

Hebrews 13:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Analysis

Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. This prayer petition requests God's sanctifying work. 'Make you perfect' (katartisai hymas, καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς, 'equip you,' 'complete you,' or 'restore you') describes God fitting believers for service, supplying all necessary grace and ability. 'In every good work' (en panti ergō agathō) indicates comprehensive obedience across all life areas. 'To do his will' (eis to poiēsai to thelēma autou) states the goal: accomplishing God's purposes.

'Working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight' (poiōn en hymin to euareston enōpion autou) emphasizes that God Himself works in believers to accomplish His will. We don't manufacture obedience independently; God enables it. This is Philippians 2:12-13 in prayer form: 'work out your salvation...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do.' 'Through Jesus Christ' specifies the mediator through whom all grace flows. The doxology 'to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen' could refer to Christ or God the Father—both deserve eternal glory.

This demonstrates the Reformed doctrine of sanctification: God works in believers to produce holiness. We cooperate but don't originate the work. Spiritual growth, good works, obedience—all flow from divine grace working through Christ. This

produces both humility (we can't boast) and confidence (God who began good work will complete it, Philippians 1:6).

Historical Context

The prayer reflects early Christian understanding that spiritual transformation comes from God's power, not human effort. Paul similarly prays for believers' sanctification (Ephesians 3:14-21; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-12). Ancient pagan religions emphasized human achievement of divine favor through rituals and works. Christianity's radical claim was that God works transformation in believers who trust Christ. The emphasis on God 'working in you' would encourage readers facing persecution—their perseverance wasn't self-generated willpower but divine enablement. This prayer established pattern for Christian prayer: asking God to work what He commands, recognizing dependence on grace for obedience.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding that God works in you to accomplish His will affect your approach to obedience and spiritual growth?
2. What 'good works' is God equipping you for, and how are you cooperating with His working in your life?
3. In what ways should recognition that all spiritual progress comes 'through Jesus Christ' produce both humility and confidence?

Interlinear Text

καταρτίσαι ὑμᾶς ἐν παντὶ ἔργῳ ἀγαθῷ εἰς τὸ ποιῶν
Make you in every work good for G3588 do
G2675 G5209 G1722 G3956 G2041 G18 G1519 G3588 G4160

τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ ποιῶν ἐν ὑμῖν τὸ εὐάρεστον
G3588 will in his do in you G3588 that which is wellpleasing
G2307 G846 G4160 G1722 G5213 G2101

ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ὡς ἡ δόξα
sight in his through Jesus Christ to whom G3588 be glory
G1799 G846 G1223 G2424 G5547 G3739 G3588 G1391

εἰς τοὺς αἰώνων τῶν αἰώνων ἀμήν
for and ever G3588 and ever Amen
G1519 G165 G165 G281

Additional Cross-References

Philippians 2:13 (Good): For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

2 Thessalonians 2:17 (Good): Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

Philippians 4:13 (References Christ): I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

1 Peter 2:5 (References Jesus): Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

2 Timothy 4:18 (Kingdom): And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Philippians 1:11 (Glory): Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

2 Corinthians 9:8 (Good): And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:

Hebrews 10:36 (Parallel theme): For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 (References Jesus): And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 4:2 (Parallel theme): That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

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