**I’M PRAYING FOR YOU**

***Let Your Yes Be Yes***

One of the most uplifting and emotional songs I have sung in my life is also one of the most guilt-ridden hymns. I love to sing it. I hate to sing it. It inspires me. It depresses me. It gives me great joy. It saddens me beyond words. It’s a song of vows I make to bless you. It’s a song of a pricked conscience that shames me for breaking my word to you. Every one of you who reads this will very likely feel the same as me.

I have a Savior, He’s pleading in glory, A dear, loving Savior, though earth friends be few;

And now He is watching in tenderness o’er me, But, oh, that my Savior were your Savior, too.

I have a Father; to me He has given, A hope for eternity, blessed and true;

And soon will He call me to meet Him in heaven, But, oh, that He’d let me bring you with me, too!

I have a robe: ’tis resplendent in whiteness, Awaiting in glory my wondering view;

Oh, when I receive it all shining in brightness, Dear friend, could I see you receiving one, too!

When Jesus has found you, tell others the story, That my loving Savior is your Savior, too;

Then pray that your Savior may bring them to glory, And prayer will be answered- ’twas answered for you!

Refrain:
**For you I am praying, For you I am praying, For you I am praying, I’m praying for you.**

Samuel O’Maley Cluff wrote that as a poem in 1860. Ira Sankey, the music director for Dwight L. Moody’s great spiritual revivals in America and England, saw the poem and put it to music. Like Peter’s words on Pentecost, it causes the hearers (and singers) to be “*pricked in the heart*” (Acts 2:37). I know it sure pricks (actually punctures) mine.

Oh, don’t get me wrong. I sincerely and honestly tell others who are revealing their hurtful story of suffering or sorrow that “I’ll be praying for you.” Many times I do. But due to the rush of the moment or the forgetfulness of my memory I way too often fail to keep my word (i.e. promise, vow) to go to God on their behalf in supplication and intercession. To say I “fail” is to euphemize (i.e. to soften and take the sting out of the word) that I have lied to you. I have given you false hope by offering you comfort that I will stop today and take your name, and your problem, to the God of grace, comfort and peace (see 2 Cor. 1:3-7).

To sympathize with another and to bear their burden requires more than a promise to pray for them. It is to commit yourself to action, whether that means time and energy in prayer, or the actual giving of food and clothes to the hungry and naked. To say “I’m praying for you” and not do so is to do nothing less than to say “*Depart in peace, be warmed and filled*” without giving them the things needed for the body (Jam. 2:14-16). “*Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*.”

God said “*by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word would be established*” (Deut. 19:15; cf. Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1). Then let me give you the word of three witnesses regarding making a promise: Jesus, Paul and James.

Jesus - “*But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one*.” - Matt. 5:37

Paul - “*… that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No*?” - 2 Cor. 1:17

James - “*But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment*.” - Jam. 5:12

When Jesus, Paul and James said that our “Yes” should mean yes, and our “No” should mean no, they were telling us that our word is our bond. It is the equal to signing a mortgage note on our house, or a contract with the car dealer, or the marriage license before the state and before God. Until the mortgage is paid, the car note is fulfilled, and the “until death do us part” is finished at a funeral, our “yes” is our covenant before God and man. In other words, tell the truth.

This leads us back to the hymn, and to the promise, that “I’m praying for you.” Honestly, if I had a dollar for every time I said those words, I could forget about the need for retirement income from Social Security. I might not yet be a millionaire, but I’d be so close you could hit it with a rock.

My conscience has hurt so much from my failure to pray for others to whom I have promised that I have started a new tactic that helps me. When I make that promise now I do what Nehemiah did when staring into the face of King Artaxerxes when put on the spot. “*Nehemiah, what do you request*?” He couldn’t tell the King, “Uh, wait, let me go talk to God first.” While looking the King in the eyes, he said a silent prayer right then and right there. “*So I prayed to the God of heaven*” (Neh. 2:4). Probably lasted three seconds, with something like, “God of heaven, please give me wisdom, now!” God heard. God answered.

I try to make a mental note to spend special time in intercessory prayer for that person to whom I promised, “I’ll pray for you.” But God can also hear a three second prayer and give answer too. I don’t won’t to lie to you when I say I’m praying for you. I now do… right then, right there, with hopes of spending more time later in my prayer closet.

Another way I keep my conscience clean is to verbally offer an immediate “blessing” to someone in need. Like when the Israelites would always say “*Shalom*” to others. “*Shalom*” was asking for God’s peace to be upon them. It was a shortened version of the blessing all Jews had memorized from Numbers 6.22-26,

“This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:
**“The LORD bless you and keep you; The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace.”**

Today we might say, “God bless you.” By that we say what Paul said to everyone he met: *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Rom 1:7; I Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Eph 1:2; Phil 1:2; Col 1:2; 1 Th 1:1; 2 Th 1:2; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phm 1:3).

Or to say it in song, “For you I am praying. I’m praying for you.”

*Shalom*. – Rick