**I’M PRAYING FOR YOU (# 2)**

***Praying For Preachers & Elders***

Most members of the church feel great comfort when they know that the elders and preachers are moved to pray for them in the midst of their suffering or sorrow. After all, the Bible says, “*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up*” (Jam. 5:13-15). Most Christians take consolation in the knowledge that “*the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*” (Jam. 3:16). When a man or woman we perceive to be righteous says, “I will pray for you,” it brings peace to their heart to know God will hear those prayers.

When Moses prayed for sinful Israel it brought God’s response, and salvation (Num. 14:1-20). Verse 20 says, “*Then the LORD said: “I have pardoned, according to your word”* (Num. 14:17-20).

When Jesus prayed for sinful Peter it brought God’s response, and restoration (Lk. 22:31-35). Verse 32 says, “*But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren*.”

When Paul prayed for sinful Corinthians it brought God’s response, and blessings (I Cor. 1:4-8). Verse 4 says, “*I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which* ***was*** *given you by Christ Jesus, that you* ***were*** *enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and knowledge*.”

After all, we fully expect preachers and elders to be men of prayer. We expect them to have an open line of communication with God in heaven. Surely they have a hotline to God’s throne and His open ear to their requests (Heb. 4:16). Preachers are to be “*examples to the believers in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith and purity*,” right (I Tim. 4:12)? Elders are to be “*examples to the flock*” (I Pet. 5:3), who have met very high standards of righteousness (I Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).

In other words, we all are comforted when righteous men who are leaders of God’s people offer intercessory prayers for us.

But what about the need for intercessory prayers from the congregation for its leaders? Let me cut to the chase. What if Acts 6:4 is missing from the leadership of the church? What if the pressing needs (i.e. “*we should leave the word of God and serve tables*”) has slowly begun to dominate the waking hours of the elders and preachers so that they do not have the necessary time to “*give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word*?”

Look at Paul as an example of one who could grow weary and discouraged, only to be lifted up by prayers from the saints. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 is powerful when it says,

8 For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were **burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life**. 9 Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, 10 who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, 11 **you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.**

Paul, who seemed almost a Superman, showed he had kryptonite weaknesses just like all other mortals. Burdened beyond measure, above strength, to the point he despaired he would die, desperately coveted the prayers of his brethren. They came through for him, God granting him “*the gift*” of renewed spiritual strength.

A scripture that has always stirred my curiosity and excited my emotions is found in Colossians 4:2-4. Read it with me.

2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; 3 meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, 4 that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

Paul reminds us that, when it comes to effective prayer that gets heaven’s attention, God loves it when the gates are stormed and the throne of grace is assaulted by an entire army of righteous soldiers. When God’s people “*come boldly to the throne of grace*” all the angels stop everything to watch and listen, then rejoice when He gives “*mercy and grace to help in time of need*” (Heb. 4:16). God opens “*a door for the word*” – even in a prison cell – when the saints unite their petitions for preachers and elders.

Do you remember when Peter was arrested just after the martyrdom of James? It was a terrifying time for the infant church. Do you know what they all did? *“Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church”* (Ac. 12:5). When God heard their prayers He sent an angel to deliver him from prison. Peter seemed to know instinctively where all his brethren were. It says, *“So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying”* (Ac. 12:12). I ask you, would Peter have been spared his life without the intercession of the saints? The inference here is that God heard their prayers and saved Peter’s life.

Jesus said that God heard the penitent prayer of a sinful tax collector who cried, “*Be merciful to me a sinner*!” (Lk. 18:13). He went down to his house justified. That tells me God hears the prayers of all His children. Therefore, I ask you, I even beg you, please pause today to say a prayer for the preachers and shepherds of this good church. If Paul and Peter needed prayers, I can assure you that Andy and I need prayers even more. If the elders at Ephesus needed prayers (Ac. 20:36), I know for a fact that Tim, Clay, Rick, Terry, and Richard need your prayers to shepherd this flock with wisdom. Thank you!

“*Brethren, pray for us*” (Heb. 13:18). – Rick