

“Brethren, Pray For Us”

“God ... delivered us out so great a death ... and will deliver: on whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us; ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplications: that, for the gift bestowed upon us by means of the many, thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf” (2 Tim. 1:10-11).

Paul had just spoken of a great danger which threatened him in Ephesus: a danger so grave that he despaired of life and had “the sentence of death” within himself. He did not choose to reveal the exact nature of that danger, so, no matter what our feelings may be, any conjecture is just that: conjecture and theorizing. Yet, while Paul did not identify the danger he faced, he did give abundant praise to God for his deliverance from it; which deliverance, according to v. 11, came about in part because of prayers Corinthian brethren offered for him.

Paul was a praying man, a truth attested to by the fact that nearly in every letter he wrote he included one or more requests he made to God for those to whom his letter was addressed. Moreover, we see by the examples of the apostle, his joint prayers with his brethren (Acts 20:36; 21:5). All this a declaration that Paul fervently believed in the power of prayer and thus he also enjoined others to pray, and often specifically requested they pray for him (1 Thess. 5:25).

Paul urged the Ephesians to pray “... on my behalf that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:19-20). Paul was ever conscience of the grace of his apostleship and wanted never to fail to make that message boldly known. Thus he asked others to pray for him to act as he ought to act.

He wrote the Colossians “withal praying for us that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ ... that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak” (Col. 4:2). While this request to Colossians “echoed” his request of the Ephesians that he might make the message manifest, “As I ought to speak,” there is his additional request that the Colossians pray for doors to be opened for the word. If it was appropriate then that brethren pray for open doors for the word, it is appropriate today. James chastened his readers thus: “Ye have not because ye ask not” (James 4:2). Is it possible that today we have not doors opened to us because we “ask not”? It is something to think about!

Even to a church he had never visited but with whom he was fellow servants of Christ, he did not hesitate to ask their prayers for him. When Paul was in Corinth at the end of his third journey, he was preparing to make a long, dangerous journey back to Jerusalem, carrying relief for needy saints there. Everywhere the Holy Spirit warned him of tribulation should he choose to venture back to Jerusalem and he knew (as he told the Ephesian elders) that “bonds and afflictions” awaited him there (Acts 20:23). And so, as he wrote the Roman letter, heavy on his mind was the journey before him and the

many uncertainties surrounding it. Then he besought the Romans, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from those that are disobedient in Judaea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest” (Rom. 15:30-32). Paul was delivered from the disobedient in Judaea (had they had their way, he would have been dead rather than a prisoner); the contribution for the saints was acceptable to them, and although he came to the Roman Christians in chains; he did come to them.

We should never underestimate the power of prayer, for although the trials in Ephesus came suddenly to Paul and the Corinthian brethren could hardly have known the specifics of it, they had been praying for Paul and their prayers for him played a part in his deliverance from danger. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” — so said our Lord Jesus Christ!

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