

2 Corinthians 1 (11) – So That Many Will Give Thanks

People who rely on God are people who rely on prayer. And not just on their own prayers to God, but also on other people's prayers to God. Paul lived a dangerous life. And he knew that whether or not he was going to be self-reliant, he had to be prayer-reliant. And he knew the value of intercessory prayer, that is, prayer on other's behalf. He prayed for others, and asked for prayer from others. He knew that his prayers, and their prayers, mattered.

Praying for other people isn't just about persecution problems. It's also about praying for people with pain problems, prison problems, physical problems, mental problems, spiritual problems, financial problems, relationship problems, family problems, faith problems, fear problems, and sin problems. And it's not just about praying for other people's problems, but praying for their guidance, gifting, protection, safety, stability, and success. Your prayers are part of God's plan for other people.

God did great things through Paul. But do you realize that what God did through Paul was also through prayer? Paul did. He always relied on God and he always asked for prayer. Christians need the prayers of other Christians. Paul was an apostle, yet he often emphasized the fact that he needed prayers for the success of his ministry and his safety as a minister.

Here are some examples...

- Romans 15:30-32 – *I appeal to you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God on my behalf, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company.*
- Ephesians 6:18-19 – *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel...*

- Philippians 1:19 – *for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance...*
- 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 – *Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith.*
- Philemon 1:22 – *At the same time, prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping that through your prayers I will be graciously given to you.*
- Hebrews 13:18-19 – *Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner.*

Look at all that prayer is said to affect in these passages. Praying for others to be delivered. Praying that they would have fruitful service. Praying for all the saints. Praying for the gospel message. Praying for the gospel minister. Praying for safe and swift travels. Praying for restoration. And knowing that earnest prayers have something to do with God acting swiftly on our behalf. The Bible says that praying for others is a really big deal.

Look at vs.10-11. Paul wanted the news of his deliverance *from such a deadly peril* to serve as motivation for the saints in Corinth to join together in prayer on his behalf, hoping that God would deliver him again if he and when was in trouble again. Paul knew that if his ministry was to continue, and to be fruitful, these believers must intercede for him. And he knew that many believers would give thanks for the blessings God bestowed on Paul through their prayers. The Corinthians were really helping accomplish God's mission together with Paul when they prayed for him. Your prayers matter.

The relationship between God's will and your prayers is somewhat mysterious. The truth is that prayer doesn't change God's will. But it is also true that prayer is part of God's will. And God has ordained prayer as a means to accomplish his will. And prayer changes you as you fellowship with God. So, prayer does not control God's power, it glorifies it. And God allows your prayers to be part of his process. You participate with God's people in God's program through your prayers.

Paul needed prayer. You need prayer. We all need prayer. That's God's design. God uses the prayers of his people. So, if you want to participate in God's purposes, pray. It isn't some small thing. Look at the text. Paul said it is a must. Prayers for a common cause brings God glorifying unity. And more prayer means more people will give thanks to God.

When someone needs help, and whatever help they need, they also need you to pray for them. It matters. In Galatians 6:2, when Paul says, "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*", part of that participation is through prayer. In 2 Corinthians 1:5, when he says "*as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too*", part of that burden and part of that blessing comes through prayer. And prayer is not just an individual thing; it is a corporate thing. It is the body of Christ, in its local expressions, and in its universal expression, sharing its triumphs and its troubles. Prayer is the engine of godly compassion.

- Romans 12:15 – *Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.*
- 1 Corinthians 12:26 – *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.*
- Hebrews 13:3 – *Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.*

All Christians are united to Christ, with God, through his Spirit, and in purpose through our prayers. Look at what Paul is saying about intercessory prayer here in our text today. And know that your prayers matter.

- Prayer helps people (*You...help us by prayer*)
- Prayer is God's will for all God's people (*You also...help us by prayer*)
- Prayer is necessary (*You...must help us by prayer*)
- Prayer unites God's people in his purpose (*through the prayers of many*)
- Prayer brings blessings (*the blessing granted us through the prayers*)
- Prayer produces thanksgiving (*many will give thanks on our behalf*)

To all of that we say, amen. Let's pray.

Prayer for Victoria Moore

Heavenly Father, we are asking for you to bless Vicki with healing, provision, and guidance. We are thankful that so many people are praying for blessings for her and her family. However, I would ask that you would bless Vicki and Michael and this family in ways that no one is even asking for, in ways that we can't have even seen, and that you bring to them in a way that demonstrates your care and compassion and presence among us.

Lord Jesus, help Vicki to understand, and then to live in such a way that shows what your true healing is about. We are thankful that there are knowledgeable people and inventions and such that will help her through this ordeal. And we know that if you should decide, you can heal her right now, and that eventually you will fully heal her. And should you decide that she remain in this state, to whatever degree, we ask that you would have mercy on her by lessening the pain, and helping her to show your presence in the life of your children, as a witness to your loving kindness and ultimate worth. Lord, give her great faith, and let her faith grow the faith of others.

God, help Vicki to understand the opportunity you are giving her. May she know your calling for her to be a special wife, mother, sister, child, friend and witness to the worth of Christ. Help her life teach the blessings of God, and help her live as a lesson of love for the Lord, to help people understand that we can overcome all things through Christ.

Holy Spirit, in these moments, while Vicki is there at the hospital, be with her in a special way. When she feels the pain, the uncertainty, and the loneliness, when it feels most helpless and hopeless, wrap your loving arms around her. Give her a joy that is more than any expression, a peace that is greater than any understanding, and a love that far surpasses any knowledge. In this way, God, prove yourself with what she already knows, but to a deeper degree, in a way that astounds her. Let her know your glory, and let others see that glory. In this awful state, let her know the awesome you. We ask all this in the name of Jesus, amen.