

Thinking about that day

1:11

you also helping together in prayer for us,

*Romans 15:30 Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you **strive together with me in prayers** to God for me, 31 that I may be delivered from those in Judea who do not believe, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints...*

*Philippians 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. 19 For I know that **this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer** and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...*

*Philemon 22 But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that **through your prayers** I shall be granted to you.*

that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many. Our prayers are multi-generational in their impact. Many persons will be thanking God for us and the grace of God we bring to them which was possible, in part, because of your prayers. This is pretty special coming from a guy who says “I labored more abundantly than everybody else” (15:10). Your prayers are accomplishing amazing things in the hearts of those you may never meet because you pray for those who are impacting them.

Consider, please what types of prayers these are. These are more than “keep Paul and Timothy motivated.” What if God answered our prayers as specifically as we requested them?

“Bless brother Paul.”

How will we know when God has answered that? How will that build faith at all? If you’re asking God to “bless Brother Paul”, and I’m asking God to bless brother Paul, at best we’ll hope our prayers were answered, and we may even guess that they have—but if we don’t start getting specific in how we pray for these laborers in Christ, we will not know if God is answering our prayers at all.

We read their reports. We ask for names. We ask them specific questions and stop letting them off the hook with “talked to several people today and a few others came to Bible study and the kids are doing fine.” Perhaps they are that general because they don’t ever get questions asked. Both we and they, as mission partners should see how important this is to these church-planting, convert baptizing, church-planting, itinerant preachers. Paul said, “we know you’ve been praying for us.”

I ask you again, “How did Paul know that?” How did he know? There must have been remarkable enablement and profound differences sensed for Paul to say “we know you’ve been helping in prayer for us!” Imagine the wonderment of knowing that people are praying for you. Not generally. That is not what is being communicated here. Paul is not counting on people floating generalities up to the sky.

2:12

For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity They had a clean conscience. Let me give you a sign that you or I may not have a crystal-clear conscience: We go around, seeking justification from others for our actions. We don’t let the Lord approve of us in our spirits. We have a smugness or an unrest or a moodiness that screams for approval from everyone but the

Lord. You know how this is...we mask it with telling everybody about what we've done or what we've said—and deep down inside—we are hoping they will first of all: approve; and second of all: that their approval will help us feel a little better.

Perhaps, some of you, my brothers, find it hard to lead in your home. Perhaps you feel like every time you turn around you are struggling to live up to what you feel like you ought to be, spiritually. Perhaps one way in which you can lead—even if you know a little less than your dear wife; even if you know a little less in your learning of the Scripture; even if, for now, you are not as faithful as the woman in your life would have you to be in the things of God—you can lead in having a clean conscience. That's rare enough, and it doesn't happen by accident:

*I am blind. Be thou my light.
Ignorant, be thou my wisdom,
Self-willed, be thou my mind.
Open my ear to grasp quickly thy Spirit's voice
And delightfully run after his beckoning hand;
Melt my conscience that no hardness remain,
make it alive to evil's slightest touch;¹*

“Simplicity” has the idea of not being duplicit in one's lifestyle. Consider it as the opposite of “complex.” Paul and Timothy lived lives where you didn't have to say “well, let's wait a month and see if this changes. Maybe they're just acting like the new preachers in town and...well....let's see if he still loves us and visits us and preaches to us when the honeymoon wears off.”

This is why I am always listening to the Lord and asking two things: 1. Is this the kind of ministry I want Sandy Ridge getting used to? Can they count on this; do I wish for them to count on this in 10 or 15 or 20 years? I don't want anybody saying anything other than, “there's been a glide path with this guy. He's been even.”

and godly sincerity, This is not that “without wax” simplicity we find in Philippians. This is a different Greek word altogether. This has the idea of “clear” or “ingenuousness” (as opposed to being disingenuous). But we are really helped with its adjective “Godly.” Paul said, I was so clear and clean that I reflected the Heavenly Father. This, along with that non-duplicity life, helps you see, that you are not going to meet Pastor A today and Pastor B tomorrow.

And perhaps you are thinking, “amen.” But...wait a minute...if you wish to have that from your pastor, wouldn't you love to have that from one another? Wouldn't it be great if your brother and sister to your front and back could expect the real Bible-believing faith and delicate love for the Lord Jesus year round?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if they could count on you to be consistent in your lifestyle and standards and commitment to this local body of Christ? Wouldn't it be great if we weren't calling you and asking you about whether you wanted your membership here still? Wouldn't it be great if we knew when you said “I love you, brother, I love you, sister” that it was a godly or honest or clear or transparent way of saying “I'll be here in a year worshipping right next to you?”

not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. There were times when we did things differently than “Corporate Rome/America.” We didn't run our business meetings the way the ungodly do. We didn't always run things in the budget committees the way Congress does. We didn't always see an immediate return for all that we did for souls.

Speaking of business meetings and God's grace, beginning in August, our business meetings will be in here on those Sunday nights. Why? Because you need to see pictures of some things during those reports. We are going to look at pictures of the Alaska trip and New York trip and Larry Phillips needs to be seen as a regular part of our missions outreach here. Why? We pay his salary at the state level and we are his church. We need to see pictures of his time in West Virginia. Did you know that Dorothy Myers was in West Virginia doing

¹ Arthur Bennett, ed. *The Valley of Vision* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2014), 186.

God's work? Well, we want Randy, our missions coordinator being able to show the rest of us what ministry outside Hickory looks like as it is performed by Sandy Ridge!

Can you see it? Can you see into the future if Jesus lives and we have a packed building during worship again and people are being born again and baptized? And revivals are taking place? And prayer meeting matters again? And a bunch of Apostle Pauls and Timothys are out and about displaying God's grace in ministry to others just like this? Well, it begins with a desire to hear those reports and having your seat resting in your seat as a member of this assembly.

2:13-14a

For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end 14 (as also you have understood us in part), This is not hard. We're not speaking to you in Yiddish. We use easy-to-understand terminology that reflects that we understand a level of urgency. Take a quick look at 3:12 and see how Paul was not going to let these believers off the hook of "thinking things through." He is furthermore saying "this little note I've sent you here requires your full attention just as you have gotten ours."

In the grander context, now, we need to see what Paul is saying, "You're not allowed to just sit back and let the Lord massage your heartaches (vv 5-8). No, you are to understand that you have an intellectual and emotional obligation with this letter you are about to read.

that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus. That time described in his earlier letter to them (1 Corinthians 1:7-8; 5:5).

1. **Perfect Priorities (too bad it will be too late):** Around the throne, we are not going to be thinking, "I wish I would have spent more time worrying about everybody misusing me and abusing me." We won't be saying "I am so glad I held grudges for years." No, I have a feeling that you're going to say, "I didn't do everything right, but I am glad I made Sandy Ridge my last church."
 - a. Do you think you'll regret this life (verse 12)?
 - i. We are always making decisions from the perspective of the final day.
 - b. Do you think you'll be upset about your investment of prayer.
2. **Only saved people around the throne:** I want to encourage us not to simply "do things to reach our community" while keeping our mouths shut. Perhaps you've heard "preach the Gospel and if necessary, use words." To quote Legion Duncan, the only thing standing between me and total agreement with that statement is the New Testament.
 - a. Quite possibly, with our 15 ministries and numerous parachurch organizations, we could be simply making the Gospel secondary in our objective.
 - b. We are furthermore also assuming people have believed the Gospel. The surprised looks I get around town when I ask "was _____ saved?" are still, well, very troubling and amazing.
 - c. What we see is continued relationships around the throne. Your real family is in this room.
 - i. We suffer together (1:5-8)
 - ii. We pray together (1:11)
 - iii. We celebrate together (1:14); we talk about I would have never made it through (verse 8) if it had not been for you. Another party would say "we would have never been brought strength and encouragement had it not been for you." Nobody is in Heaven saying "Look what I've done!"
3. **Mutual boasting around the throne:** Both will be thanking the other.
 - a. You were saved by us.
 - i. Our comfort (1:5-7).
 - ii. Our lifestyle (1:
 - b. We were saved by your prayers (1:8-11).