

HOW TO BETTER PRAY FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

“Brethren, pray for us”. 1 Thes. 5:25

by Ron Valerio

“Brethren, pray for us.” This was the request of the great Apostle Paul. Paul was a missionary sent out from the local church at Antioch. He could have spent the rest of his life teaching the converts at Antioch. He could have refused God’s leading and the Holy Spirit’s pressure on his heart. He could have done so, but he would have been out of the will of God for his life. He surrendered his heart and accepted God’s call on his life. *“Brethren, pray for us.”* This was the plea from a man in the perfect will of God.

Aside from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Paul the Apostle was the greatest and most influential missionary of all time. *“Brethren pray for us.”* This was the request of the missionary who brought the Gospel to Europe. This was the request of the great Apostle who penned fourteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. Paul’s request was a plea from a missionary’s heart. And it is the plea from the heart of every blood-bought, God-sent missionary today. The plea is that the believers of the local church would engage in the most vital task of the missionary endeavor—intercessory prayer, or praying on behalf of someone else.

Now, if the great Apostle Paul needed and pleaded the prayers of others, then every God-sent missionary needs the prayers of others. I suppose there are literally hundreds of areas of prayer that the missionary needs. We could and should pray for the missionary’s relationship with God. We should remember their physical and emotional needs. Praying specifically for the missionary’s family is vitally important as they make their home in a foreign land often far removed from everyone they have ever known. Let’s not forget their financial needs. Missionaries seem to always have endless needs to do the work of the Lord. A Korean missionary stood up in a mission conference and said in broken English, GOSPEL FREE—MISSIONARY COSTS MUCH! A price tag cannot be put on the souls of men. The human soul is of infinite value. The fulfillment of the Great Commission must go forward on the wings of prayer.

So many in our churches with good intentions pray a general prayer like, “Lord, bless all our missionaries around the world, everywhere. Amen.” However, specific prayers get specific answers! The Word of God reveals to us some of missionary Paul’s specific prayer requests:

PRAY FOR WORDS TO SPEAK. *“And for me, that utterance may be given unto me. . .” Eph. 6:19a* Every missionary needs prayer for the words to speak. Missionaries deal daily with cultural and language differences. They are declaring the message of eternal life to the lost. Their culture cannot save them. Their government cannot save them. They cannot save themselves. The only hope people have is a clear presentation of the Gospel. My wife Kathy and I attended a family retreat. The guest speaker was a veteran missionary to Africa. He challenged us to commit to memory Psalm 19:14, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of

my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.” May the missionary’s words be acceptable to the Lord and spiritually profitable to men.

PRAY FOR HOLY BOLDNESS. Paul asked for prayer “. . . *that I may open my mouth boldly. . .*” *Eph. 6:20b* All believers need holy boldness to speak for their Lord. Someone has said that most Christians are like the Arctic River, frozen at the mouth. The missionary is the foreigner, the uninvited guest of a foreign land. He is the one in the minority preaching to the majority. Paul preached to peoples of different countries with differing cultures and asked for the local church to pray that he have holy boldness. When you pray for your missionaries, ask the Lord to give them holy boldness and power to deliver the message to people who think differently, live differently and talk differently.

PRAY FOR OPEN DOORS. A missionary may have the words to speak and the boldness to speak them, while it is God who opens the doors. Paul coveted the prayers of God’s people that the doors of opportunity would be opened unto him. *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery Christ. . .” (Col 4:3)* Many years earlier, Paul testified to the local church at Corinth, *“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries. (1 Co 16:9)* When prayer is made for your missionaries, remember to pray for open doors of opportunity to preach the Gospel. With the same stroke of the pen that Paul writes of an open door, he emphasizes *“that there are many adversaries”*. Sometimes we get the idea that when God is leading there is no opposition. However, that’s when the opposition is often the greatest.

PRAY FOR ENCOURAGEMENT AND SAFETY. *“. . . we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life”. 2 Cor. 1:8 “Ye also helping together by prayer for us. . .” 2 Cor. 1:11* Recently, my Dominican co-worker, Rafael and I were on our way back to the capital after doing some construction work at the mission site somewhat in the interior of the island. While passing through a small town, traffic came to a screeching halt. Crowds were stirring and blocking the street. We could not move an inch in any direction. Suddenly we saw two young men chasing a robber. They were coming right towards our SUV. One man hit the robber on the head with a wooden rod with slivers. As the robber fell to the ground, they proceeded to shoot him dead right next to us firing five bullets into the young man’s body. The Lord put a hedge of protection around us in the midst of the ordeal, sparing us from being victims in the crossfire. Pray that the Lord would put a hedge of protection around every missionary as they do God’s bidding.

PRAY WITH INTENSITY. *“I beseech you. . .that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. . .Rom. 15:30* There was a sense of urgency coming from the Apostle’s heart. There was also a strong confidence that the local church was behind Paul one hundred percent. We are co-laborers together in the Gospel. The Scriptures here indicate that we are in this missionary enterprise together. There is a Divine connection between the missionary on the field and the believer’s in the local church. That connection is prayer. My pastor sent me an e-mail recently saying, “we

are having special prayer for you tomorrow night”. It is strengthening to know that others are praying for you so that the Gospel may go forth with power.

PRAY THAT THEY BE REFRESHED. “. . . *that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me. . .*”(Rom. 15:30a)*That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed. Rom. 15:32b* The Apostle Paul was willing to spend and be spent for the sake of the Gospel. This extraordinary missionary requested prayer that he might be refreshed. Even our Lord in the flesh needed times of refreshment. How much more should we pray that our missionaries include a time of rest from the daily demands on the foreign field.

There is an urgent need in these last days to get back to the matter of intercessory prayer. Much attention can be given to money, methods and machinery, and materials, while neglecting fervent prayer to uphold our missionaries. Prayer is not the least we can do, rather it is the *most* that we can do.