

PRAYER AND MINISTRY

“God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times.” —ROMANS 1:9-10

The Apostle Paul had a remarkable prayer life. It was always for the work of Christ’s church and the benefit of others. Many of his prayers are included in letters he wrote on the front lines of battle or imprisoned. At the time of writing, he had no way of knowing his letters would comprise a major portion of our New Testament scriptures.

Paul had not yet been to Rome, but was eager to come, and he says, “How constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times.” There are three aspects Paul points out to the Christians in Rome. They are first called to be spiritual. That’s an upward direction to God. The first indication of the work God gives us is when we begin to feel a pull to pray for a specific ministry.

I’ve known many people, myself included, who began to pray in a certain direction, and over a period of time, God began to lead. I always kept a map of the world on my bedroom wall, and when I got married, it got moved to the wall in my study. I had no idea God would ask me to travel the world and preach the gospel, but it began with praying for the world, which I still do. If God lays a burden on our hearts to pray for something, follow that through. That’s the first door which leads to what Christ is calling us to do.

Paul also prays for an inward direction of spiritual ministry. That’s about imparting spiritual gifts, and being mutually encouraged by one another.

The upward direction, dealing with God, will express itself in the inward direction of building up one another within the church. The third direction of spiritual life and ministry is the outward direction. In Romans 1:14, Paul says, “I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish.”

If we’re going to exercise spiritual ministry, we deal first with God, the upward direction; then with each other, the inward direction; and then outward into the world. Paul always prays for the things only God can give us. If our prayers are going to be effective and fruitful, our hearts need to be aligned with God’s will and agenda. What we’ll discover is that our prayer requests have their source in Christ. Jesus said, “You may ask for anything in my name, and I will do it” (John 14:14). In our service to Him, we can come before God with confidence, because His will is our will – to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, I pray for a deeper discernment of your voice to follow the calling You have for me. May I first look upward to You, then to my church and, step out in faith.

TO REFLECT UPON: Are my prayers aligned with God’s will and agenda for this world?