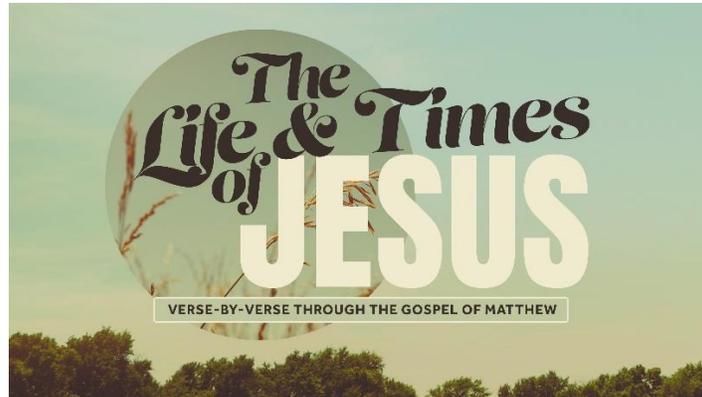


FELLOWSHIP NOTES – October 9th, 2022



Part 3: “The King’s Early Years” – Matthew 2 (Part 1)

1. **Jesus received the _____ of the wise men – Matt. 2:1-12 (Heb. 11:1, 6)**

Myth-buster: How did Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus?

Answer: We don’t know because _____

Myth-buster: Were the men from the east kings and did they travel to Israel on camels?

Answer: No, because there is no evidence in the _____ that indicates this. They are referred to as “wise men” or “magi” meaning magic or magicians. How they traveled to Israel is anyone’s guess.

Spiritual Principle: True faith moves forward even when the _____ and the path ahead is _____.

Prophecy: The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem – Micah 5:2

Fulfillment: Matthew 2:5-6 – Jesus was born in Bethlehem even though Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth in Galilee

Myth-buster: What was the “star” the wise men followed, and does it exist today?

Answer: The nature of the star as presented in the record of Matthew does not coincide with the natural phenomenon of what we consider a “star”. This was a supernatural phenomenon created by God himself for the wise men only to lead them to Jesus. It was not a stationary star but mobile, appearing in the far east first to guide the wise men to Jerusalem, then again as they traveled from Jerusalem to Bethlehem leading them to the exact residence where Jesus and his family were staying. This phenomenon was unique to the birth of Jesus and has never been repeated since.



Prophecy: Kings would kneel before the future Messiah, offer Him gifts and worship Him –
Psalm 72:9-11

Fulfillment: Matthew 2:11 - The wise men knelt before baby Jesus, gave Him gifts and worshiped Him

Myth-buster: Were there three wise men who came to worship Jesus as is depicted in most representations of the birth of Christ?

Answer: While it is assumed there were three men because there are three different gifts they gave to Jesus in worship, again, there is no evidence in the biblical record that indicates this. We don't know for sure how many wise men there were.

Spiritual Principle: True worship is evidenced by _____ and

Growth Group Study Guide for October 9th – 16th

Getting Started

Group Discussion: As we all know, life happens and often we find ourselves in need of prayer. How does it bless you to know that you have a church family in your life who are ready to support you in prayer whenever it is needed?

Digging Deeper

Read the attached article together as a group, as you do watch for the answers to the following questions. After reading it, discuss the following questions...

1. Read Romans 15:30-33. What does this teach us about praying for spiritual leaders?
2. What does this article say about why our spiritual leaders need the prayer support of the church family?
3. What are the three prayer targets for pastors given in the article and why is each significant?

#1: _____

#2: _____

#3: _____

Wrapping Up

Close in prayer, praying for the pastors of Fellowship specifically and by name.

Three Strategic Prayers for Our Spiritual Leaders

By Daniel Henderson

I am not much of a bowler, but I know that it is virtually impossible to get a strike if the ball does not hit the head pin. Satan is a calculating and destructive enemy of God's people. He knows how essential it is to eliminate pastoral leaders in order to decimate the church and thwart the work of the Gospel.

Yet, we can all make a powerful difference in opposing the attacks of the enemy. Samuel Chadwick wrote, "The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from praying. He fears nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work, and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray." Oswald Chambers agreed: "The prayer of the feeblest saint who lives in the Spirit and keeps right with God is a terror to Satan." When we pray for our leaders, we counteract Satan's attacks and play a vital role in the advancement of Christ's cause.

Paul's Word on Why, How, and What

Paul understood this, which is why he often called on the churches to pray for him. In Romans 15:30-33, we find one of the less familiar but most powerful appeals for prayer. This passage offers vital guidance for us all as we intercede for our spiritual leaders.

As Paul wrote to the Romans (probably from Corinth), he reflected on his planned visit with them on his way to Spain. First, he was going to deliver a love gift to the persecuted believers in Jerusalem, which he had been collecting among the gentile churches. He knew his serious need for prayer support in these ministry endeavors, so he appealed to the believers to pray for him.

Why We Pray for Spiritual Leaders

In Romans 15:30 Paul writes, "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." Most obvious, we see Paul's basic encouragement to pray when he says, "I beg you." The Greek, "parakaleo", simply communicates Paul's effort to come alongside these believers, urging them to pray. But there is something even deeper here.

Paul writes, "through the Lord Jesus Christ." Certainly, we pray, only because of the finished work and present intercession of Christ (Hebrews 7:25, 10:20-22). Most literally, Paul is urging us here to pray because of our regard for Christ. As the Amplified reads, "for the sake of our Lord Jesus." Our prayer for pastors and missionaries must ultimately be motivated by our love and worship of Jesus Christ because it is His name, His cause, and His glory that are at stake. When we are Jesus-worshippers we will also be reliable, passionate intercessors for our leaders.

Third, Paul says that we should pray "through the love of the Spirit." The most literal interpretation of this phrase speaks of our love FOR the person and work of the Holy Spirit. Prayer is a vital part of supernatural power and Gospel advancement. Because we love it when the Holy Spirit is working in extraordinary ways, we should commit our hearts to pray for our leaders. If we are dissatisfied with the level of spiritual power in the pulpit or ministries of the church, our love for the Holy Spirit compels us to pray for a greater manifestation of His presence and work.

How We Pray for Spiritual Leaders

Paul's appeal for prayer intensifies as he continues with this urgent appeal: "Strive together with me in prayers to God for me" (v. 30). This is not a casual word about shallow, short, simple prayers. The Greek work here is *sunagonidzomai*, which communicates the idea of agonizing with another person in the midst of an intense struggle. Paul is asking them to join him in feeling the weight and warfare of all he is facing. This is a heart of real intercession. Yet, we are so often casual and complacent in our prayers for leaders. The late David Wilkerson, a pastor and founder of Teen Challenge, spoke about our need for a greater sense of spiritual anguish in a powerful message (see "Anguish" by David Wilkerson on YouTube):

"Whatever happened to anguish in the house of God? Whatever happened to anguish in the ministry? It's a word you don't hear in this pampered age. Anguish means extreme pain and distress – the emotions so stirred that it becomes painful; acute, deeply-felt inner pain because of conditions about you, in you, or around you. Anguish...the sorrow and agony of God's heart."

He continues, "We've held on to our religious rhetoric and our revival talk, but we've become so passive. All true passion is birthed out of anguish. All true passion for Christ comes out of a baptism of anguish. You search the Scripture and you find that when God determined to recover a ruined situation, He would share His own anguish for what God saw happening to His people. He would find a praying man and he would take that man and literally baptize him in anguish."

Charles Spurgeon noted, "I know of no greater kindness than for my people to pray for me." Every wise church leader seeks and cherishes the prayer support of his people. Yet, why do we pray? How should we pray? What should we pray about?

Three Specific Prayer Targets

Paul describes three specific needs that are pressing on him as he serves the Lord and travels in obedience to the call.

First, he seeks prayer for **protection from spiritual enemies**. He asked the Romans to pray that he might be "delivered from those in Judea who do not believe." In this context, Paul was journeying back to Jerusalem where his most violent opponents would come against him.

He was not concerned with survival but with the satisfaction of his mission. On one hand Paul said, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:20-21). On the other hand, when faced with inevitable threats on his life, he states, "Chains and tribulations await me. But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:23-24). Paul's prayer request was rooted in a longing to effectively finish his task, not a fear of dying.

Today, Western believers do not feel so compelled to pray this way since our leaders are seldom threatened. Yet, I am reminded of a story told to me by a church member named Ted. While on a plane in California Ted sat next to a man who appeared to be praying and fasting during the flight. Ted eventually asked the gentleman about his evident devotion. Indeed, the man was praying and fasting – to Satan. Ted learned that this man had joined other Satanists in a commitment to fast and pray once a week for the downfall of the

marriages of Christian leaders. Indeed, the battle is real, the attacks are subtle, and our prayers are vital.

Second, Paul asks the church to pray for the **prosperity of his ministry efforts to the saints**. He stated, "...that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints." In taking funds collected from the gentiles, he faced the possibility of rejection, suspicion, or division depending on the response of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem.

Still today, we need to pray for the soil of the hearts of God's people to be receptive as the Word and work of the ministry is shared by our leaders. So many times, the enemy fuels misunderstanding, confusion, and criticism, which undermine the fruit of Gospel ministry.

Third, Paul sought prayer for the **provision of his personal needs** by the believers in Rome. After a long, demanding journey Paul anticipated making it to Rome, by God's will and with his joy intact, but needing personal refreshment from the saints there. Whether they speak openly about it or not, our leaders need the refreshment of encouraging words, thoughtful actions, and supportive expressions of kindness.

High-Impact Prayers

When we review Acts 21:17 – 28:31 we find the answers to these prayers. Paul's gift to the believers in Jerusalem was accepted. In addition, the Jerusalem church rejoiced in the work of the Gospel and wanted to learn more about the spread of grace.

While in Jerusalem, the antagonistic Jews attacked Paul again, seeking to kill him. The Roman military, seeing their hatred and learning of their murderous plots, sent him to Caesarea (under the guard of 470 soldiers!) where Paul appeared before several Roman magistrates. Eventually, Paul sailed to Rome to appeal to Caesar. On the way, they experienced shipwreck and Paul was bitten by a viper – only to survive everything. Throughout it all, the Roman church was agonizing in prayer for Paul's protection.

Paul was under house arrest in Rome, so he did not make it to the 11:00 a.m. worship service to enjoy the refreshment of the believers there. However, it is apparent that believers were able to come to him and refresh his spirit. Most notable was a man named Onesiphorus, of whom Paul spoke in his final letter (2 Timothy 1:16-18).

As we see these amazing answers to prayer, we must obey the call to pray for our leaders. God invites us to play a vital role in the advancement of His Gospel purposes as we intercede for pastors and missionaries.

The Peace that Comes Through Prayer

Paul's appeal for prayer ends with this benediction: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen." Prayer replaces worry. Prayer produces a Christ-alignment in our hearts that results in unity, trust, and spiritual health. For the sake of the Gospel, for the good of our leaders, and for the spiritual health of our own hearts – let's resolve to pray for those whom God has appointed to shepherd our souls.