

BRETHREN, PRAY FOR US

1 Thessalonians

5:25

Brethren, pray for us.

Many times, we place a type of greater emphasis on leaders, their work, their actions and their families – we want them to be an influence for Christ; be the kind of leaders that God wants in the church, family and society.

Using the term, 'leaders', our focus is on elders, deacons, ministers, counsellors, mentors, teachers, workers, and those who play active lead roles or lead in a formal way *[both male and female]* in the work of Christ.

Placing such greater emphasis is not really out of place, because God's words demand it.

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:48).

Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you (1 Timothy 4:16).

The challenge in placing such greater emphasis, is that we are not considering what we need to do, to help them achieve such status.

We are not considering the right kind of support we ought to provide for such leaders. Because in a general sense, we are all fellow workers in God's vineyard, we ought to support them.

As a result, of this lack of performing our responsibilities toward them, we fail to pray for them as we ought to.

This brings us to our text – **1 Thessalonians 5:25** - *Brethren, pray for us.*

Charles Itseghosimhe

We can see other reference scriptures:

2 Thessalonians 3:1 - *Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you.*

Colossians 4:3-4 - *meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.*

These scriptures reveal the aim of this sermon.

The aim of this sermon is to reveal to us that leaders (elders, deacons, ministers, counsellors, mentors, teachers, workers and those who play active lead roles or lead in a formal way *[both male and female]*) in the work of Christ:

- are not super-human, as many think, but they are human like others, who either work from the background or who do not participate in the work of Christ.
- are capable of being spiritually, physically or emotionally wounded.
- are capable of being tempted and can fall from the faith.
- should be encouraged to live right and be faithful in godly living. This requires building godly and progressive relationship with them, not destructive relationship.
- should not to be tempted by brethren.
- should be prayed for.

Exodus 32 tells us about Aaron, whom God appointed to assist Moses to lead the children of Israel.

Aaron yielded to pressures from some of the Israelites, to make a golden calf, as a god to them.

In **verse 25**, Moses saw that the people were unrestrained (*for Aaron had not restrained them, but made them naked to their shame among their enemies*).

Aaron, as a leader, was easily persuaded to do wrong; and when his stronger-minded and more gracious brother was absent, he became the willing tool of the idolatrous people.

He had not any principle, to stand on God's side, irrespective of the pressure.

The weakness and sin of Aaron caused the death of about three thousand men of Israel. The LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made (**verses 28 & 35**).

In **Galatians 2:11-14**, we read of another record of a great leader, apostle Peter.

Apostle Peter ate with the Gentiles, based on God's law that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love (**Galatians 5:6**).

But when Peter saw certain Jews who believed in circumcision as a standard of acceptance into Christianity, because he was afraid of them, he withdrew and separated himself from the Gentiles.

Here Peter lacked courage. He was easily frightened. He did not live up to that principle which the gospel taught, and which he had professed.

By his action of withdrawing from the Gentiles, others believed the lie that without circumcision, one cannot be regarded as a Christian.

When Peter separated from the Gentiles, other Jews who were with Peter, pretended that they did not eat with the said Gentiles, they were carried away by Peter's hypocrisy. Among those carried away by this hypocrisy, was the great benevolent brother Barnabas (**verse 13**).

You can see that from the era of the law of Moses to the Christian era, leaders of

God's people face a large number of dangers, both physical and spiritual, that can destroy tribes, priesthood, congregations, ministries and families, and even take the very lives of the leaders.

Both these leaders and everyone else need to understand this point, as it is vital to help strengthen the church to be able to fulfil her mission in the world.

Paul by God's grace, can be referred as a giant in prayers. But Paul, and other apostles and leaders, felt the need to ask for prayers from other brethren.

It is a character they have developed because of their understanding of the power of their ministries and the attacks from Satan.

Hebrews 13:18 - *pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably.*

Unfortunately, some Christians never get beyond praying for their own needs and their own concerns.

Sometimes, we hardly pray for the church to grow and be properly organized, or for the leaders to be efficient, focused and faithful to God or for the church work to be properly defined or for true love to manifests more in the church.

Paul challenged us (in **1 Thessalonians 5:25**, **2 Thessalonians 3:1** and **Colossians 4:3-4**) to move beyond ourselves into the otherness of prayer: interceding on behalf of other Christians.

Paul with so much emphasis, requested the Thessalonians and Colossians to pray for him and other leaders. Brethren pray for us! Pray for me and the gospel team.

Praying for each other reflects the true nature of Christianity. Isolation and separation are anti-Christ, in all areas, most especially in the area of supporting one another to grow in Christ and for God's word and work to spread.

Paul knew very well that there are many hidden or unsuspected dangers or difficulties and traps for leaders, in the ministry work.

Leaders are often surrounded by temptations and they are in great danger if they do not have the prayers of their people. Without those prayers, they will be likely to accomplish little or nothing in the cause of their God.

The apostles who enjoyed the Holy Spirit in inspiration and empowerment for extraordinary commission, believe that the prayers of brethren are a necessity in their lives and work.

The word "pray" is in the present tense indicating **continued** prayer.

True prayer flows from a loving heart filled with peace and progress.

Prayer challenges us to live what we pray for. If you pray for growth, you will be challenged to make efforts that support growth otherwise your prayer is faith without work. There is power in true prayers.

No one can do God's work without prayer. No one can go into ministry work and find fulfilment without the power of God.

Those who want prayer and who pray, understand that they are not sufficient in themselves to do God's work. They know they must depend on God to do it.

God requires that His people should pray for His leaders.

How can we expect God to send a message by a leader, whom we are interested in, yet failed to pray for him?

Apostle Paul used themselves to be a prayer point. His prayer request was not on material needs. He was even in prison and under stress.

Yet his request was for an opportunity for the word of God to spread with power; an opportunity for them to be empowered to speak as the Holy Spirit directs; an opportunity for them to be reflection of the word which they preach or will preach; and an opportunity for them to have clarity in their presentation of the gospel.

We have not completed our work of preaching the gospel to others until we have taught them in a way that they can understand it.

Evangelism (*door-to-door, by appointment, media – social/TV/radio*) is not evangelism in its full potentials - until the listeners can understand what is preached and take an action to submit to Jesus Christ.

Preachers sometimes talk over people's heads and then blame the unbelievers for not responding to the truth. We must pray for the gift of clarity in presenting the gospel!

Sometimes, we do not bother about the mental state of leaders. They face distracting and disturbing forces.

They need to be in proper mental mood because God's work too is mental work. There is a work of preparation for the pulpit, and a work of communication in the pulpit. The result in either case depends upon the atmosphere which surrounds the leader's soul.

Praying for such opportunities (*for the word of God to spread with power; for preachers to be empowered to speak as the Holy Spirit directs; for speakers to be reflection of the word which they preach or will preach; for preachers to have clarity in their presentation of the gospel*) sometimes can be frightening because God will surely make them available.

When we have a minister, an opportunity to work open-heartedly for the effectiveness of his work (to God's glory) - arises.

When we have a brother ordained as a deacon or elder, an opportunity to build constructive relationship with them for the efficiency of their work and for their faithfulness - arises.

When we have a counsellor, an opportunity to make their work impact on our lives, in line with God's will - arises.

When we get a job, an opportunity to spread the word, to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and to reflect the word - manifests.

Same thing applies, when we move in a new neighbourhood or when we face a challenging situation, like meeting a sick or bereaved or depressed colleague, friend or neighbour - opportunities arise for

compassion, love, counsel, benevolence and the gospel.

The charge remains - *brethren pray for us!*

A principle is revealed in this charge - praying for leaders is a reflection of our understanding of our role in the church and an indication that we are fulfilling God's purpose in our lives.

In companies, the success of a project depends largely on the teamwork of the personnel involved. In the military, the success of a war, depends strongly on the team of soldiers in the battlefield. In every marriage and families, the real growth lies in the teamwork of the parents and the children.

There is virtually no area of life that does not need teamwork. This includes the church. Part of our teamwork is praying for one another. This is something that everyone can do.

May be your schedule or circumstance (*beyond your control*) as a member does not allow you to directly participate in the church work - your valuable service can be found in praying for those who are active participants.

Teamwork is needed in the church. We should pray for one another; we can pray for one another.

Romans 15:30-32 - *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, 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, that I may come to you with joy by the will of God, and may be refreshed together with you.*

Paul did not claim to be a super-human above other apostles who are not in the gospel field or above brethren who may not be apostles. Neither did other true leaders in the ministry.

They did not see themselves as super-Christians who can do everything alone. They did not consider it to be below their status to call on non-apostles or non-church workers, or to request their prayers.

They were conscious of their limitations. They knew that intercessory

prayer will move God to do things for His glory.

James 4:2 - *you lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. **Yet you do not have because you do not ask.***

Paul, other true apostles and the gospel team, understand the power in asking. **Matthew 7:7** - *ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.*

If you are a leader (*under the context of our discussion*) and you think you don't need the prayers of other brethren for the faithfulness of your life and the efficiency of your ministry - then you have manifested pride and have doomed yourself to destruction.

Ministers, deacons, elders, song leaders, teachers, counsellors, ushers, group and committee lead, workers and so on - all stand in need of their people's prayers; and the more people pray fervently for them, the more good leaders they become, as God would have it, and the more benefit people may receive by their ministries.

They need to be encouraged to do right, live right and work right.

CONCLUSION

Brethren, leaders are human with similar emotions as others: they are open to the same temptations; their work is also difficult and tiring. They also face opposition or criticism. They are also exposed to dangers. They meet with bitter disappointments.

They can be in need too, even the need of prayers of Christians, even new converts.

Those who appear regularly before the church need the prayers of the church. Because such leaders are so likely to fail in some way, they need prayer so that they will be able to maintain a consistent testimony for the glory of Christ as they make effort to speak and reflect God's word.

As we pray for them, so we live in the form of what we prayed for them, by doing what needs to be done.