

April 8, 2015

The Concerned Spirit

Romans 1:9-10a (NASB), ***“For God, whom I serve in my spirit in the preaching of the gospel of His Son, is my witness as to how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers...”***

As hard as it is to fathom there are some who render very superficial service to God and they serve the Lord for selfish and me-centered reasons. In Romans 1:8-15 Paul gives us some characteristics of true spiritual service. The first one we looked at yesterday was found in verse 8 and it was that of a thankful heart which the apostle Paul had in abundance. The second characteristic then of sincere and genuine spiritual service is a concerned spirit. The apostle Paul exemplified this characteristic in his life. Paul was grateful for what had been done and what was being done in the name of the Lord, but he was also concerned deeply about balancing those with what still needed to be done.

It is here in today’s passage that Paul mentions the key phrase of verses 8-15, ***“God, whom I serve in my spirit.”*** The Greek word *latreuo* which is translated to mean ***“to serve”*** is always used in the New Testament of religious service and because of this it is sometimes translated to mean ***“worship.”*** The greatest worship a believer can offer to God is devoted, pure, and heartfelt ministry.

God centered service calls for the total and unreserved commitment of the believer. Paul served God with every last ounce of himself that he possessed. It all began with his ***“spirit”*** which flowed from a deep desire to honor God in his soul. In Romans 12:1-2 it says, ***“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*** The unrestrained commitment of the believer is achieved and was achieved by Paul because he viewed his life as ***“a living and holy sacrifice.”*** IN other words Paul understood that there was nothing more important in his life than being a living sacrifice to God. We can only do this though when we are ***“transformed by the renewing of”*** our minds through the daily consistent exposure to God’s inerrant word.

In 2 Timothy 1:3 Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy, ***“I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience.”*** Because Paul served the Lord with a sincere heart, he also then served the Lord with a clear conscience. Paul’s worship and his service were inextricably linked. His worship was an act of service and his service was an act or worship.

Paul’s primary service to God was ***“the preaching of the gospel of His Son.”*** This was the ministry to which God had called him and to which Paul gave every breath of his life. Not everyone is called to preach and teach but we are all called to serve and we are to serve with the

same intensity and commitment that Paul had. Paul goes on to explain though that his service didn't stop there it also included a deep, personal concern for everyone who believed in the "***gospel***," whether they had heard the gospel from him or from someone else. Paul demonstrates in this letter a deep concern for the brothers and sisters in Rome even though they were not converts because of his ministry but as a result of the ministry of others.

Perhaps because most of the readers of this letter would not have personally known Paul he calls the Lord as a "***witness***" to his sincere love and concern for their spiritual growth and maturity. Paul knew that God, who knows the motives and the sincerity of every heart, would testify "***as to how unceasingly***" Paul made "***mention***" of them "***always in***" his "***prayers.***"

Paul rejoiced and he gave thanks to God for their faithfulness and he also understood that apart from God's continuing provision even strong faith falters. This is why these brothers and sisters were always in his prayers. We all for different reasons need the prayer support of our fellow believers.

Paul constantly offered prayers for his fellow believers, both those whom he knew personally and those whom he didn't. In this passage he doesn't state what the particular divine petitions that he made were but we can assume that they were very similar to what he prayed for in other letters. One of the greatest examples of this is found in Ephesians 3:14-19, "***For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to the fullness of God.***"

Now that is a prayer! Paul prayed for the brothers and sisters at Ephesus that they would be strengthened by the Holy Spirit, that Christ would be at home in their hearts, that they would be filled with God's own love, and that they would be made perfect in His truth and likeness.

The content of all of Paul's prayers was deeply spiritual. He prayed for individual brothers and sisters and he also prayed for groups of believers in the different churches and in different regions. Paul prayed that their hearts would be unified with the heart of God, and that their knowledge of His Word would be complete, and that their obedience to God's will would be made perfect. The depth and intensity of our prayers is a fairly accurate measure of the depth and intensity of our concern.

Let's commit anew to support each other in prayer and not just prayer about the daily concerns of life: bills, family, kids, aches and pains. Let us pray for each other as Paul prayed for so many that our hearts would be unified with God, that our knowledge of His word would grow, and that we would be obedient to God's will.