



The Secret Prayers of a Leader

By Rev. Bong Baylon

Eugene Peterson once said, “Every profession has sins to which it is especially liable.” I think Christian leaders are guilty as well. Prayer is one area where we are prone to sin inadvertently. It is so much a part of our

profession – we’re so used to doing it as Christian leaders, and everyone is requesting us to pray – that we tend to be unaware especially when we are trivializing it. We treat prayer as something less than holy or sacred; we assume that we are just talking to ourselves or to the people around us, instead of to the Holy and Righteous God. We must remember that prayer is dangerous, for we are approaching the very throne of God. We cannot treat it as something common or ordinary. We must be careful when we pray, for it reveals the true condition of our hearts.

The apostle Paul values prayer. It is central to his calling as a Christian leader. He approaches it with utmost seriousness. In the Book of Ephesians he talks a lot about his prayer life. With graciousness and humility, he reveals his secret prayers to us. He reveals his heart in his prayers, and I think it will help us a lot as Christian leaders if we can learn from him how to pray.

There are three characteristics to his prayers...

HE PRAYS FOR PERSONAL FAITH TO REALLY DEEPEN AMONG THOSE HE LEADS

In Ephesians 1:15-17, he says, “For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God’s people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” I believe this is an awesome prayer, especially since he is addressing believers already. He is saying here that he believes that there is more to the Christian life than just making a one-time transaction. Believing in Jesus is committing yourself to follow Him, to know Him better as a result. Accepting Him as Savior and Lord is just the beginning; it is not the end of the story.

So much of our theology is revealed in our prayers. May we pray like this for those the Lord entrusts to us to lead. Let us not be content in just seeing converts; let us make disciples instead! Let us pray that our disciples will deepen their faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

HE PRAYS FOR REAL HOPE TO BE STRENGTHENED AMONG THOSE HE LEADS

In addition, Paul says in Ephesians 1:18-23, “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

In praying for people to grow deep in their faith, he knows how that process can often lead to frustration. Sin is no laughing matter. There’s a strong possibility that, left to one’s resources, a Christian can easily get discouraged and give up. But Paul prays for real hope to fill the hearts of those he leads. This is the prayer of a true Christian leader, for he leads with and in hope. He knows that the joyful expectation of victory in Christ is what will keep a Christ follower from giving up altogether.

HE PRAYS FOR DIVINE LOVE TO BREAK ALL BARRIERS AMONG THOSE HE LEADS

Finally, Paul says in Ephesians 3:14-19, “For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Paul knew very well the common Jewish tendency to be close-minded and exclusive, quite unlike the inclusive love of God, which has been revealed in Christ. Therefore, he prays for those he leads, that they may be filled with God’s all-encompassing love instead, a love that embraces both Jew and Gentile alike. Salvation is for all, not just for the few. This is what Paul prays – a love that knows no boundaries and breaks all man-made walls.

CONCLUSION

What can we say about Paul's secret prayers? They are the kind of prayers that all Christian leaders must learn to pray. Not the trivial kind, but the kind that truly reflects the true heart of God. Ultimately, what a leader prays in secret will define his leadership.