

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

I have heard of your faith

Pastor Hank French

I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers (Ephesians 1:15-16).

When I was a seminary student, my faculty advisor was Professor Roy Harrisville. Once a week all of his advisees would gather in his office to talk about our studies and the ministry we were preparing for. Professor Harrisville enjoyed telling us—usually quite firmly—what to do and what to expect.

I can still remember the day when he told us to open the Bible to Ephesians 1:15-16. He had one of us read it out loud and then—firmly—told us: “Do it! Always give thanks to God for the people in your congregation—even the hard-to-get-along-with-ones! And always pray for everyone in your congregation—especially that God would bless them in every way they needed God’s blessing. Do it and you will be the pastor they need; don’t do it and you won’t last.”

In my 45 years of ordained ministry, I have followed his advice. I have served in many different churches as a pastor and in two seminaries as a professor and praying for the members of my different churches and for my students has been a source of great blessing for me. It has been a good reminder that ministry is not about the minister; it is about the people of God.

In my experience, any Christian who takes Professor Harrisville’s advice and gives regular thanks for the people in their lives and repeatedly asks God to bless them in whatever way they need to be blessed find themselves being richly blessed. The happiest and most peaceful people I know are the grateful, praying people who channel God’s love and grace to others.

Prayer: Holy God, this day may I be a channel of your love and grace through gratitude and prayer for others. Amen.