

PATTERSON FAMILY PRAYER LETTER (Feb. 1, 2018)

Dear Friends in Christ, *at Sterling Berman,*

Warmest greetings from another cold day here! The abundant snow (with big snow drifts) is beautiful! But, as most of you probably know, I don't function so well in bitterly cold weather! I recently read a comment I could both chuckle with and agree with. Someone said, "The thing I really like about this very cold weather is how good it makes a warm room and a good heater feel when you come back inside!" :-)
But it is all the Lord's good gift! And so we rejoice in Him and His care in every varied circumstance of life! **Thank you for your faithful prayers and encouragement and your generous support! Thank you again for taking time to read my Prayer Letter and to join me in praise and prayer to our ever - faithful, loving Lord!** Here are a few items for which I would ask you to pray:

- About the time you get my letter, our 12 member ministry team will be in Jamaica doing Bible Quizzing and one - on - one ministry in at least 12 public schools! Their trip extends from Feb. 4th through 11th. My precious daughter, Frances, is again on the team! She loves all youth, all people who need the Lord and His love. She has a special love for the Jamaicans! This is her 9th year to go there to share God's truth and love! The Quiz teams there are memorizing and Quizzing over I John. They are coached by teachers in these public schools! (How wonderful is that?!!) Pray for safety and fun and above all for lasting spiritual impact in the lives of Jamaicans and in the lives of our great team members!
- Please keep praying for my ministry at the Sterling Prison. As happens there from time to time, there has been an attack by an offender on an officer. This caused 10 days of "lock-down" this month on the medium security side of the prison. (which is where I carry on most of my ministry) This, as you would imagine, has increased the degree of tension in the minds and hearts of both inmates and officers. So, please pray for peace and safety! Pray for an out-pouring of our Lord's peace-making love and grace! Pray for me during all this as I have opportunities to minister God's truth, grace and love to both inmates and staff.
- My weekly Bible study on the minimum security side of the prison continues to go really well. I wish you could sit in the group and witness the lively discussion and question and answer times there! Often, as you will recall, I ask for prayer for men from this group who are close to their release date. This month, I especially ask prayer for a quiet, slender 73 year old black man in this group who will be leaving soon. He has become a "favorite" class member because, by his bright countenance and smiles and nods, week after week, I can tell he is really "with me"! Recently, in a study I entitled "Listen to Jesus", we were studying passages where Jesus said, "take heed how you hear" etc. I emphasized that as we daily, carefully read and prayerfully meditate on God's Word, we should "listen" to what the Holy Spirit is "saying" etc. We had 90 minutes of Bible reading - study with profitable discussion and questions. As Willie was leaving the room that evening, he took hold of my arm at the door. His face was "troubled and distressed"! He said, "Chaplain, would you please pray for me? My time in here is getting short and I don't want to fall away from the Lord! But I can't read!" An attentive white brother in Christ was near us. He overheard. He assured Willie, "Willie, I

and others in our Living Unit will read to you! I will check out for you CDs that are a recording of the Scriptures being read aloud by a good reader! 2 weeks later, I wish you could have heard the lengthy, joyful sharing from quiet Willie! He shared with a glowing face and tear filled eyes! He shared with our Bible study group how much he is being blessed as men reach out to him and share with him and read to him and encourage him! Pray for Willie! His health is not very good. He will not be surrounded by these men when he gets out soon! Pray that God will surround him with others on the outside who will keep encouraging and edifying him with God's truth, grace and love!

- I read a study recently that revealed that in our nation's prison population, the inmates read, on average, at about a 3rd grade level. But many are very good readers! Pray that I and others can remember that! Pray that more and more of them will enroll in GED classes while they are incarcerated. Pray that they will work hard at the desperately needed ability to read well! Pray that I and they will help others read better! All so that we can understand and apply the life - transforming, soul - nourishing, joy - producing truth of God's living and enduring Word!
- As many of you know, I use good hymns as a key part of my own daily devotional times with the Lord. Along with His Word, they are greatly used by Him to guide my prayers and deepen my faith. In closing this month's letter, here is one that greatly blessed me in that way this very morning! It is entitled, "He Will Hold Me Fast". I hope it will bless you!

HE WILL HOLD ME FAST

When I fear my faith will fail, Christ will hold me fast;
When the Tempter would prevail, He will hold me fast!
I could never keep my hold through life's fearful path,
For my love is often cold; He must hold me fast!

Those He saves are His delight! Christ will hold me fast!
[I am] Precious in His holy sight, He will hold me fast!
He'll not let my soul be lost - His promises shall last!
Bought by Him at such a cost! He will hold me fast!

For my life, He bled and died; Christ will hold me fast!
[God's] Justice has been satisfied; He will hold me fast!
Raised with Him to endless life, He will hold me fast!
'Til my faith is turned to sight, when He comes at last!

[Yes!] He will hold me fast; He will hold me fast -
Since my Savior loves me so, He will hold me fast!

Gratefully with you in His amazing love and sustaining grace,

Dean

Dean Patterson and family, I Cor. 15:57-58