

LEARNING FROM PAUL'S PRAYERS

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. There is a tendency for our prayers to be repetitious – just repeating the same words over and over each time we pray – perhaps because we do not think about it, do not plan, or have not learned to pray as well as we should, and therefore need to be taught.
2. That we as disciples of Jesus need to be taught to pray is evident from the fact that he had to teach his disciples to pray according to Mt.6:5-13, wherein he taught them both what not to do and what to do in their prayer-life. Cf. Lk.11:1-13.
3. Since our topic for study is “Learning From Paul’s Prayers,” we remind you of what he said in 1Cor.11:1 and Phil.4:9.
 - a. 1Cor.11:1: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”
 - b. Phil.4:9: “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”
4. Since Paul, as did Jesus, taught by both word and deed, or by example, in this lesson I’m suggesting and emphasizing, for the benefit of all of us, young and old, that we can, even need to, learn about prayer from Paul’s prayers recorded in the N.T.
 - a. This should be especially important for the young men who are just beginning to lead in public prayer.
 - b. This is important because they, so often, learn from the older men, or simply follow the example of the older men and repeat the prayers they hear from such examples.
 - c. On thing for sure, we will be learning from one who, as a disciple and an Apostle of Christ, certainly knew how to pray.
5. From Paul’s example in prayer we may learn such things as:
 - a. To whom to pray.
 - b. Through whom to pray.
 - c. For whom to pray.
 - d. Things for which we should pray, or things which are the proper objects of our prayers.
 - e. And perhaps even why we should pray, as well as the language of prayer.

II. DISCUSSION

A. In ROM 1:8-12, in praying for the saints at Rome, Paul:

1. Directed his prayer to God through Jesus Christ, V.8a.
2. To God through Jesus Christ he prayed for all the saints at Rome, giving thanks to God for the fact that their “faith is spoken of throughout the whole world,” V.8b.
 - a. His prayer was for the faith of all the saints at Rome, not just for the elders, or the deacons, or the preacher –for one and all – male and female¹
3. He claimed God as his witness that his praying for them was personal and constant, V.9.
4. His prayer included making a three-fold request:
 - a. That he might be prospered by the will of God to come to them, V.10
 - b. That he might see them in order that he might “impart unto them some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established,” V.11
 - c. That they – he and they – may be comforted in each other’s faith, or enjoy comfort in each other by their mutual faith, V.12.
5. Learn: Prayer is to be directed to God through Jesus Christ; the faith of all saints is a proper object of prayer; prayer for faithful saints should be personal and constant; prayer is subject to the will of God; mutual benefits are the goal of prayer.

B. In Rom.10:1-4 his heart’s desire and prayer to God

1. Was “for Israel (Paul’s kinsmen according to the flesh, 9:3), that they might be saved,” V.1.
2. His prayer to this end on their behalf was necessitated because, though they had a zeal for God, they were lost in their unbelief and ignorance of God’s righteousness, that is, of God’s means of making men righteous, Vv.2,3. Cf. Rom.1:16,17; 3:20-22.
3. Their zeal without knowledge resulted in their attempt to establish their own righteousness and refusing to believe and submit to God’s righteousness – thus lost in sin.
4. The object of his prayer is that they may yet believe and obey the gospel as the whole of Ch.10 necessarily implies.

5. Learn: Praying for the lost that they may repent and obey the gospel is a proper object of prayer; praying for the salvation of those who continue in the state of zeal without knowledge, thus turning their ear from hearing the law of God, is not the proper object of acceptable prayer. Cf. Prov.28:9.

C. In Rom.15:30-33 Paul prayed

1. That the saints at Rome “strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,” that is, that they join him in a deeply earnest effort at prayer on his behalf, V.30.
2. His solemn request that they strive together with him in their prayers for him is to the end, aim or purpose, “that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea,” or from the enemies of truth, V.31a.
3. Also “that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints,” V.31b – that is, the relief for the needy Jewish saints contributed by Gentile believers. Cf. Vv.25-27.
4. Furthermore, he prayed that he may come with joy by the will of God (subject to the will of God), and may with you, or together with you, find rest, V.32.
5. Learn: praying for saints to strive together in prayer for one another and on behalf of each other is an object of scriptural prayer; such praying for each other to aid in reaching common spiritual goals is a thing of acceptable prayer; that prayer is always subject to the will of God to whom it is addressed.

D. In 1Cor.1:4-8 Paul prayed to God for the Corinthian saints wherein

1. He offered thanks to God for God’s grace given to them by Jesus Christ, V.4.
2. He gave thanks to God that by his grace they were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed, made firm, established, or made secure, in them, in the interest of their eternal salvation at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, Vv.5-8.
3. Learn: That offering thanks for the gift of God’s grace by Jesus Christ and its work in the life of the saint is a proper object of prayer.

E. In Eph.1:15-21 Paul prayed to God for the Ephesian Christians, wherein he said:

1. He continually gave thanks for them and prayed: “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory:
 - a. May give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened
 - b. That ye may know what is the hope of his calling, or the hope to which he calls you
 - c. And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, or how gloriously rich God’s portion in his people is
 - d. And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to believers, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand, or how surpassingly great is his power for believers, measured by his tremendously mighty power when he raised Christ from the dead, and seated him at his right hand in heaven, for above even other government, authority, power, and dominion, yea, for above every other title that can be conferred, not only in this world but in the world to come.
2. Learn: That giving thanks for God’s revelation to us, enlightening the eyes of our understanding, making it possible for believers to know the hope to which they are called, what the glorious inheritance of God is, how surpassingly great is God’s power, as well as how it is measured and manifested, is the object of prayer to God.

F. In Eph.6:19,20 Paul asked that the Ephesians pray for him, asking:

1. That utterance may be given unto me
2. That I may open my mouth boldly
3. To make known the mystery of the gospel
4. That I, as an ambassador of Christ in bonds, may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.
5. Learn: Asking for such help and praying for others to be granted such help in time of need is a proper object of prayer.

E. In Phil.1:3-11 Paul offered continual thanks to God and prayed for them making request with joy:

1. For their fellowship with him in the gospel, V.5. Cf. 2:25; 4:10-18.
2. He prayed that their love would abound yet more and more, directed by fuller knowledge and keener insight, V.9.
3. That they would always approve the better things, have a proper sense of what is vital, or of right things, V.10a.
4. That they might be sincere and blameless till the day of Christ, or be faithful till the end, V.10b.
5. That they might be filled with or abounding in the fruits of righteousness, which are by, or with the help of, Jesus Christ, unto God's glory and praise, V.11.
6. Learn: The proper objects of prayer are:
 - a. Giving thanks for and praying for the saints fellowship in the gospel, sharing in the support of preaching the gospel.
 - b. Giving thanks for the love of the saints and praying for it to abound more and more, guided by truth in the practice of righteousness.
 - c. Praying for the continued faithfulness of believers till the very end.

H. In Col.1:3-11 Paul gave thanks to God and prayed continually for the Colossian saints.

1. He gave thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus, V.4a; Cf. 2Tim.1:3-5.
2. For the love they had for all the saints, Vv.4b,8. (the love with which the Spirit had awakened or inspired in them)
3. For their hope of what is laid up for them in heaven, of which they had learned in the word of the truth of the gospel, V.5.
4. He prayed that they might be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and understanding, V.9.
5. That they might walk (live) worthy of the Lord to God's full satisfaction, being fruitful in every good work, growing continually in fuller knowledge of God, V.10.
6. That they thereby be strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, unto all patience or endurance and

longsuffering with joyfulness, or every sort of joyful endurance and forbearance, V.11.

7. Learn: The proper object of scriptural prayer is prayer:
 - a. For the saints faith in Christ Jesus.
 - b. For their love for one another.
 - c. For their hope of heaven.
 - d. For saints to be filled with and to grow in the knowledge of God's will.
 - e. For their walking worthy of the Lord.
 - f. That saints may be strengthened in every sort of joyful endurance and forbearance.

I. In 1Thes.1:2,3 Paul offered thanks to God for the saints at Thessalonica and prayed for them remembering without ceasing:

1. Their work of faith, V.3a.
2. Their labor (toiling) of love, V.3b.
3. Their patience of (or enduring hope) in our Lord Jesus Christ, V.3c.
4. Learn: The saints working faith; their toiling love; their joyful endurance and forbearance – are all objects of scriptural prayer.

J. In 1Thes.3:9-13 Paul again expressed thanks to God for the saints in Thessalonica and prayer for them

1. Saying, in effect, in V.9, in view of what he wrote in Vv.7,8, “For how can I render God enough thanks for you, for all the joy I have on account of you in the presence of God.”
2. That the Lord would make them increase and abound or overflow in love one toward another, and toward all men, V.12. Cf. 4:9,10.
3. That God may stablish your hearts in holiness when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints, V.13.
4. Learn: The proper object of prayer is:
 - a. Giving thanks for the joy shared with fellow-saints.
 - b. Praying that all saints increase and abound or overflow in love one toward one another and for all men.
 - c. Praying for the continued faithfulness and eternal salvation of believers.

K. In 2Thes.3:1,2 Paul prayed asking that the saints pray for him

1. That the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, or continue to spread and prove its glorious power (lit. continue to run and be glorified), V.1.
2. That he would be delivered from unreasonable (unprincipled) and wicked man: for not all men have faith, V.2.
3. Learn: It's right and proper to pray for the preaching and spread of the word of God; and for the protection and deliverance of its messengers.

L. In 1Tim.2:1-4 Paul taught that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks

1. Should be made:
 - a. For all men
 - b. For kings
 - c. And for all that are in authority, V.1.
2. The stated purpose: that we, as God's people, may lead quiet and peaceful lives in all godliness and honesty, V.2.
3. He said this is the right thing to do because it please God our Savior, who would have all men to be saved by coming to a knowledge of the truth, Vv.3,4.
4. Learn: It is right and the proper object of prayer:
 - a. To pray for civil authorities.
 - b. For all men.
 - c. That all men come to a knowledge of the truth in order to be saved.

M. In 2Tim.1:16-18 Paul, on behalf of Onesiphorus, prayed that the Lord:

1. Would give or show mercy to the house or family of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed or cheered me, and was not ashamed of the chains I wore, V.16.
2. Would grant unto him that he may find mercy (or be granted eternal reward) of the Lord in that day, V.18. Cf. Jude 21.
3. Learn: That praying for an individual saint in the interest of his good deeds to another saint is proper; that praying for divine

blessings to granted to the family of such a saint is also in order.

N. In 2Tim.4:14-16 Paul prayed

1. That Alexander the coppersmith, who did Paul much evil, and who greatly without or opposed his teaching, would be rewarded by the Lord according to his works, Vv.14,16. Cf. Eccl.12:13,14; Rom.2:6; 2Cor.5:10.
2. For those who, at his first answer or verbal defense in court, forsook him, Paul prayed to God “that it may not be laid to their charge,” V.16. Cf. Lk.23:34; Ac.7:59,60.
3. Learn: That recognition of sinful actions and the Lord’s vengeance for such is the proper object of prayer; that compassionate prayer with a desire to seek the sinners forgiveness is proper.

O. Also in all of Paul’s Epistles from 1Cor. through Philemon, at the beginning and the end of each one, he offers in prayer the following words or their equivalent: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.”

1. Therefore, without a doubt, it is always in order to pray for God’s grace and peace to abide with us.

III. CONCLUSION

1. Following Paul’s example and teaching in prayer is no doubt an excellent means of learning much about prayer; such as:
 - a. To whom to pray.
 - b. Through whom to pray.
 - c. For whom to pray.
 - d. Things for which we should pray, or things that are the proper objects of prayer.
 - e. And perhaps even why we should pray, as well as the language of prayer.
2. Remember his words in 1Cor.11:1 and Phil.4:9.