

PRAYING WITH PAUL

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. What do our prayers say about us? Paul affirmed that, in some sense, we don't always know how to pray as we ought: "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought..." Rom.8:26a.
2. We might even grow discouraged to the point that we fail to pray altogether. Cf. Lk.18:1: "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;"
3. "Lord, teach us to pray," the disciple asked, Lk.11:1. When the disciples had heard Jesus pray, their need for this spiritual instruction became apparent.
4. What a thrilling thing it is to realize that we can grow in this area of acute need – One I have always felt the need for!
5. Isn't it wonderful that we have someone of deep spiritual understanding, someone in whom we can have absolute trust, personally teach and/or guide us so that we might pray more as we ought?
6. In fact, we have two such individuals. One is Jesus Christ; the other is the Apostle Paul. In this lesson we will be studying Paul.
7. Paul's inspired letters to churches and individuals are filled with references to personal prayers; and though he has been dead for many centuries, the record of his prayers survives in God's living and active word. Cf. Heb.4:12: "For the word of God is living, and active..." (ASV).
8. We can sit at the Apostle's feet and learn to pray more as we should, praying the substance of his prayers in relation to our spiritual needs and that of others.
9. Now study with me just one of his prayers: that of 2Th.1:11,12 (ESV) "*To this end we pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*"
10. Take now of what we learn from praying with Paul from this prayer in these two verses.

II. DISCUSSION

A. PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE, OR THAT OUT OF WHICH HE PRAYED FOR THEM.

1. Paul's prayer extends from the context in which he expressed gratitude for their faith, practice and hope in anticipation of the Lord's return. See it in Vv.2-10.
2. So what all was on Paul's mind as he prayed for them? He regularly expressed gratitude for the Thessalonians and confidence in God.
3. His gratitude for this young church resulted from their tremendous growth in faith and love, coupled with their resiliency, their faith having been severely tested by persecutions and afflictions. See Ac.17.
4. Additionally, Paul was confident that God would vindicate them and that Jesus Christ would return in glory.
5. Their sacrifices would not be in vain. With humility and gratitude they realized that their hope rested on "the grace of God and the Lord Jesus Christ," V.12.
6. Paul's perspective in his prayer for them grew out of his contemplation of their strong spirituality, which is evidenced by their severely tested faith, their hope and practice of faithfulness under persecution and tribulation.

B. PAUL'S PETITION

1. Paul's petition to God was for their further spiritual growth.
 - a. Thus he prayed specifically for them and what they needed; not just some general thought.
 - b. They needed to continually develop inasmuch as the world would continue fighting them.
 - c. God's help was necessary, which Paul knew. So he prayed for them "that God may count you worthy of your calling," V.11.
 - (1) For that to happen, they would have to remain faithful in and under all circumstances.
 - (2) Therefore, this in effect, is what Paul is praying for on their behalf.

- d. God called them by or through the gospel of Christ, and that calling required of them a firm commitment to the truth and a life of sanctification. Cf. 2:13-15.
- 2. The second part of Paul's petition on their behalf was that God "may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power," V.11.
 - a. Through inspired teaching and through the leaven of brethren's influence, Paul knew that God could and would work in their lives so that their good intentions, manifested by their actions, could come to full bloom, so that every work of faith that was started may find full expression in trust and obedience throughout their lives.
 - b. This would result in these brethren walking worthy of their calling. See Eph.4:1-3.

C. PAUL'S PURPOSE IN THIS PRAYER.

- 1. Paul's prayer involved a specified purpose: "That the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you," V.12a.
 - a. They had been pagans.
 - b. They came to know and to serve the true and living God and his Son Jesus Christ, according to 1Th.1:9,10.
 - c. They learned of salvation and sanctification.
 - d. They learned that Jesus Christ would return.
 - e. They lived in faith according to the truth in Christ Jesus with their lives on the line.
 - f. Their radiant faith in Christ reflected God's glory. Cf. Mt.5:13-16.
- 2. Furthermore, Paul prays, "and you in him."
 - a. Their spiritual progress would result in their own glorification.
 - b. They would be vindicated; they would be saved eternally upon Christ's return.
 - c. Their hope was "in him." The one and only one in who there is salvation, Ac.4:12; 2Tim.2:10.

III. CONCLUSION

- 1. What can *we* learn from praying with Paul?

2. First, we need God's help to complete our journey to heaven and eternal salvation. We *must* humbly depend on him.
3. Second, we *must* finish our works of faith. Christianity is not an ideology; it is "Christ in you" and "you in him" producing verifiable results – spiritually beneficial actions and a Christ – like life resulting from faith in the Father and the Son. Cf. Heb.11:6; Jno.8:24; 17:3.
4. And finally, we *must* realize that the foundation for humble dependence on God and works of faith are personal gratitude to God and to Jesus Christ for saving us and confidence that he will do what he has promised (i.e., help us in this life and vindicate us at the return of Jesus Christ. Cf. 2Pet.1:9-11; 3:9.

(Credit to: Jason Jackson, Christian Courier, November 2010, pp.2,3)