

Sunday, May 30, 2010—Great Lakes Grace Bible Conference—How to Pray: The Pauline Prayer Paradigm Practically Applied

Introduction

- Last night we outlined a basic structure for prayer during the dispensation of Grace.
 - Pray without ceasing
 - Peace with God
 - Indwelling Holy Spirit
 - Remain instant in prayer (Romans 12:12)
 - If you have a concern pray about it (Philippians 4:6)
 - Holy Spirit, written Word, Living Word (Jesus Christ) all make intercession on your behalf
 - Intercession results in the peace of God keep our heart and mind
- This morning I want to give you some practical examples applying Paul's prayer model.

Instant Prayer in Action

- Think for a moment about how many people and how many churches Paul had to pray for. Paul's habit must have been that as he thought of someone, he would instantly make mention of them to God. It may have been a short one-sentence prayer or perhaps more, but it seems certain that Paul didn't stop and pray an hour or so for each person every day.
- Philippians 1:3—upon every remembrance of you
- II Timothy 1:3—remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day
- Romans 1:9—make mention of you in my prayers
- Ephesians 1:16—making mention of you in my prayers
- I Thessalonians 1:2—making mention of you in our prayers
- Philemon 4—making mention of thee always in my prayers
- Paul's epistles confirm that Paul did not pray for people only when they needed prayer. Throughout his letters we see Paul praying for the member of Christ's church each time he heard reports of their love and faith, good report, reports that they were doing well. He didn't wait for prayer requests; instead he prayed a short prayer, "making mention of them" whenever they came to mind. To think of them was to pray for them.
- How greatly would such an approach to prayer for others and our church revolutionize our lives and our assembly?

The Order of Prayer

- I Timothy 2:1-2, 8-- While ever concern or worry is an instant call to prayer. Paul also teaches that we should pray for others regularly regardless of our own situations.
 - Supplications—need, want, privation, a seeking, asking, or entreating of God or man.
 - Philippians 1:4—“requests”
 - Intercessions—a request concerning others on their behalf
 - Giving of Thanks—thankfulness, to give thanks
- Why should we pray for our leaders? “That we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” Paul wrote these words from prison on the eve of the first major Roman persecution of Christians under Nero as he understood the hindrance leaders could be to the Gospels flowing in any area, and the power they had to obstruct even those living honest and godly lives.
- Almost everywhere Paul mentions prayer in his letters; he also discusses thanksgiving, as if the two were inseparable. While prayer may start with supplications, and then move on to intercessions, for Paul, time in prayer always began and ended with thanksgiving.
- Colossians 4:2—watch in the same with thanksgiving

Learning How to Pray from Paul’s Example

- As we saw last night, the will of God is found in the Word of God. This reality is what makes the prayers of Paul recorded in Scripture so precious. Paul wrote his letters to the churches through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Therefore, his prayers in these letters are literally the words of the Holy Spirit praying through Paul.
- For each thing the Holy Spirit taught through Paul, He quickened a spiritual muscle within the believer—a muscle that would be exercised and trained by reading Paul’s epistles.
- Simple stated, we have in black and white on the pages of Scriptures through the pen of the Apostle Paul, God the Holy Spirit’s prayers for the Body of Christ.
- Studying the prayers of Paul contains the potential to teach us how to pray and unleash a powerful working in our lives as believers.
- Ephesians 1:15-23—Paul’s prayer is the Ephesians would be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they might:
 - Know God
 - Know what is the hope of their calling
 - Know the riches of the glory of **his** inheritance in the saints
 - Know the exceeding greatness of his power toward us-ward who believe

- The goal of Paul's prayer is that the Ephesians would be given (bestowed, granted, or supplied) with a spirit sensitive mind that is inundated with the wisdom and revelation essential for knowing God.
- Ephesians 3:14-21—According to God the Father's riches in glory Paul prays that the Ephesians would be:
 - Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man
 - Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith
 - Be rooted and grounded in love might be able to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height and know the love of Christ which passeth all knowledge
 - Filled with all the fullness of God
- Ephesians 3:14, 16—Notice that in verse 14 Paul prays to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that in verse 16 the Spirit would strengthen us with might in our inner man.
- It is imperative that you understand that this mighty strengthening is going to occur in your inner man not your outward man.
- Today in the Dispensation of Grace God is doing something different than he was in time past he has concluded Israel his physical earthly people in unbelief and is forming the Church the body of Christ. A new spiritual heavenly agency. Therefore God deals with his body differently from how he dealt with Israel in the past.
 - II Corinthians 5:16—we don't have a physical fleshly relationship with Christ the way Israel did in time past. Rather we have a spiritual relationship with our heavenly father.
 - Ephesians 1:3—our blessings are all given to us by Christ but they are spiritual in nature not physical. That is why Paul prays that our inward man would be strengthened by the Spirit.
- As a result, some have accused us teaching that God is not working in your life.
 - Philippians 2:13--God is at work today in you that believe. It is an inner man work so that the life of Jesus Christ can be shown forth in your outer man.
 - II Corinthians 4:10-11—when we walk by faith in who God has made in Jesus Christ it becomes his life that is being lived out through us. It is the life of Christ being made manifest in our mortal flesh.
 - I Thessalonians 2:13—it is faith in the words on page that activates the power of God in your inner man.
- Philippians 1:9-11—Paul's prayer on behalf of the Philippians is that there love may abound more and more in knowledge and judgment so that they might:
 - Approve things that are excellent
 - Be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ
 - Filled with all the fruits of righteousness
- Colossians 1:9-14—Since the day Paul heard of their love in the Spirit in verse 8 he did not cease to pray for the Colossians that they might:

- Be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding
 - Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing
 - Be fruitful in every good work
 - Increasing in the knowledge of God
 - Strengthened with all might according to his glorious power unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness
 - Giving thanks unto the father
- Romans 15:5-6—Once again there are some things that Paul wants God the Father to grant or give unto the Romans.
 - likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus
 - with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ
 - Rome was the New York City of its day, a hodgepodge of culture, commerce, government, and art. People came from all over the known world to settle there. At the same time people from various backgrounds, races, and cultures were coming to Christ. How were they to all get along with one another enough to come together as one church to worship God, evangelize, teach the Bible, and expand the Body of Christ?
 - Romans 14—contains a couple of examples of the divisions over issues that existed within the Roman church.
 - Romans 14:1-4—meats
 - Romans 14:5-6—esteeming one day as better than another
 - Romans 14:14-15, 17, 19—the ultimate question ought to be does it edify. If it does not edify it should not be practiced.
 - Romans 15:1-2—the first thing that we need to understand about being likeminded in Christ is that we are going to have to put aside some of our own desires and wishes for the sake of our fellow saints.
 - Philippians 2:1-4
 - The key to being likeminded is not agreeing more or arguing less, rather it rests in letting the word of Christ dwell in us richly thereby allowing us to think and operate with the mind of Christ.

Conclusion

- Observations:
 - Everything single thing that Paul prays for the churches in spiritual in nature and concerns their inner man.
 - Rather than praying for stuff. Paul prays that the saints would be patient and learn how to be content regardless of their physical state.

- Philippians 4:6-7—Paul’s paradigm for prayer is simple: Have a concern? Pray right then and there. Notice that the promise is not that you will get everything you ask for. Rather that the peace of God will keep you heart and mind. Keep means to guard or the set a military watch over your heart and mind.
- The practical working of this verse is determined by your thought life. Your emotions will respond to what you think about. If you think on the things in verse 8 you will not be full of care in verse 6. Knowing that the peace of God which comes from the God of peace which passes understanding will keep your heart and mind.
- We have only scratched the surface this weekend when it comes to the issue of Pauline prayer. I have tried to explain how we should pray rather than how we should not pray.
- I would like to encourage all of you to pick up The Index of Pauline Prayer from my information table and study through all of Paul’s prayers on your own time.
- Remember these are more than just Paul’s prayers for the church’s they are the Holy Spirit’s prayers for the body of Christ. We need to make Paul’s prayers our prayers.