



Thinking About Prayer

By

Mark McGee

“Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver *us*, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift *granted* to us through many.” 2 Corinthians 1:9-11

Paul went through some tough times during his ministry. Listen to what he told the Corinthians.

“For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life.” 2 Corinthians 1:8

Paul was a human being. He faced tough times just like us. He experienced stress and pressure, just like us. He faced pressure that was beyond his ability to endure, just like us. He even despaired of life itself, just like us. But Paul realized what was happening to him was part of a larger spiritual plan for his life. He knew it was happening that he might not rely on himself but on Christ Who lived “in” him. Paul was not a superman, but he was a spiritually wise man. He knew God was in him and with him every step of his journey. Paul knew God loved him. He knew God was “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.”

Paul also knew the power of prayer. He knew that God used the prayers of His children to support and help other believers in need. Paul wrote: “On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us...” Paul knew God had and would continue to deliver him in his time of trial. Paul also knew the Corinthians were praying for him and he connected those prayers to God’s continual deliverance: “as you help us by your prayers.” Paul knew God granted His gracious favor to him “in answer to the prayers of many.”

God does not do His Work of Grace in a vacuum. He doesn’t pick just a few people to participate in His Mighty Work. He lets **every believer** play an important part. God invites each of us to pray for one another and play a vital role in the great things He is doing.

One of the greatest things one person can do for another is **pray**. Listen to what Paul wrote about the importance of the ministry (service) of prayer.

“Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer.” Romans 12:12

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I

ought to speak.” Colossians 4:2-4

“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” 2 Corinthians 9:14

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, *and* giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.” 1 Timothy 2:1-2

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints—and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:18-20

“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with

joy.” Colossians 1:9-11

“Now I beg you, brethren, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and through the love of the Spirit, that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me.” Romans 15:30

“But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you.” Philemon 1:22

“Epaphras, who is *one* of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.” Colossians 4:12

“For what thanks can we render to God for you, for all the joy with which we rejoice for your sake before our God, night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?” 1 Thessalonians 3:9-10

These are a small number of Biblical examples of God’s people praying for each other. Paul depended on the prayers of the saints. He knew prayer was a major part of God’s plan to communicate His Love and Grace to a needy world.

Each of us, today, has the opportunity to pray. We can pray for people we love and for people who do us wrong. We can pray for anyone at anytime. Nothing can restrict us from praying. Notice that Paul prayed “night and day” for the needs of people. He and other

believers “struggled” in prayer. They felt the need deeply. They knew what was at stake. They prayed with all their hearts.

Have you ever had difficulty in praying? Have you ever felt so deeply about something that human words in prayer didn't seem adequate to the need? So have I. Paul understood that and wrote these comforting words.

“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” Romans 8:26-27

Prayer is one of the greatest opportunities a Christian can experience in this life. God not only listens to us, He **wants** us to tell Him everything. He wants us to share in the deep things of His Spirit. He wants us to participate in His great Plan to save the souls of millions. God wants us to pray.

What does this mean to you and me? It means we can play a vital role in every Christian ministry on earth! It means you can pray for me and I can pray for you. It means you can pray for your pastor and he can pray for you. It means you can struggle in prayer about the problems facing people in your church and they can struggle in prayer for you. It means you can pray earnestly for the ministries of people thousands of miles away and they can pray for you.

The Internet and World Wide Web have brought all of us a lot closer. We can visit the sites of ministries around the world to find out what they're doing and what they need. We can pray for them. We can send them e-mail to let them know we're praying for them. We can share our needs with each other and pray for one another. It means we can be **more** involved than ever in God's work around the world. That's exciting! It's also a tremendous challenge. God uses our prayers. He takes our wants and desires and mixes them with the wants and desires of all His children and carries out His Perfect Will. It's an amazing and wonderful thing!

When should a Christian pray? Whenever we want. Paul mentioned praying night and day. Jesus prayed night and day as He prepared to go to the Cross for us. The disciples of Christ prayed night and day as they took the message of God's Love to a starving world. Sharing our deepest thoughts and concerns with God is something we can do anytime. That's because Christ is "in" you and you are "in Christ. God's ears are always open to the cries of His children. How long should we pray? For as long as we have need to pray. God's ears never tire of our prayers, our petitions, our thanksgiving. We can go to God with our most private thoughts any time of the day or night and for as long as we want. He'll listen to us for a minute, for 30 minutes, for an hour, for two hours or twelve hours. He will listen to us all day for days. He is always there to listen and respond to us in the "Sweet Hour of Prayer."

“Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer! That calls me from a world of care, And bids me, at my Father’s throne, Make all my wants and wishes known; In seasons of distress and grief, My soul has often found relief, And oft escaped the tempter’s snare By Thy return, Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer! Thy wings shall my petition bear, To Him whose truth and righteousness, Engage the waiting souls to bless; and since He bids me seek His face, Believe His word and trust His grace, I’ll cast on Him my ev’ry care, And wait for Him, Sweet hour of prayer! sweet hour of prayer! May I Thy consolation share, Till from Mount Pisgah’s lofty height, I view my home and take my flight; This robe of flesh I’ll drop, and rise To seize the everlasting prize; And shout, while passing thru the air, Farewell, farewell, sweet hour of prayer.” W.W. Walford & William B. Bradbury

Take a few moments, right now, to thank God for His wonderful gift of prayer. Thank Him for all He’s done for you and people you love. Tell Him what’s on your heart. Share your burdens with Him. He’s waiting to hear from you, from me, from all of us. His Shoulders are broad. His Heart is large. His Love is overwhelming. His Mercy is sure. His Comfort is able. His Grace is ready.

Copyright © 1990-2015 GraceLife Ministries

“Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”