

Praying with Paul, Part 1

Book Suggestion: *Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation* by D.A. Carson

Future Texts

2 Thess. 1:11-12

Col. 1:9-14

1 Thess. 3:9-13

Philippians 1:9-11

Ephesians 1:15-23

Eph. 3:14-21

Romans 15:14-33

I. The Urgent Need to Pray

a. What is the most pressing need in the contemporary church of the Western world?

- John 17:3, “And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

b. Importance of Prayer and Knowing God

- Robert Murray M’Cheyne: “What a man is alone on his knees before God, that he is, and no more” (17).
- J.I. Packer: “I believe that prayer is the measure of the man, spiritually, in a way that nothing else is, so that how we pray is as important a question as we can ever face” (Carson, 17).
- “Where is our delight in praying? Where is our sense that we are meeting with the living God, that we are doing business with God, that we are interceding with genuine unction before the throne of grace.... I do not write these things to manipulate you or to be engendering guilty feelings. But what shall we *do*? Have not many of us tried at one point or another to improve our praying, and floundered so badly that we are more discouraged than we ever were....Can we profitably meet the other challenges that confront the Western church if prayer is ignored as much as it has been?” (Carson, 17).

II. Who God is and What He Has Done for Us

a. *Paul’s prayers are shaped by God as Trinity*

- i. **Ephesians 3:14–21**: ¹⁴ For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, ¹⁶ that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...

b. *Paul’s prayers are also shaped by God’s Character and Attributes*

- i. **Prays for Power in Colossians 1:11**: prays that they would “strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy...”

- ii. **Prays for hope in Romans 15:13:** “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.”
- c. **Paul’s prayers also tie God’s character to what He has done for us in Christ:**
 - i. **Prays that they would know the glorious inheritance in Ephesians 1:17–18:** “...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints...”
 - ii. **Prays that they would have eternal comfort in 2 Thessalonians 2:16–17:** “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”

d. Implications?

III. Thankfulness for God’s Grace in Others

a. Texts

- i. **Colossians 1:3–4:** We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,
 - ii. **1 Thessalonians 1:2–3:** We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii. **2 Thessalonians 1:3:** We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.
- b. In short, Paul loves seeing believers grow in their faith in Christ and love for believers and he is thankful!**
- c. What are we most thankful for—does it shape our prayers this way?**

IV. An Expectation of Christ’s Return

a. Texts

- i. **1 Thessalonians 3:11–13:** “Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, ¹² and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, ¹³ so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.”
 - ii. **1 Thessalonians 5:23:** Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.
 - iii. **Philippians 1:9–10:** “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...”
- b. Do we tend to think this way? And do we tend to pray this way? With eternity in view and not just the here and now...**