

Sunday, March 17, 2024 am

## COMMUNIATING WITH GOD (8)

### Paul – an example of prayer

1 Corinthians 11:1, Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. Last week, examined the prayer life of Jesus. Today, we want to examine the prayer life of Paul. As noted in this passage, Paul sought to imitate Christ in his life. We find Paul to be a powerful example of the importance of prayer, both in the manner he prayed and what he taught about prayer. Let us pursue that in this lesson.

#### I. Prayer in the life of Paul

- a. First consider that Paul was a Pharisee.
  - i. Philippians 3:5-6 – he was, ...*circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless...* Acts 22:3 – Paul was a devout Jew, zealous for God.
  - ii. As keepers of the Law (though they certainly manipulated it when convenient – cf. Matthew 15:1-9) Pharisees, (faults withstanding), would have prayed often. Though the examples of their prayers are negative in scripture (Luke 18:10-11 – the Pharisee who went to the temple to pray; cf. Matthew 6:5 – they loved to be seen by men, Matthew 23:14 – Jesus noted that while devouring the poor, they would “for a pretense make long prayers...”), clearly they saw prayer as important – which would be consistent with the LOM (
    - iii. When Paul was struck blind, AS A Pharisee, he did, likely, what he knew to do – pray (Acts 9:9-11). For 3 days he fasted and prayed.
    - iv. Thus prayer was important to him, even as a Jew.
    - v. We can also find many examples of faithful Jews praying in the Old Testament (next week).
  - b. Acts 22:12, 17 – as Paul is retelling his conversion to Jews in Jerusalem, having been arrested, he mentions that he had gone to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple.
  - c. Acts 13:3 – as Paul and Barnabas are sent on their first preaching journey, the brethren fasted and prayed with them.
  - d. Acts 14:23 – still on their first preaching journey, they return to churches previously established and appoint elders in every church. As they did they, “prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.”
  - e. Acts 16:13 – Paul finds Lydia and other Jewish women in Phillipi praying and he teaches them.
  - f. Acts 16:25 – Paul & Silas in prison in Philippi, are singing and praying at midnight.
  - g. Acts 20:36 – concluding his 3<sup>rd</sup> preaching journey by heading toward Jerusalem, he meets with the Ephesian elders. After teaching and encouraging them, as he is about to leave, “he knelt down and prayed with them all.”
  - h. Acts 21:5 – in Tyre and headed toward Jerusalem, again, “we knelt down on the shore and prayed.”
  - i. Acts 27:29 – headed toward Rome (because he had appealed to Caesar), the ship is in troubled waters, they “prayed for day to come.”

- j. Acts 28:8 – on the island of Malta, Paul prays for the father of Publius who was sick. He then laid hands on him and he was healed.
- k. Paul continually prayed for the brethren. NOTE: In the majority of his letters, we find Paul praying and/or instructing about prayer.
  - i. Romans 1:8-10 – he opens his letter letting them know he is praying for them.
  - ii. Romans 10:1 – he prayed to God concerning Israel
  - iii. 1 Corinthians 1: 4 – he thanked God concerning them. NOTE: On several occasion we find Paul expressing thankfulness to God for others and himself. A few of the following verse will bear this out, but they are by no means an exhaustive list. We WILL address gratitude in a future lesson.
  - iv. 1 Corinthians 16:23 – Paul’s benediction to them, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.” Also 2 Corinthians 13:14. NOTE that in many of Paul’s letters, he concludes with a written prayer – a request of God for them.
  - v. 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 – Paul “pleaded with the Lord” 3 times that his “thorn in the flesh” be removed. The Lord said, “No”, “*My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.*” As we have noted, Paul accepted that answer and made the best of everything he was going through.
  - vi. 2 Corinthians 13:9 – he prayed that they might be made complete
  - vii. Ephesians 1:16 – Paul made mention of them in his prayers
  - viii. Philippians 1:4, 9 – praying that their love would abound
  - ix. Colossians 1:3,9 – he was always praying for them
  - x. 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 3:10 – he prayed night and day for them.
  - xi. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 – his prayers included giving thanks to God.
  - xii. 2 Thessalonians 1:11 – he was always praying for them.
  - xiii. 2 Timothy 1:3 – Paul thanked God for and remembered Timothy in his prayers “night and day”
  - xiv. Philemon 4 – Paul thanked God, mentioning Philemon in his prayers always.

## II. **What did Paul teach about prayer?**

- a. Romans 8:26 – we do not know what we should pray for – the Spirit helps.
- b. Romans 12:12 – continuing steadfastly in prayer
- c. Romans 15:30-33 – He requested that others pray for him to be delivered from unreasonable men. See also Philippians 1:19, Colossians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 5:25, 2 Thessalonians 3:1,
- d. 1 Corinthians 7:5 – husbands and wives ought to spend time in prayers, even individually
- e. 1 Corinthians 11 & 14 – throughout the text, we find an emphasis on prayer when we assemble together. Paul gives instructions about how to do this. Of note, 1 Corinthians 14:15, *What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding...*
- f. 2 Corinthians 1:11 – Paul acknowledges their prayers for him and his party.
- g. 2 Corinthians 9:13-14 – when we help brethren, it ought to prompt them to pray for you (thankfulness, etc.)
- h. Ephesians 6:18 – praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit
- i. Philippians 4:6 – be anxious for nothing, but in everything with prayer and thanksgiving...
- j. Colossians 4:2 – continue earnestly in prayer
- k. Colossians 4:12 – Paul commends Epaphras, a bond servant of Christ, who labored fervently for them in his prayers. Paul RECOGNIZED the prayers of others.
- l. 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18 – pray without ceasing. In everything give thanks.

- m. 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 8 – Paul’s desire that men pray everywhere, especially for leaders.
- n. 1 Timothy 4:4 – everything God has given us for food is good if received with thanksgiving, “sanctified by the word of God and prayer.”
- o. 1 Timothy 5:5 – the godly “widow” worthy of help from the church proves herself by continuing in supplications and prayers night and day.

**III. Concluding thoughts about Paul and prayer**

- a. Let us again return to the passage we began with, 1 Corinthians 11:1, “*Imitate me as I also imitate Christ.*”
- b. The faithfulness of Paul is unparalleled in the New Testament. We know how much he gave up, worked and suffered for the cause of Christ. As we have seen in this lesson, clearly prayer was a part of his regular spiritual routine.
- c. We find Paul praying for his kinsmen, worldly rulers, his brethren, the church, the furtherance of the gospel and even his enemies. While at times his prayers were general in nature, at other times he was very specific about what and who he was praying for.
- d. We find Paul encouraging us to pray regularly and with thanksgiving. And He gives us that example.
- e. Years ago, Preceptor magazine published a workbook about prayer in which a lesson was presented about how Paul prayed (by Louis J. Sharp). In that lesson he noted that Paul prayed: Positively, Perpetually, and in Praise. He prayed Publicly, Privately, and Persistently.
- f. Truly his example is worthy of imitation. He also prayed Powerfully, Patiently, and Pertinently (relevant); He prayed for Progress, Peace, Perfection and in Prosperity; He prayed in Poverty, Prison, Perplexity (sometimes puzzled at how others acted), and facing Problems; Finally he prayed Purposefully for People, Potentates, and Progress (of the gospel).

Paul genuinely cared about brethren and took time to teach them, not only by precept, but also by his example the power of prayer. May we equally learn from his example the importance of prayer. Are you a person of prayer like Paul? Think about it.