

Principles from Paul's Prayers

Gleanings from Philippians 1:4

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Philippians 1:4 Πάντοτε ἐν πάσῃ δεήσει μου ὑπὲρ πάντων ὑμῶν, μετὰ χαρᾶς τὴν
δέησιν ποιούμενος,
author's translation "...always making supplication in my every supplication for all of you with joy..."

Philippians 1:4 describes how the Apostle Paul thanks God in all his remembrance of the Philippian believers. He reminds them that they are all saints *in Christ Jesus* (1:1) and that they have received grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:2). And so this propels Paul into thankfulness to God when he remembers them. Paul is overwhelmed with love and gratitude and care for this church that is precious to his heart.

In what follows, I'll provide 4 simple principles we can learn from Paul's prayers.

1. He prays *WITH CONSTANCY*.

When Paul says that he "always" offers prayers it does not mean that he ceaselessly prays for people 24/7 on his knees. The rest of the verse further explains what he means as he states that [he always prays for them] "in his every prayer for them all." That means that the believers in Philippi are at the forefront of his mind when he meets with God in prayer. As Paul thanks his God and expresses praise to God, he quickly turns to the precious congregation of Philippian believers that has helped him in the furtherance of the gospel in so many ways. Men of God pray. Men of God pray constantly. Indeed, Paul exhorts believers to pray continually (1 Thess 5:17) and to pray at all times (Eph 6:18). Believers can learn from Paul as he regularly bows before his God in worshipful gratitude and in heartfelt praise as he pours out his soul to God and in so doing he regularly lifts up the Philippian believers. Let this remind all Christians to be constantly, regularly, and ceaselessly praying for the brethren.

2. He prays *WITH INTERCESSION*.

In this verse, Paul utilizes the same particular Greek word for prayer two times. The idea of "prayer" [δεήσει... δέησιν] refers to an entreaty, a request, a supplication, an intercession. It's as if Paul is saying: "I'm always offering entreaties with joy in my every entreaty for you all." Perhaps the best way to view this is Paul praying with intercessory prayers on behalf of the Philippian believers. Paul intercedes for -- that is, he prays on behalf of -- the Christians that he knows and loves in the city of Philippi. What an encouragement this must have been for the believers to receive this letter from Epaphroditus and undoubtedly they must have been reassured that Paul really does love them for he shows it by his undying intercession and fervent entreaties to God on their behalf. What a faithful friend who prays for his friends. Indeed, the friend loves the brethren the most when he is praying for them and bringing them before God's almighty throne of grace. Let us learn to pray for one another. To make requests to God on behalf of the believers whom we know and love and serve alongside of in the ministry.

3. He prays *WITH JOY*.

Not only does Paul continually pray for them and intercede for them by bringing them before God but he does so with joy. To Paul, prayer is no chore, it's a delight. Prayer is no mere preparation to do great things for God, *it is* doing great things for God! Paul bows before the Lord in thankful prayer and brings the Philippians before the mighty God who hears and answers prayer. And he does so with an attitude of joy. And amazingly, Paul prays with joy for the believers even as he knows they have need of growth in humility, in unity amongst the brethren, and in proper thinking as they live life. He knows they need to remember the gospel and be on constant guard from the false circumcision and false teachers that roam around true believers. And yet all the while, he does not see prayer as a dutiful task but a delightful privilege. He finds it a blessing, not a burden. O that all believers would joyfully bring their brethren before the Lord in diligent and regular prayer. What would happen to our relationships and our congregations if we prayed for one another with joy in our every prayer for one another. For Paul, even amidst hardship, he can pray with joy because He knows and has an unshakeable confidence in the certainty that God is in control. Thus, as he prays for them, intercedes for them, thanks God for them, and prays for their growth and godliness, his heart can throb with joy and his lips can drip with glad praise. Let us learn from the Apostle and pray with true joy.

4. He prays *WITH SPECIFICITY*.

Another element of Paul's prayer is that he prays for all the saints [πάντων ὑμῶν]. He prays for *all* of the brethren. What an example for all ministers of the gospel and shepherds who serve Christ's church to learn from Paul's example and to pray for *all* the saints specifically, by name, regularly, and with joy. Furthermore, what a profound example for all Christians to emulate by praying for all the saints specifically. Consider your own prayer life. How do you pray for the entire flock of God where you serve? Do you know them? Do you have a directory of their names so you can pray with specificity for *all of them*? Consider how powerful our churches would be if we constantly, joyfully, and specifically interceded for one another in heartfelt, biblical, passionate prayers! O how unstoppable the church would be! Consider how many souls be would be touched by the gospel as we would bear each other up to speak of Christ to the lost! And even knowing that there was a rift between Euodia and Syntyche (cf Phil 4:2), Paul still thanks God for them and prays for them *specifically*. Consider how Paul must have prayed for the Philippian jailer and his family and Lydia and her family (and the church that met at her home; cf Acts 16:40). O that we would follow the Apostle Paul's example in praying specifically for all the saints. Consider taking 3-5 names/families per day in your church and bringing them before the Lord faithfully. Consider how you may get to know folks that you may not be all that familiar with at the present. Consider how you will encourage others when you reassure them that you have been praying specifically for them. Consider how uplifting it would be to have others follow up with you regarding specific prayer requests. Do you pray for the marriages in your church -- all of them? Do you pray for the children to be saved and walk closely with Christ -- all of them? Do you pray for your pastors and elders? Do you pray for the youth? Do you pray for the elderly and shut-ins? O let us begin now to pray joyfully, regularly, and specifically for all the saints as we intercede for them. O think of what Christ could do through this kind of faithful and prayerful church!