

In one sense, prayer is the simplest thing in the world. People have been talking to God from the beginning, without instruction and without method. We have praised Him, cursed Him, begged Him, and bargained with Him. We tell Him to send the rains, heal the sick, give us jobs, prove He exists, and explain Himself. We do this naturally, artlessly, because we feel like it. There is nothing complicated about such prayer.

The Bible, however, speaks of prayer in ways that are far from simple. The Lord's Prayer, that model of brevity, has generated enough commentaries to fill libraries, and for good reason. Jesus and the other biblical authors saw prayer as more than just talking to God; prayer is an expression, a reflection, of our hearts. In the Bible, admonitions to pray are really admonitions to embrace the truth: about God, our neighbour, our world, ourselves. Do we know our real problem? Do we know who can fix it? Do we know what is truly valuable and worth having? If we do, then our prayers will reflect this.

The prayers of the apostle Paul are a wonderful example of Christian maturity expressed through prayer. In most of the letters he wrote, Paul included a prayer for his readers. Paul's prayers are touching, profound, eloquent, and loving; in addition, however, they are a guide to us in our own journey of faith. Paul's heart was fixed on the essential things, things which are true and important and indispensable. Paul's prayers, then, become a mirror in which we can examine ourselves, asking whether our concerns are anywhere close to Paul's

Over the next weeks we will be looking at the prayers of St Paul to strengthen our pray life and equip us to pray more effectively. We will see what he prayed for and how we can pray for others and ourselves in the way that Paul prayed for the followers of Jesus in his letters.

### **FOR GODLY LIVING:**

Paul was very concerned that the lives of the early Christians were worthy of the calling of Christ.

He prayed that his fellow Christians would live a godly life. Firstly to give glory to the God who has saved them and secondly that their godly living would be a message to the non believers

about the difference that Jesus makes to their lives.

He knew that they would come against forces that would lead them astray from the high calling of Christ. He knew that power of evil but he preached and prayed about a greater power that could deliver them and lead them in the right way of Christ.

The following verses indicate the many ways that he prayed for the godly living of the saints.

-- 2 Cor. 13:7 "Now we pray to God **that you do no wrong**; not that we ourselves may appear approved, but **that you may do what is right** ...."

-- 2 Cor. 13:9 (NIV) "...and our prayer is for your perfection."

-- Phil. 1:9-11 "And this I pray...that you may approve the things that are excellent, **in order to be sincere and blameless** until the day of Christ."

-- Col. 1:9-10 "...we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will... **so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects** ...."

-- 1 Thes. 3:12-13 "...may the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another, and for all men... **so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in holiness** before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus...."

-- 1 Thes. 5:23 (NIV) "May God Himself, the God of peace, **sanctify you through and through** . May your whole spirit, soul, and body **be kept blameless** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

-- 2 Thes. 1:11 (NIV) "With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, **that our God may count you worthy of His calling** and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith."

-- 1 Tim. 2:1 "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, for kings and all who are in authority, **in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity**."

**Read through the verses and reflect on how your life has been transformed by the prayers for godly living of St Paul. Personalise these verses by putting [ ] name of the person that you are praying for. Then pray these verses out loud for the person that you are praying for.**

**EG 2 Corinthians 13:7-Lord God, [ ] I pray for George that he [ ] would do no wrong and that he may do what is right. Amen**

## **FOR MINISTRY OPPORTUNITY AND SUCCESS:**

For many of us, we struggle to pray for success. It seems a dirty word in Christian circles. It seems selfish. It is like praying to win the lottery and pocketing millions of dollars. Of course we would share the wealth around but it just seems wrong. It seems that it goes against the grain.

Yet the work of Jesus depended upon the success of his disciples and then Paul. The spread of Christianity depended upon the success of its missionary ventures- good and bad. The ministry of Jesus is based on being fruitful and having success.

Yet success has never been defined by what the world deems as success: more power; more money; more land; more companies etc. Success been defined about being faithful to what God has called you to be and do.

While we may not earn a million+ dollars, we do earn a million + blessings as we faithfully serve the Lord.

Our praying, like Paul's, is to include prayers for someone to be successful for the Lord. Paul saw himself, sometimes, as the answer to his prayer through his words of teaching, encouragement and wisdom. His visit and/or letter would bring success to the person or congregation because He was IN CHRIST!

Paul's prayers for success include the following points:

-- Colossians. 1:10 (NIV) "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord... **bearing fruit in every good work** ...."

-- 1 Thes. 3:10 (NIV) "Night and day we pray most earnestly **that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith** ."

-- 2 Thessalonians. 1:11 (NIV) "We constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His calling, and **that by His power He may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith** ."

-- Philemon.1:6 (NIV) "I pray **that you may be active in sharing your faith**, so that you will have a powerful understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

3.)

***As you pray this week, ask God to lead you in how to pray a “success” prayer for yourself; a family member or friend or some other person or organisation.***

### FOR STRENGTHENING:

Life is not easy sometimes. We are confronted with many challenges and it is not easy to overcome the challenges. We can lose our energy easily, battling against seemingly unsurpassable odds.

We find what we believe being undermined by a society that is progressively turning its back on Christianity and its values. We see minority causes taking over the majority viewpoints.

In a similar way in Paul's time, the churches that Paul started faced enormous challenges trying to share the gospel in a hostile environment. Thus Paul wrote to encourage and pray for the churches and leaders that he started.

His prayer is that they be strengthened: to be increased in vigour; to turn resolutely in a certain direction.

His prayer request was they might be strengthen with the power of God and the ability to endure, to be patient and wait upon the Lord and His timing.

The fruit of such strengthening was to have Christ dwell in their hearts and have a blameless life full of good works to show to the people around that Jesus does really make a difference to their lives.

A life led by Jesus shown through endurance and good works was and still is a very powerful sermon to the knockers and persecutors of Christianity. Their ability to praise in the midst of persecution and execution was a powerful testimony that touched those who watched their death.

-- Ephesians . 3:16-17 (NIV) "I pray that out of His glorious riches **He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."

-- Colossians. 1:10-11 (NIV) "And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord... **being strengthened with all power according to His glorious might** so that you may have great endurance and patience...."

-- 1 Thessalonians. 3:13 (NIV) "May He **strengthen your hearts** so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God...."

-- 2 Thessalonians. 2:16 "Now may our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father comfort **and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word**  
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**Pray that the Lord may strengthen you and your loved ones as you face difficulties in life.**