

The Power Of Prayer

Prayer's Foundation

As we approach the end of the year, we observe Matthew chapter 24 being lived out; the world is in turmoil, countries at war, rumors of coming wars, lives in chaos, draughts, famines, earthquakes, economies a wreck, suicide rate climbing and the world lacks peace. I cannot think of anything more important than one of the greatest sources of peace and one of the greatest weapons God provides His children for our peace and hope, and the hope of the world. Reading from Paul's letter to the saints in Ephesus, "Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ **praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication.** To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints." (Ephesians 6:10-18) Without prayer there is not the solid foundation for God's peace in our lives and for one to do battle for the kingdom of

God. Without a foundation of prayer, one will not be able to put on “[the whole armor of God](#)”. Without prayer we are not ready for battle or living our daily lives in this evil and broken world.

It is not just prayer in private but also prayer visibly that sustains our lives, family and ministry. I want to focus on visible prayer, or to put it another way, I wonder if prayer is the visible fuel that constantly calls down the power of God in our lives, our families and our ministry. Is prayer central or is it peripheral in our lives? Do we spend dedicated time with God in prayer every day or do we get around to prayer when we think of it or when we have the time or only when there is a crisis?

The reason prayer is essential to our Christian life, family and ministry is that we exist and our family exists and our ministry exists to do the humanly impossible. We are called to magnify Christ and be supremely satisfied in Christ both in living our lives and in death. We need to be bathed in prayer to accomplish God’s will for our lives and to know God’s peace in all circumstances. It is through prayer one experiences the unity of love in the cause of the gospel, prayer enables one to be fearless before our adversaries and at the same time prayer gives one humility and causes one to count others more important than ourselves. Prayer helps enable us to live with our lives in surrender to Christ and obedience to Christ. To live for God’s glory is humanly impossible without Christ and to live for the glory of Christ requires our submission to Him and His Spirit and we are able to do this better and better as our prayer life grows stronger and stronger.

God has established prayer as the means by which we receive His supernatural help. Without supernatural help, we cannot live a life worthy of the Gospel. Everything that distinguishes Christians from the corruption of the world,

to enable us as God's children to lead a Christ-exalting way of life is only accomplished by of God's supernatural grace. God has ordained that His grace flow to us through prayer. Prayer must be central, not peripheral to our lives.

Prayer Displays Dependence On God

Prayer should be one of the visible powers in a Christian's life, not just a private act that nobody knows is happening. I say this because the New Testament makes prayer a public act as well as a private one and because visible prayer is a statement of our helplessness and our utter dependence on God for the outcomes of life and family and ministry. God is glorified when it is plain to people that we consider Him a trustworthy Father who is eager to hear our prayers. He is glorified when Christians humble themselves openly as people who are not ashamed to beg for God's help and admit their weaknesses.

Quiet time and private prayer are important and essential. However, if prayer is not also the visible power in our lives, we fail to communicate to people who God is and what He does, without visible prayer what we communicate to the world is what we do - not what God does, and when that happens the world is often disappointed in the God we represent because we are sinners who often fall short. Making God smaller and ineffective is what one is communicating when prayer is not visibly woven into the fabric of our lives, family and ministry.

I want to consider the visibility of prayer in Paul's letter to the Philippians. Please open your Bible to Philippians chapter 1. As Paul begins this wonderful letter, he cannot complete his greeting before he is praying, he does not just write about prayer, but actually prays and prays constantly, and here in his writing, his prayers are public and visible. I begin at verse 1, ["Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers](#)

and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” Before Paul finished with his first sentence, he is publicly, not privately, praying a blessing of grace and peace down on the saints of Christ in Philippi. Think about the words in verse 2, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” What kind of speech is this? He is clearly speaking directly to the brethren in Philippi, “Grace to you.” Paul speaks in the second person plural. He does not say, “Grace from me or grace to them,” but “Grace to you” from or given by God.

Let me ask, what verb would you add? Grace and peace *be* to you? Grace and peace *come* to you? Grace and peace *fill* you? Grace and peace *bless* you, *guide* you, *comfort* you or *protect* you? Would we exclude any of these verbs? No, I think not. I believe Paul’s intention is to say, may the grace and peace given from God be lived by his readers. He is saying God’s grace and peace is for you and is to be to you **all** that His grace and peace can do and be for you, absolutely **all** of it because it comes from God. However, whatever verb we add would fall short. So, Paul leaves out limiting verbs and says, “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” We need to understand that Paul intends for the brethren to experience **all** of God’s grace and peace as he writes these words. These are not throwaway words leaving out verbs; they are words given and inspired by God the Holy Spirit. These are words meant to communicate and instill grace and peace to the fullest in the Philippians’ hearts. Well then, how does this grace and peace come?

We find the answer in verse 2, Paul does not give grace and peace, but “Grace to you and peace *comes* from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul is not thinking merely of the relationship here between himself and the Philippians. The reason is because he knows he is not the ultimate source of grace and peace; God is. Paul's mind is first towards God and then towards the brethren. He is aware that if his words are to awaken people to experience grace and peace, it will be because God has heard his words of prayer and made them the channel of His grace and peace for His people. These words are both a blessing to the brethren and a prayer of dependence on God and these words are public and visible. They show Paul's dependence on God and on prayer to be God's facilitator of grace and peace. Paul is communicating to his readers a prayer of dependence upon God and it is visible and public.

In verse 3 Paul continues his prayer, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy." Paul prays though his letter publicly and he is saying he prays for them often. The question this raises is how does this fit with what Jesus said as recorded in Matthew? Jesus said, "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ⁶ But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:5-6) Jesus was warning, do not deceive yourselves by using prayer publicly to impress others with your spirituality, as the Pharisees. If you do that, it will be plain that you are not praying to get God's grace or help or placing your life in submission, but you are praying to get man's praise. You may get man's praise, but that is all you will get. Jesus also does not want us to use public prayer as gossip, "Dear Lord, help brother Bill with his drinking problem – strengthen him Lord I pray". If you have been a Christian very long, sadly, you will have heard someone

pray something along this line and they use prayer as gossip and potentially hurt someone.

Jesus was not saying that the only place you can pray is in your closet where nobody knows you are praying and it is just you and God. The issue was not whether prayer was made in public but whether prayer was motivated by vanity, made for the love of man's praise – or if one's prayers come from the heart of a saved sinner and are for the glory of God and a desire for His peace and grace and mercy and love to come into one's life in order to give it back out to other people, so God will bring grace and peace in their lives also.

Paul was not disobeying Jesus here in Philippians by making his prayer public. He was sharing the joy he had in calling down God's blessings on the Philippians, and he was overflowing with thankfulness for the truth of God in the Philippians lives. Move ahead with me in Philippians to chapter 4, verse 19, **“My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”** Paul makes his prayer public showing his love of the brethren and showing God's glorious readiness to meet their needs according to His riches, for God does what no human can do – giving Christian hearts His grace and peace through understanding His will, removing doubt – knowing His eternal plan of salvation will come to fruition. Prayer brings the warmth of knowing Christ is with you, personally, through the indwelling of His Spirit.

Prayer Glorifies God

I have already been alluding to prayer as a means for glorifying God visibility and publicly, now let's go deeper. Back to chapter 1 of Philippians, verses 9 to 11, Paul is praying for their joy and that their **“love may abound more and more,** but Paul goes beyond just this. Paul continues, **“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,¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” Paul’s desire and goal is for believers in Christ to live righteously through the power of Christ to the glory and praise of God knowing His eternal truth through His Word and prayer, thus showing the dark and corrupt world there is a God of hope that can bring light of grace and peace into the world! Paul states, “with knowledge and all discernment (*knowledge and discernment come from the study of God’s Word and prayer*),¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.” The Word of God and prayer is what equips Christians for battle, helps them to live holy; so, the result will be we stand blameless on the day of Christ.

Paul weaves prayer publicly into the ministry of this letter. He wants everyone to know that he prays for the Philippians and what he prays. He prays for abounding love. He prays for discernment in the tough choices that love must make. He prays that they will arrive blameless at the “day of Christ.” He prays that they will be overflowing with righteous deeds founded on their love of Christ.

Paul makes plain that the reason he prays for all this, the reason he asks God to do these things is because it is through prayer that these things come, it is “through Jesus Christ” in verse 11, so we understand these things are supernatural. If they do not come through Jesus and His Spirit, they do not come at all. This is why Paul prays and makes his prayer public, Paul displays his total dependency upon Christ demonstrating to all listening - that God is a glorious and a hearing God and Christ is present in believer’s lives through the power of His Spirit and His will is made known through His Word and prayer. God receives glory through their love, blamelessness, discernment and their righteous deeds because these

come “[through Jesus Christ](#)” in answer to prayer. Making prayer a visible part of his ministry is Paul’s way of calling attention to the glorious bounty of God’s overflowing grace. Visible prayer is at the heart of how God gets glory in our lives and ministry and displays to the world our dependence on God as saved sinners surrendered to Christ.

Prayer Bolsters Faith

In Philippians 1:19 Paul declares, it is your prayers for me that will make the difference in my ministry. Paul says, “[I will rejoice,¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.](#)” Paul is saying as a sinner he strengthened in faith by surrendering to Christ and empowered to carry on by the prayers of others. It also, amazes me that Paul states throughout his writings that it is the prayers of ordinary believers, like you and me, which is the means by which he expects his apostolic ministry to succeed. I believe this is true for me as well; it is your prayers that help bring wisdom and guidance as I seek God and work on sermons for each Sunday. Your prayers strengthen me to seek Christ as the evil one attacks. I join Paul as he says to the brethren, “I am depending on your prayers for my deliverance and the success of my ministry” and he is not proud because Christ has called him to be an apostle but declares his utter dependence on Christ publicly. So, whether it is his prayers for them, or their prayers for him, Paul is visibly weaving a manifested dependence on God through prayer into the ministry of this letter.

Prayer Cultivates Peace

Please move ahead in Philippians to chapter 4 where Paul exhorts the brethren of Philippi to pray and he relates it to a foundational teaching of his letter. Reading beginning at verse 6, “[The Lord is at hand;](#) ⁶ [do not be anxious about](#)

anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:5–7)

In one sense, this command to pray is all encompassing and in another sense, it is very focused. It is all encompassing because of the words “in everything.” Verse 6, “do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” The words “in everything” are all encompassing; pray about everything in your life and let God rebuild you into one filled with His Spirit to live for His glory. However, in another sense, this command is very narrow and focused. Paul doesn’t refer to one hundred things you may get in answer to prayer; he refers to freedom from anxiety and the presence of peace. These are the consequences of all-encompassing prayer; one loses their anxiety and gains peace in their soul and that is a peace that builds one into a warrior of peace for God. One will have peace even as the evil one attacks, as when Stephen was martyred and he experienced God’s peace.

With this in mind let me read verses 6 and 7 again, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” So, the aim of all these prayers, praying about everything, is to rid one’s mind, heart and soul of all anxiety and then positively replace anxiety with the peace of God. This is really remarkable. Paul’s concern here is focused primarily on a state of mind and heart and soul that is free from anxiety or fear and is filled with peace or contentment. Why is this Paul’s focus?

Prayer Exalts Christ

When we step back and think about Paul's main burden in this letter, the reason for his focus becomes clear. Paul's great burden is that Jesus Christ be magnified and that the worth of the Gospel be publicly vindicated and promoted by the example of the Christ-centered lives being lived out by Jesus Christ's followers; privately and publicly. Paul expectation for himself is found in verse 20 of chapter 1, "as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." Paul is saying through his prayers and the prayers of other believers - his heart, mind and soul will so full of Christ and His Spirit he will live in a manner glorifying Christ and not bring shame no matter what the world throws at him and in his living or his dying he will honor Christ. Paul fully expects the Philippians to live in the same manner. Continuing in chapter 1, reading verse 27, "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel." Paul wants them to live worthy of the gospel of Christ as individuals and as a community. Paul knows the importance of community to strengthen each so they will stand firm in one spirit and one mind and this comes from the teaching of God's Word and visible prayer. My beloved let us live our lives in a state of prayer and praise, in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ with one spirit and one mind. That sounds good, but how is this accomplished? Verse 28 calls for us to live lives "not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God." We are to be people of peace and freely give God's grace to others. When we pray for the enemies of God to come to salvation through Christ it makes a difference in how we relate to others - it gives us a heart of peace and hope.

The way Christ would be magnified in life was that the Philippians would walk worthy of the gospel, just as we are called to walk in the gospel. Verse 27, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.” My beloved, we are to live in a manner showing the supreme worth of the gospel and of Jesus Christ. How does that happen? It happens through lives of fearlessness and unity in love for the sake of the gospel. Listen to verses 27 and 28, “...I may hear...that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents.” How do we stand firm and not be frightened? Through the preaching of the God’s Word, we are brought into unity of our mind and through visible public prayer God melds us together with hearts of fearless unity and peace. Paul speaks this message of our lives lived before the world in fearlessness and peace, as verse 28 continues, “This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.” Supernatural, Christ-exalting fearlessness is the key to glorifying Christ in this world. Living in the boldness means the world can do nothing to take Christ away. Even if the world takes our mortal life, it cannot touch our eternal life with Christ.

Christ-exalting fearlessness in the face of danger is not natural, but supernatural. Fearless peace is the key to glorifying Christ in the world. Therefore, we must pray. We need to pray in our prayer closet alone, which is a good thing, but when we pray alone Christ will not be magnified in our fearlessness before the fallen world. However, when we pray visibly, it requires we be fearless about our need for Christ and when we step out in faith Christ replaces fear with peace and we begin to pray in every circumstance for His help. People see our lives lived out and hear our words of gratitude to Christ and our desire for others to know Christ and our desire to be people of peace even with those we disagree with and even

with those who are enemies of God. Christ is glorified when we are fearless and at the same time possess His deep peace.

Let me ask when was the last time you prayed that the President would come to know Christ? How about Putin? Can you imagine what would happen if the leaders of the world got saved? Do you pray for those who have wounded you? Do you pray that God will change your heart and you can let go and forgive? Husband, are you praying for your wife and that the Lord will show you how to die for her as Christ died for the church? Wife do you pray for your husband and that the Lord would show you how to submit and encourage him to be the spiritual head God calls him to be. Husband and wife do you pray for reconciliation and forgiveness for the hurts you have each done? Parents are you modeling private and public-visible prayer with your children and lifting your children up to the Lord to become the bold and fearless church of the future! Come to God in prayer and He will show you the path to answer these questions.

I close this message with prayer, visible prayer, and then we will break into a few of groups and pray together for unity, for peace, for love and to be fearless before the world.

Please bow your heads. My God, I lift my heart to You, I beg You to take away my fear and give me Your peace. I pray this for each person here and I pray this for us as a community that loves Christ and each other. Help us God, help us trust Your promises, all of Your promises and may You grant peace for all here this morning. Lord may our days be filled with Your all-satisfying Son, Jesus Christ and Your Spirit. All mighty God give us supernatural answers to our prayers. Oh God, You surpass all the powers of human reason and man's ability to create short-term safety in this world of woe. Dear Father, we cry out to You,

“Abba Father” for You are the only antidote to this world’s soul-destroying chaos. God, You alone, are our only hope of living without fear, enter us, reside in us, change us, mold us and make us into supernatural children living your gospel. Dear Father, strengthen us to live in such a way to magnify Christ and may our lives show the world the power of the Living God. Oh, Lord, I ask this for myself, for my family, for my brothers and sisters and their families. I pled with You to help be sin less, help me serve my wife better, to model Christ for my family and this church, for I am weak and You are forever strong. Help us as a community and as individuals live a Christ-filled supernatural life. May we teach our children the miraculous wonders of You, Lord. Oh, Jesus, our Lord and Savior, we plead with You to help us raise our children as God-fearing future men and women who know the peace of Christ and are able to go forth into this sinful world declaring Christ without fear. Grow our faith, our courage, our love and our hope and our peace in You alone, and enable us to live faithful and to be courageous before the world. Amen!