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Teaching Notes

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## Paul's Prayer Life

“What is the most urgent need in the church of the Western world today? Is it sexual purity?... A strong stand on abortion?... Integrity and generosity in finances?... Freedom from greed, materialism and self-indulgence?... Evangelism and church planting? ... Disciplined, biblical thinking and right doctrine? ... Clearly all these things are important. I would not want anything I have said to be taken as a disparagement of evangelism and worship, a diminishment of the importance of purity and integrity, a carelessness about disciplined Bible study. But there is a sense in which these urgent needs are symptomatic of a far more serious lack. The one thing we most urgently need in Western Christendom is a deeper knowledge of God. We need to know God better.

When it comes to knowing God, we are a culture of the spiritually stunted. So much of our religion is packaged to address our felt needs – and these are almost uniformly anchored in our pursuit of our own happiness and fulfillment. God simply becomes the Great Being who, potentially at least, meets our needs and fulfills our aspirations. We think rather little of what he is like, what he expects of us, what he seeks in us. We are not captured by his holiness and love; his thoughts and words capture too little of our imagination, too little of our discourse, too few of our priorities.”

D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*

***Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for...***

- The Beginning of Paul's Prayer Life

***Acts 9:11-12 The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. <sup>12</sup> In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight."***

- Paul's Missionary Call: Coming Through Prayer

*Acts 13:1-3 In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.*

- Paul's Missionary Passion: Evangelism Undergirded By Prayer

*Acts 26:28-29 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" <sup>29</sup> Paul replied, "Short time or long--I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."*

*Romans 10:1 Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.*

*2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.*

- Paul's Missionary Strategy: Organizing Through Prayer

*Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.*

- Paul's Missionary Comfort: Strength Through Prayer

*Acts 16:22-25 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten. <sup>23</sup> After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup> Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.*

*Acts 18:9-11 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. <sup>10</sup> For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." <sup>11</sup> So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.*

*Acts 21:5 But when our time was up, we left and continued on our way. All the disciples and their wives and children accompanied us out of the city, and there on the beach we knelt to pray.*

- Paul's Constant Habit: Prayer for God's People

*Romans 1:9-10 God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you <sup>10</sup> in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.*

*Philippians 1:3-6 I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

*Colossians 1:9 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you...*

*1 Thessalonians 1:2-3 We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. <sup>3</sup> We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*2 Thessalonians 1:11 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you...*

- Paul's Consistent Need: Prayer for Himself

*1 Thessalonians 5:25 Brothers, pray for us.*

1. Opportunity for evangelism

*2 Thessalonians 3:1 Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.*

2. Boldness and clarity in evangelism

*Ephesians 6:19 Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,<sup>20</sup> for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

*Colossians 4:3-4 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.<sup>4</sup> Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.*

3. Protection in persecution

*Romans 15:30-32 I urge you, brothers, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.<sup>31</sup> Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,<sup>32</sup> so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.*

*2 Thessalonians 3:2 And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.*

*2 Corinthians 1:8-11 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.<sup>10</sup> He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us,<sup>11</sup> as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.*

- Paul's Prayers for the Churches: What He Prays For

1. For the perfection of the churches

*2 Corinthians 13:9 "...our prayer is for your perfection."*

2. For full understanding of God's power working in them

*Ephesians 1:18-19 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,<sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

3. Strength in Christ, knowledge of His love

*Ephesians 3:16-19 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,<sup>17</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,<sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,<sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

4. Knowledge of God's will for greater fruitfulness

*Philippians 1:9-11 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

*Colossians 1:9-12 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. <sup>10</sup> And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, <sup>11</sup> being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully <sup>12</sup> giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.*

5. That God may count Christians worthy of their calling

6. That God may fulfill the faith-filled purposes of Christians

*2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 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. <sup>12</sup> We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

## I. Specific Promises of God Conducive to Prayer

A. For God to Glorify His Name

***John 12:28 Father, glorify your name!" Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again."***

B. For God to Make Jesus' Enemies a Footstool

***Psalms 110:1 The LORD says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet."***

C. For the Elect to Be Saved

***Titus 1:1-2 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ for the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness--<sup>2</sup> a faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time***

***2 Timothy 2:10 I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.***

D. For Gospel Advance Among Unreached People Groups

***Matthew 24:14 this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.***

E. For Sanctification to Proceed Among True Believers

***Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

F. For Daily Physical Needs to be Met

***Matthew 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.***

***Philippians 4:19 my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.***

G. For the Persecuted Among God's People to Receive Justice

***Luke 18:7-8 And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off?<sup>8</sup> I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly.***

H. For Protection from Satan's Attacks

***James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.***

I. For a Filtering of Our Temptations and a Way of Escape During Temptation

***1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.***

J. For a Powerful Sense of God's Presence

***James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.***

***Hebrews 13:5 God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."***

K. For a Renewal of Strength for God's People

***Isaiah 41:10 So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.***

L. For the Peace of God to Control Our Minds

***Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.***

M. For Forgiveness of Specific Sins

***1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

N. For Christ to Return Soon

***Revelation 3:11 I am coming soon.***

***Revelation 22:7 "Behold, I am coming soon!"***

***Revelation 22:12 Behold, I am coming soon!***

***Revelation 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."***