

Learning to Pray from Paul's Epistles

Scripture	Prayer Requests
(Rom 1:9-10 NIV) God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and <u>I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would open up the way for His servant & apostle to come and encourage/strengthen God's people in their Christian faith & walk
(Rom 10:1 NIV) Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is <u>that they may be saved.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would reveal the truth about how a person becomes righteous in His sight through faith in Jesus as God's gift of righteousness ... in order that they would be saved
(Rom 15:31a NIV) Pray <u>that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea....</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God's servant would be rescued from the hands of those who intend harm because they do not believe in the Gospel he proclaims
(Rom. 15:31b NIV) ... <u>and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there,</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the ministry of God's servant (ie the ministry of "helps" or providing material assistance raised by Paul from among the Gentile churches for the needs of their Jewish brethren in need) would be find acceptance among God's people
(2 Cor 13:7 NIV) Now we pray to God <u>that you will not do anything wrong.</u> Not that people will see that we have stood the test but <u>that you will do what is right</u> even though we may seem to have failed. (2 Cor 13:9 NIV) We are glad whenever we are weak but you are strong; and <u>our prayer is for your perfection.</u> (NASB) For we rejoice when we ourselves are weak but you are strong; this we also pray for, <u>that you be made complete.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God's people would act in a way that is right, shunning that which is wrong ... in order that they become "perfect" or mature in the faith (ie "thoroughly equipped" – Strong's; "a making fit", implying a process leading to consummation – Vine's)
(Eph 1:17-19a NIV) I keep asking <u>that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.</u> I pray also <u>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, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would impart to His holy ones His Spirit of wisdom & revelation so that they would know Him ever more intimately and truly; and • That He would open the spiritual eyes of His people so that they would grow in their understanding and experience of the HOPE for which they have been called, of the RICHES of God's glorious inheritance in them; and • His incredibly, awesome POWER that is at work in them as believers
(Eph 3:16-19 NIV) I pray <u>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.</u> And I pray <u>that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would strengthen His people with His power so that Christ might become truly at home in their innermost beings; • That they might be empowered by God's Spirit to lay hold of the immeasurable and unfathomable love of Christ; and

<p><u>how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That they would become filled “into” all the fullness of God
<p>(Eph 6:18-20 NIV) And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and <u>always keep on praying for all the saints.</u> Pray also for me, <u>that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel,</u> for which I am an ambassador in chains. <u>Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are exhorted to pray in a general sense for all God’s people everywhere, ie praise, thanksgiving & petition using every form of prayer; • We are also exhorted to pray in a specific sense for those called to proclaim the Good News ... that each time they open their mouths to share God’s Good News, God would give them “utterance” (a “word” or freedom in their “speech”) in order that they be free to proclaim the Good News boldly, ie without fear of what man might do or what man might think, without fear of any negative consequences – rather with faith in God’s faithfulness and will to bring forth good fruit to His praise & glory
<p>(Phil 1:9-11 NIV) And this is my prayer: <u>that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the love of God’s people might increasingly abound with the spiritual ability to test & approve those things that are “excellent” (ie that far surpass the “ordinary”) ... • So that they might be proven (through the testing of their faith) to be both pure/sincere and blameless (“not led into sin”) until the day Jesus returns ... filled to the full with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ ... to the glory and praise of God
<p>(Phil 1:19 NIV) for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out <u>for my deliverance.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would turn adverse situations (eg “chains” or imprisonment or opposition to the Gospel) into situations of advantage for the Gospel and for the deliverance of God’s servants from the intentions of those who oppose the Gospel and God’s servants (N.B. Paul points out that God works deliverance through the complementary activities of His praying people and through the working of His Holy Spirit)
<p>(Col 1:9-12 NIV) For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and <u>asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.</u> 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, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would fill His people (to the full) with the knowledge, perception and discernment of His will in/through all spiritual wisdom and (spiritual) understanding (implying that we can only truly discern God’s will as we receive the working of God’s Spirit within our spirits, not merely through engaging our rational minds in a study and pursuit of the things of God) ... for what purpose??? • So that they may live a life that is worthy of the Lord (and of the Gospel of Christ – see Phil.1:27), ie a life that truly honours and glorifies His holy name both in attitude, word

	<p>and deed – so that when people rub shoulders with them, they sense a little of the presence and beauty of Christ;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order that they may please Him by bearing the fruit of good works and by growing in their knowledge of God (ie their discernment of His nature & character, and of His ways) ... strengthened within with all God’s divine power and might ... thus enabling them to endure all the tests of life with great patience and joy and with a truly thankful heart in all situations of life
<p>(Col 4:2-4 NIV) Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, <u>that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.</u>s</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God would open “a door for the word”, a way open for the “word”, ie the Gospel message, or the preaching of the Gospel ... for what purpose??? God’s work is preparatory and necessary for man to do God’s work: • So that His servants may speak out the glorious mystery of Christ (ie the message of God’s plan of redemption that was once hidden but has now been revealed through the Spirit to those to whom He gives the gift of faith); • And that in speaking out this Gospel message, they would render or make it to be “apparent” or “manifest” to the hearts and minds of their hearers
<p>(Col 4:12 NIV) Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, <u>that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That God’s people may stand firm and established, “perfect” (mature) and “fully assured” / “convinced” in all aspects of the will of God (N.B. perfect pass. or middle participle from verb “to fill” = “to be absolutely convinced, feel certain”)
<p>(1 Th 3:10 NIV) Night and day we pray most earnestly <u>that we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul’s prayer for these believers is rooted in a deep and affectionate relationship – a mutual relationship in which their strong & enduring faith brought much encouragement and joy to his spirit (amid the distresses of persecution), and his care for them brought them ongoing help in the growth of their Christian faith • The earnestness of Paul’s longing in praying to see them again is also noteworthy, especially from his words how “night & day exceedingly praying” – one has to say that one of the greatest weaknesses in Christian praying may be half-heartedness (a “child” to apathy) • Paul’s most earnest prayer is that God would open a way for him to see their faces once again so that he as their spiritual father might have opportunity to “perfect” (Strong: “to complete thoroughly”; lit./fig. “to repair or adjust”) what was still lacking (“deficient”; ie where they were “falling short” in their

	<p>understanding of Christian truth as well as in their life of faith) in their faith ... hence this prayer request is that God would open ways for His servants to continually build up and “repair” the faith of God’s people – so that they might live a life of faith that is both pleasing to God and of maximum joy and benefit to them</p>
<p>(2 Th 1:11-12 NIV) With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, <u>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. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him,</u> according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The background to Paul’s prayer is his focus upon the great events that will take place at the moment of Christ’s return: His being glorified in His people and being marvelled at by them (vs.10) – “with this in mind”, how are they to live now? Therefore, Paul prays for them ... • That God would count (not “make”) them worthy (ie “fit”) of His calling them into an eternal relationship with Himself as His own holy and beloved children (ie to be worthy of the rights & privileges as His children, worthy of the honour to be identified with the name of Jesus Christ, worthy of the privilege to partake in Christ’s inheritance, worthy to be entrusted with “divine duties”) ... so as to please and honour our Lord in all aspects of our lives (cf. different focus in v. 5, ie the certainty on the day of judgment, after having suffered in the present day, that “you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering”) • That God, through releasing the flow of His divine power and energy, would bring to a fulfilment every desire for goodness and every work or act of faith in the minds and hearts of the believers (desires and acts which He Himself has already planted within them!) – TEV/GNB “May he fulfill by his power all your desire for goodness and complete your work of faith.” NLT “And we pray that God, by his power, will fulfill all your good intentions and faithful deeds.”
<p>(2 Th 3:1-3 NIV) Finally, brothers, pray for us <u>that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you. And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith.</u> But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul’s heart’s desire (inspired by God’s Holy Spirit = hence God’s heart’s desire) was for the “running” of the word of the Lord. (When this verb is used together with “logos”, it comes to mean: “a message which becomes widely and rapidly known” (taken from LOGOS 2.0c Greek-English Lexicon of the NT) – which shows God’s heart that His truth/Gospel spread widely and rapidly and become known in all places – which also implies that God’s heart is grieved whenever the word/Gospel is allowed to remain dormant as a seed and isn’t taken and planted in other parts of the world, because God’s people do nothing or are not interested in the spread of the Gospel – which also implies that we are not in tune with God’s heart (our hearts are cold and sickly) if we have no desire for the word of God to spread through

	<p>us to others – which must indicate a state of lukewarmness and disobedience, a sin to be repented from (cf. we’re often told that we shouldn’t feel guilty about not witnessing – but is this a false or a true guilt? True guilt is related to sin and sin is to be confessed and dealt with), a spiritual state to be even more concerned about than hearing from a doctor that we have an internal cancerous growth – but it also means that God will hear and answer this prayer and bless the spread of the Gospel wherever His servants take it though the fruit or results may not be apparent immediately. Our God is a God both of sowing and also of harvest, that the two go hand in hand, and that the sowing be done in true faith that He will bring a harvest in His time, by His power, in response to our faithfulness in sowing the seeds of truth.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paul also prayed that the word or message of the Gospel/the Lord would be “honoured” or “glorified” (= to be rendered or made glorious; to be magnified or exalted) – this was/is God’s holy work which He does through His faithful servants who declare it; thus it was the responsibility of God’s servants to uphold or magnify the word of the Gospel (= raise up the truth before the minds of men, honouring it as the Word and truth of the eternal God), and through prayer, God would honour His truth and cause it to spread widely and rapidly (N.B. Matthew Henry’s Commentary) • Paul asked God’s people to also pray that God would deliver them from the hands of “unreasonable & wicked men” (= men who do not believe in or honour God’s Good News), ie those who would hinder the progress and spread of the Gospel through their evil and cunning ways and opposition to it – in other words, through fervent and faithful praying, God’s people can stand against the tide of evil opposition that would otherwise engulf and destroy the people of God and frustrate the progress of God’s Gospel; or, without diligence in prayer, God’s people as it were can allow the enemy a free hand to put up road-blocks in the way of the spread of the Gospel
<p>(1 Tim 2:1 NIV) I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone--for kings and all those in authority, <u>that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timothy was instructed to teach the believers to be faithful in prayer for EVERYONE, including rulers and people in positions of authority within the society – asking God to so guide them in all the affairs of government that God’s people might live peaceful and tranquil lives (cf. lives marked by confusion and conflict) in a true reverence for God (godliness, piety) and a sense of His awesome majesty and grandeur (solemnity, dignity, devoutness) – how noteworthy it is

	<p>that a life of peace and piety in the fear of God is clearly linked with the faithful, earnest prayers of God's people for the leaders of their society (though it could not be supported by the wider Scriptural context to conclude that where there are oppressive & repressive governments, this indicates a failure of God's people to pray hard enough for their leaders)</p>
<p>(1 Tim 5:5 NIV) The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to <u>pray and to ask God for help</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Here is the most fundamental dimension of prayer for God's children, viz. humbly asking Father-God for help in the face of some crisis, as in the case of a widow bereft of any other human support • Paul underscores the truth that asking for God's help through prayer is how we put our hope in God when faced with life's dilemmas or crises; ie how we show that we are true "believers", children who live in total dependence upon the grace and kindness of their loving, heavenly Father, who "live by their faith" – which means that when we fail to pray but try to solve our problems through other means (human or spiritual), we grieve our Father who is thereby unable to show us more of His amazing grace and frustrated in His desire to release His power for our good; also we show how ignorant we are of our <i>real</i> human condition, thinking that we can (or should) tackle life's dilemmas in the tough-it-out-by-yourself way like everyone else – in other words, we fail to enter into and enjoy the special benefits of being a child of the living God

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