

**THE PRAYER LIFE OF PAUL**  
**Personal Prayer Life**  
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What I wanted to do was make into one handout that you could keep permanently in your Bible the content of the apostle Paul's prayer life. There are a lot of scripture here that relate to prayer. Next week I'll give another handout. That handout will be the specific prayers Paul prayed. This handout tells us what his prayer life was like, what kind of things he was praying about. Next week we'll have a different set of scripture that give us approximately eleven specific prayers.

We've been in the series for some weeks on prayer. We're especially looking the past few Sunday nights on the theme of prayer in the New Testament. We looked first at the prayer life of Jesus. Then at the prayer life of the early church. Now we're looking at Paul's prayer life.

The beginning of the Christian life of Paul is marked by prayer. The first time we see him after he has become a Christian he is introduced to us with the words from Acts chapter 9 that the Lord speaks to a man named Ananias. Ananias is given instructions, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul for he is praying."

There is in scripture what some hold to be a law of first mention. That is when something is mentioned for the first time it becomes a control word for interpretation in the rest of scripture. I'm not sure that that is a law that can always be applied to every situation. But certainly when used of Paul, the law of first mention applies. The first time we see him as a new believer he is seen as praying. And he will be that way all of his life.

I suppose if there is anything I could say to new converts here is start out the Christian life by being a person of prayer. That will always characterize your Christian experience. If you've not become a person of prayer yet begin to be characterized by that. "For he is praying."

As you look through Paul's thirteen letters he never gives us a comprehensive autobiographical statement on praying. That is he doesn't tell us how he prays. He doesn't tell us what set times of prayer that he has. He doesn't particularly tell us when he prays. Nor does he set down and say, "Now in this letter or in this chapter I'm going to tell you everything I know about prayers. Trying to be systematic so here it is." I suppose it pleased the Holy Spirit that he simply delivers his soul in the letters. Then it comes later for the Bible teachers that we'll have something to do to put it all together and say, This is what Paul taught on prayer.

It almost seems as you read Paul that he assumes that prayer will be natural to the Christian life. As natural to the Christian life as breathing is to the biological life. He almost takes for granted that the Christian will be one who gives himself to God in prayer.

As we look through these scriptures found in Paul's letters about prayer tonight we will see five things in broad outline.

1. The first thing we will see that prayer appears for Paul not to be something just reserved for special times of the day.

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We don't know whether Paul had specific prayer times. Like every morning at 6:00 he rose and spent the first half-hour in prayer. He never tells us that at all. So we know nothing about the regularized, systematized nature of his life of prayer as a Christian.

But when we do read what he has to say about prayer we find that prayer appears all during his life and during the workday. He says for example to the Thessalonians 5:17 "Pray without ceasing." That word in the English doesn't quite convey what he actually meant by it because pray without ceasing to us connotes a person who is praying every single minute. But that's really not the kind of prayer Paul is talking about. The word "without ceasing" in the Greek language could be used for example of a person who had a hacking cough. There is no way to regulate the cough. We really have very little power in controlling our cough. It erupts. Paul is saying prayer is like that in our life. We find it not so much regulated but all during the day and even during the night hours we find that prayer is an instinct we turn to.

As you go through the thirteen letters although you find no systematic teaching on prayer you will find that there are over fifty incidences in the letters where in the course of it Paul just erupts and starts talking about prayer. Or starts praying. Or gives some instruction on prayer. I think that's the way he evidently lived.

I'm convinced in reading Paul and studying him afresh on prayer that if a person came to him and said, I have a need and I need you to pray about it. He would have not have said, I'll pray with you about that and we'll remember you in our prayers. And gone off. I think he stopped right then and prayed about that right now. That's a good kind of praying and it certainly marks Paul's life. Prayer is not reserved just for special times in the day. It's not just something you do when you're feeling holy. Or just in a set apart season. It's all day long. Continual communication with the Lord.

The second thing that I notice about the apostle's prayer life is there is a pervasiveness in prayer in his daily life.

This is really just an extension of point one. But a pervasiveness in his prayer. He contains references to personal prayer like Romans 12:12 "Be faithful in prayer." Ephesians 6:18 "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind be alert and always keep on praying for the saints." Whatever turn the day takes keep that in prayer. Philippians 1:3 "I thank God every time I remember you." Philippians 4:6 "Don't be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God." Colossians 1:9 "Since the day we heard about you we have not stopped praying for you."

Think about that for a moment. Paul had never met many of the Colossian believers. He did not found that church. It was founded by people in the church at Ephesus whom he had pioneered. Yet he said, From the first day I heard that the gospel got to you I have not stopped praying for you. Colossians 4:2 "Devote yourselves to prayer being watchful and thankful." He makes this statement about one of his fellow workers. Epaphras "He is always wrestling in prayer for you." He says to the Thessalonians, 1 Thessalonians 3:10 "Night and day we pray most earnestly." And to Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:3 "Night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers." And to the Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians 1:11 "We constantly pray for you."

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I'm intrigued by the fact that when Paul uses the term "night and day." He doesn't say "Day and night." He reverses it. That may suggest that he spent a lot of time up at night praying for people.

We sometimes think that the Christian life is one that is anxiety free. Yet for a person who has responsibilities there are concerns. Maybe not worries in the worldly and evil sense but real legitimate concerns. Paul at one time says that he has upon him the concern for all the churches. There was evidently many a night when Paul did not easily fall to sleep. Instead of letting those night times be times of worry and frustration, he turned them positively into times of prayer and thanksgiving. So he could say in the watches of the night, I have been praying for you. Prayer pervaded his conscious life.

A third thing we can see about Paul's praying is that his prayers emphasize thanksgiving. It is not just once but it is all throughout his praying. He thanks God for the Roman Christians whom also he had not yet met at the time he writes the letter, that "their faith is reported all over the world." He thanks God for the Corinthians "because of the grace given them in Christ Jesus." We need to focus on that for a moment. When Paul writes the Corinthians, he's got a lot of things he needs to correct that is wrong with that church. But he begins by being grateful for what he can thank God for. That's a good pattern. We all have people relationships that need to be corrected, need to be tended to. But in the process of tending to them, the Lord would have us wherever possible begins with thanksgiving.

To the Philippians he is thankful for their partnership in the gospel. "I thank God for every time I remember you in all my prayers for you. I always pray with joy." What a wonderful attitude that is to have toward another person. Or toward another group of people. Every time I pray, it's not that I go into some heaviness or some sort of travail. But I pray for you with joy. Paul is not able to say that of some of the churches. But he was able to say it to the Philippians. He says to the Colossians "We have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints." He's able to thank the Lord for the Thessalonians that their work is produced by faith, labor is prompted by love and endurance is inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." He tells the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 3:9 that he thanks God for "all the joy that we have in the presence of God because of you." And in 2 Thessalonians he writes "Because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth." To Timothy, he thanks God that he considered him, Paul, faithful appointing him to his service." And to Philemon he is thankful because he heard about his "faith in Jesus and his love for all the saints."

Thanksgiving is meant to be a dominant aspect of our prayer life. We might pause for a moment when we are praying for people and run through these scriptures. Wherever we find thanksgiving in Paul, instead of reading Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians or Timothy substitute the people in our life. Maybe when we're praying for the church too. Doing like Paul did to the Philippians, Whenever I consider the ministry of this church and the people of the church, I pray with joy and give thanks to God for your work of faith. This is a church that is trying to see faith at work, trying to see love laboring, trying to see hope enduring. That trinity of qualities which is so essential to a well-ordered character. Faith is not something floosy out there and a random kind of a belief. Faith has practicality. Love has expression. And hope has to endure. Thank God for that.

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Paul tells us to add to our thanksgiving, singing. Ephesians 5:20 “Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks to God for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.” We ought to sing when we pray and give thanks. In everything, Philippians 4:6 “By prayer and thanksgiving present your requests to God.” In everything give thanks. Thank him for the character he’s building in you.

I’m an expert at being grumpy. A lot of sermons I preach I never preach to anybody except me. If I could just learn this truth: in everything by prayer and thanksgiving present my request to God. If we don’t do it with prayer and thanksgiving we haven’t saturated it with any kind of soil of acceptance. We simply come to God with a grocery list of demands. God does not want us to go through life as brittle people. Brittle people break. I’d much rather be elastic. I can be pulled this way and that and I don’t get out of joint. I just keep on going. Prayer and thanksgiving are designed to produce elasticity in us.

So he writes to the Thessalonians, “Give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will concerning you.” 1 Timothy 2:1 “I urge then that thanksgiving be made for everyone. And everyone means kings and those in places of authority.” Not for the person as much as for the position. But to thank God that we live in a society where maybe we don’t agree with all the rulings that are made but at least we live in a stable society. Partially stable.

An attitude of thanksgiving keeps turning all the blows of life into advances. Instead of receiving something as a mortal blow we can turn around and say, it was meant for my harm. It was meant for the church’s harm but God’s going to make it for the good. It’s not just Christians in America who give thanks for people in places in authority. But it’s Christians everywhere in their particular lands who give God thanks for everything from the mayor to the president or dictator. God through that is at work.

People are changed by watching our lives and how we respond to these adversities. Give thanks to God in all circumstances.

We’re even told in 1 Timothy to give thanks for food. “Everything that God created is good. Nothing is to be rejected if it’s received with thanksgiving because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.”

A few weeks ago I messed up table prayers by saying I never found Jesus blessing food. He blessed God and gave thanks for food. Here Paul says when we set down at a meal we can thank God that everything he created is good and it’s been consecrated by the word of God and prayer. So I suppose we can pray, “Lord, set apart this food for it’s right use in my body.”

Why is it that when we set down at a meal we are to give thanks? Because mealtimes are when we are together. It’s when our family conversations take place. Why should we give thanks? Because we’re to set a context for that relationship. The giving of thanks doesn’t become a ritual of the meal. But it becomes a reality in the relationship. Giving thanks.

Prayer is always breaking in to every day situations. It’s pervasive in Paul. Thanksgiving is everywhere present.

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And the fourth thing we want to look at as a main kind of part of the Apostle Paul's prayer life is we want to ask the question, What are the prayer requests of an apostle? What's he praying for?

As you go through this list I've given you, you find he's praying essentially for four things. I can reduce his prayer life in terms of requests to four areas of prayer.

First, he is praying for the salvation of others. Romans 10:1. He says, "I pray that all Israel will be saved." It's a prayer that burdens his heart. Care for his own people. His own family. His own nation. Lord, save those who are near to me who are of my flesh and blood. It's appropriate that we pray for those who are around us and be constantly in prayer that they will be saved.

Second thing that he prays for is for those who are already in authority. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 "For kings and those in authority that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." There are some people who think maybe the church of Jesus Christ can only grow when they are being persecuted, so bring on the persecution so we can grow more. Granted the church does grow greatly in persecution. But Paul also saw the church growing in a time of peace. He's praying therefore that God will help the leaders of the government bring about a stable place in society because he holds the position that a dictatorship is better than anarchy. That the rule of a czar is better than tumultuous rioting in the streets. Therefore he prays, "Help the social conditions to be stable so that we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and holiness."

He's praying for other people to be saved. He's praying for those in authority.

He is also praying for other Christians. He has a real shopping list of prayer requests for other Christians. Let's note a few of these things which he's praying for other Christians, which we can then turn around and use to pray for other believers.

2 Corinthians 13:7 he prays that you will not do anything wrong. That'd be a great one for parents to pray.

For the Colossians, chapter 1, he has one basic prayer request and has four reasons supporting it. He prays that they will be filled with the knowledge of his will through spiritual wisdom and understanding. We pray this in order that one, you may lead a life worthy of the Lord; two, may please him in every way; three, may bear fruit in ever good work; four, may grow in the knowledge of God and five, may be strengthened in all power according to his glorious might so that you might have great endurance and patience. Wisdom and understanding will give you these things. A life worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way, bearing fruit, growing, and being strengthened.

For the Thessalonian believer he prays this "That we may see you again and supply what is lacking in your faith." I was staggered at that. That phrase "supply what is lacking in your faith" almost sounds like a superiority kind of thing but it's not. Here Paul is speaking to immature Christians saying "I want to supply what is lacking in your faith." That's a dynamic attitude because it says maybe the Lord has imparted something in our life that he hasn't imparted yet or someone else hasn't yet secured and that the purpose of ministry whether it's one on one witness or whether it's pulpit preaching or whatever is that we might supply what is

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lacking in one another. There needs to be that confidence that when we share with other people the Lord has given us something vital to share so that what is incomplete in someone else may become complete through our ministry. Dynamic attitude. He's not praying, "I hope when I go there I'll make a great impression on these people so that they'll invite me back." But "I pray that I'll supply what is lacking in your faith."

He is praying for the believers and these requests in 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 "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 faith that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you." God, count this person worthy of his calling. Give him power to fulfill every good purpose. Glorify the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To Philemon he's praying in verse 6 "That you may be active in sharing your faith so that you may have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

I never find Paul praying that the church will be more spiritual. "Spiritual" means different things to different people. I like the term "more Christlike." Because "spiritual" we may identify with some cultural habit or some emotional characteristic of the service. Spiritual means different things. Real pride can generate in a group that's praying for the group to be more spiritual. The idea is if we pray the church to be more spiritual then they'll be like us who are more spiritual who are praying that the less spiritual will be more spiritual. Paul's prayer was "Help the church to be more Christ centered. Help it to be more Christ filled. Help it to be more Christ like. Help it to be more Christ empowered. Help it to be more Holy Spirit endued. Give it wisdom. Give it love. Give it character. Give it power. Give it depth. Give it breath. Give it evangelism. God, do this in your church."

That's a great way to pray for the body of Christ.

Another thing I notice about his prayer requests is that he does not focus anything at all on praying for other people's physical healthy. I'm sure he did this. I'm not saying that the absence of it says he wasn't praying for people's spiritual health. But you go through all his prayer requests, all these fifty plus times, and never once does he pray to the church "I hear you all have the Asian flu and I pray that you all be well." That's not to say he wasn't praying for that. But his concern was on spiritual and emotional health. If you're well physically but you're ill emotionally and spiritually that's no good. And you're not going to get along with God and other people. So Paul's praying for those kind of fundamental things. That suggests to me that his focus in praying is on internal changes rather than external changes.

The more I study prayer in the New Testament the more I see prayer as not some rabbit's foot you get out and you start rubbing real hard when you hit a rough circumstance. But I see prayer as a vitalizing force for changing the internality of the insides of our life when things on the outside are yielding and aren't opening as we had anticipated or expected. He prays fill them with knowledge, fill them love, give them an insight into your power and into your might and into the glorious love of God who brought Jesus Christ to us. That's the focus of his praying. I think I'm reading Paul fairly. His focus was on internal praying. Not to say he didn't see God do things externally – he did. He prayed for Publius' father on the island of Malta and the man was healed of a high fever. In the book of Acts he prayed for Eutychus who fell out of the window. There were circumstances. I wouldn't intimate that all prayer is just happening on the

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inside. But I'm saying the dominant central focus of Paul's teaching on prayer appears to be rearranging the data of the life. "Lord, what are my responses to this?"

So he's praying for the church.

Then a fourth category of his praying. He's praying first for the salvation of the lost then he was praying for people in authority. Then he prayed for the church, other believers. Then he prayed for himself. He says flat out to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 5:25 "Pray for us." Thessalonians was the second letter that Paul wrote. Galatians was his first. If you read Galatians carefully you will not find one reference to prayer in the letter. Not surprising. For two reasons: one, it is a church with which he is having a great deal of frustration because they have practically apostatized from the faith into legalism. And maybe, just maybe, in Paul's prayer life that is a growth of development. Maybe in those early years of his Christian walk there was still a little bit more Saul in him than Paul. He who had been used in winning arguments by grabbing people by the hair and straightening them out had not yet fully gotten over that tendency as an apostle starting out. So he had maybe not yet learned to approach things in an atmosphere of thanksgiving and prayer. By the time he writes Thessalonians his second letter, he's improving. He simply says, "Brothers pray for us." He doesn't say what to pray for but just pray for us. When you come to every letter after that you find him being very specific about what he wanted people to pray about.

He said to the Romans in 1:8 "I pray that now at last by God's will I may come to you." He follows that up at the end of the letter in 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." Four requests: "That I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea. That my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there so that, three, by God's will I may come to you in joy and [four] together with you be refreshed." That's the prayer list right there. That's one of the most incredible prayer lists in scripture. It's an elaboration of "By God's will I may come to you." From the time he prays that until it is fulfilled it is months and in one or two cases years go by before the prayers are answered. Was he rescued from the unbelievers in Judea? Yes. Roman soldiers saved him from being torn apart by a mob. Why is he praying that his service in Jerusalem maybe acceptable to the saints? He's bringing a bag of money to the Christians there. There were people in the Jerusalem church saying, I would rather die than take any money that this apostle to the Gentiles is bringing. He simply prays that prayer will turn the key. Then he prays that by God's will he may come to them in joy. Somebody could have said to him when he prayed that, "God's will for you to come to the Romans with joy is going to be you're going to be almost torn apart in a mob riot in Jerusalem and then you're going to get arrested and set in jail in Caesarea for two years while corrupt governors wait for you to bribe them which you won't do. Then finally when you're about to be assassinated you're going to appeal to Caesar and you're going to get on a prison ship and go to Rome. In the middle of the Mediterranean you're going to be drifting for two weeks without knowing where you're going. Then you're going to crack up and nearing drown. You're going to get bit by a snake on Malta and winter there as a prison. Then finally you're going to come to Rome in chains. That's God's will to get you to Rome. You want to embrace God's will?" It's good that sometimes we don't know what God's will is. But we can pray "By God's will..."

Was he refreshed with the Roman Christian when he finally got there. You better believe it. They met him outside of town at a place called Three Taverns. They were refreshed and

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strengthened by one another's companionship. To the Corinthians he writes in 2 Corinthians 1:10-11 "That he will continue to deliver us as you help us by your prayers." And again in 12:8 "Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it from me [the thorn in the flesh – something that affected him physically]." To the Philippians writing from a prison cell he says "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 for which I am in chains. Pray that I also may declare physically as I should for I know that through your prayers and the help given to me by the Spirit of Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance." Give me strength to be a witness. Help this to turn out for my deliverance.

Then writing again from prison to the Colossians. "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. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should."

Again, from prison, Philemon 22 "I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers."

Early on in his ministry he had expressed a prayer to the Thessalonians long before his imprisonment. 2 Thessalonians 3 "Pray brothers that the message of our 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."

What do we make of all these prayer requests for himself? Paul's overriding concern is the impact his life can have for God. He is not interested in personal well being for the sake of his own pleasure or satisfaction. He never prays for happiness. He prays for usefulness. He prays for boldness. He prays for strength. He prays for the gospel to be open up to him for other people. But never, never does he pray simply that life will be more comfortable for him. He has an overriding concern that his life will be an honor and bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ. A great way to pray for yourself.

There's a fifth category of his praying. We've looked at the fact that his praying continually interrupted his life, the pervasiveness of his prayer, his thankfulness in prayer, then his requests in prayer. I've got a miscellaneous as point five.

Additional insights on prayer. Six quick points.

His prayer emphasizes our bond to God. Romans 8:15 "By him we cry 'Abba, Father.'" He emphasizes the help of the Spirit in prayer. He found many times in his prayer life he didn't know how to pray. He was stumped. He was too tired. He was too unsure of what God wanted to do. He was too crushed by adversities. So he freely admitted "We do not know how to pray as we ought." In those moments what's happening, "The Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words can't express. He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit." The man who says I do not know how to pray as I ought, turns around three verses later and says, "I know God is working good in everything." There are times in life we don't know, while we know. We don't know how to pray as we ought but we know God is working for the good. Paul says in those times when we don't know how to pray intelligently or we're too crushed by life to pray accurately or to pray with any kind of perception the Spirit kicks in in our life and prays for us according to God's will because he searches the mind of the Father and he searches the hidden recesses of the heart and he's able to unite the two.

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He emphasizes praying with the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 14:14-15 “I will pray in a tongue. My spirit prays. My mind is unfruitful so what shall I do. I will pray with my spirit and I will also pray with my mind. I will sing with my spirit and I will also sing with my mind.” An action of will. There are moments in life when one does not know intelligently what to pray and the Spirit must take over and pray for us in language that we do not understand. So we come to God and pray in an unknown tongue. And I will sing in prayer. I will sing with my mind and I will sing with the Spirit.

Praying in tongues and singing in tongues is not something to be afraid of. It’s not something to have doctrinal arguments over. It’s a help to the prayer life. I find that the Holy Spirit is always wanting to break through when I’m in prayer with God and override sometimes my super-sophisticated ideas of intelligence.

Another thing Paul says about personal prayer. Some seasons of prayer are meant to be private. 2 Corinthians 12 tells us about that. He has a revelation that he never shared with the Corinthians about a man who was caught up into the third heaven, the dwelling place of God. It says it happened fourteen years ago. He’d known the Corinthians all during that time and never told them about his mystical experience in prayer. I’m convinced there are some experiences in prayer that are meant to be private. Paul only brings it out when the super apostles are bragging about their exploits.

He finds also that prayer replaces anxiety and produces peace. Philippians 4:6-7 “Do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” When I come to pray and I’m so troubled by life, as I begin to give thanks and make myself available to God, God moves his peace into my life displacing the anxiety and the trouble.

Joy rather than anger or argument is meant to be a companion of prayer. 1 Thessalonians 5 “Be joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances.” 1 Timothy 2:8 “I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer without anger or disputing.” Joy and peace, the companions of prayer.

Some questions for reflection:

During the day and the night, is my routine interrupted by prayer? It’s so possible as a Christian to labor under guilt. To say, I’m not really a good prayer because I don’t spend hours in prayer, a block of time everyday. We live in condemnation and we wish we could get the discipline to spend long blocks of time in prayer. Maybe we need to just let the Holy Spirit be natural with us and throughout the day driving, at work, in conversation with somebody, we pray. Whether it’s silently or with someone. We let prayer be a natural part of our everyday, every night environment. Instead of living under condemnation, we give thanks the Lord that interesting all the moments of our life there is prayer. Not do without the blocks of time but thank God for the times we do pray. And increase those times. Is my night and day marked by times of prayer?

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Will I commit to pray pervasively? Will I devote myself to pray? Is thanksgiving a key opening element in my prayers and a dominant cord in my life? Do I thank God more than I complain? Do my prayers include petitions for the salvation of the lost, for those in governmental authority, for the church and fellow believers? And what do my prayers consist of for myself? Am I praying that things will be easier for me or that I will shine more brightly for Christ? And do my prayers spill over into my emotional life so that in the time with the Lord I find myself at peace with God and security is displacing anxiety and joy displacing anger?

Lord Jesus, we looked at the prayer life tonight of one of your choice servants. Probably there's so much we haven't seen in it. But maybe we have seen a little bit and it's been a help and inspiration to us. We want to thank you, Lord Jesus, for this word which the apostle shares with us about his praying. We want to be people of prayer. We want to open our hearts to you. We sense that the Spirit is at work in the service in a wonderful spirit of thanksgiving and adoration to your name. And how you bring release as we praise you and adore you. Thank you, Lord. We want to pray that you'll reach deeper into our life and cause us to be more committed to you. Cause us to trust in you more than we've ever trusted in you. We pray Lord Jesus for the path of peace in all of our relationships which comes not from the easy way of asking for happiness but comes through the cross where we find you involved in the work of forgiveness and reconciliation and release. Make us Christ like in our attitudes, Christ like in our language, Christ like in our relationships. All of us are flesh and the salt in us keeps trying to come through. May you in us prevail over all the evil one. Grant in this community we as an entire church body may ever proclaim your name with increasing boldness and fearless witness. May we explode in times of joy as a congregation. May we be reserved when it's time to be reserved and may we come spontaneously with joy and adoration in moments when that's appropriate to our hearts. Release our emotional life. Release our will to serve you. Establish your work and plan in our life. May your blessing be upon each one. May each make the choices in their own life which come out of a deep desire first to please you. I pray that you would minister and surround those in our body who need special touch of love and assurance from another human being, another member of the body. That we as a body will know what it is to encourage one another, to build one another up, to love one another, to be hospitable to one another. Help us to care for one another and to forgive one another and to be gracious and be easy on one another and not judge one another. But to support one another. Help us to be the people you want. Bless your people, Lord. Refresh us on our way. Thank you for your great love. In Jesus' name. Amen.