

Using the Word of God in Prayer (Part II): Learning from the Prayers of Paul

In the Bible, there are numerous records of the *fact* and the *act* of praying. There are also many records of verbatim prayers. The Bible speaks often of Jesus praying, but there are only a few instances where the actual words of the prayers are recorded. The same is also true of the prayers of the Apostle Paul, the Early Church and many others in the Bible.

Distinguishing between the recorded prayers (actual words) and the records (references or descriptions and summaries) of the prayers in the Bible is helpful. An example of a record of praying is in 1Thes 1:2-3, where Paul tells of what he prayed for, not giving us the identical words of the prayers. In 1Thes 3:11-13, he gives the verbatim prayer. We are not to minimize the value of the descriptions or the summaries of prayers. The entire Bible is inspired by God. However, if we desire and aspire to use the Scriptures to pray, an effective strategy is to first focus on the actual words of the recorded prayers to learn from the prayer and learn how to pray.

Ultimately, we should develop proficiency in using both the records of prayers and the recorded prayers. The records of prayers are indispensable in shaping and developing a balanced theology of prayer. Studying (reading, reflecting, researching and recording) and praying (responding to) the recorded prayers will enhance our practice of prayer. Many of the Psalms contain the actual words of the prayers of the Psalmists.

To pray effectively, we must be filled with Spirit of God and the Word of God. These are parallel and equivalent to each other in their effects. We are filled with the Spirit of God to the extent that we are filled with the Word of God (Eph 5:15-21 cf. Col 3:15-17). Jesus said that if we abide in Him and His Word abides in us, our prayers will be answered (Jn 15:7). This is one of the keys to answered prayers. The Holy Spirit has recorded the very words of many prayers, so that the people of God might learn how to pray more effectively (cf. Rom 15:4). We need to understand the connection and correlation between praying in the Spirit and Praying the Word of God.

Listening to and using the prayers of others is one of the disciplines in the early stages of the development of the skill and art of praying. There is a parallel between learning to speak and learning to pray.

Praying using the Scriptures is similar to learning to speak by listening to someone. Never-the-less, on another plane, it is totally different. Praying using the Scriptures is not just parroting the words of another person, but it is an authoritative and effective use of the Word of God.

When using the Scriptures to pray, you will find that not every portion of Scripture lends itself readily to praying it. As you are initiating this practice, it is advisable to choose portions that are easier to work with and allow yourself to grow in the discipline through practice. After you have developed enough of a comfort level and skills, you can approach the more challenging portions, cf. 2Peter 1:3-11; Eph 1:3-14, etc.

Here are some of the records of prayers (references to prayer and praying) and recorded prayers of the Apostle Paul to get you started in the practice of using the Scriptures to pray. (We can and need to do the same with the other records of prayers and recorded prayers in the Bible). Reading, reflecting, recording and praying the prayers in the Bible is both instructive and effective. It will revolutionize your prayer life like nothing else will. You will not want to go back to the old practices after you feel the intimacy, experience the satisfaction and see the fruits.

Examples of Paul's Prayers:

- Eph 1:15-23
- Eph 3:13-21
- Phil 1:9-11
- Col 1:9-14
- 1Thes 3:11-13
- Rom 15:5-6, 13
- Heb 13:20-21 (We are not sure that the Apostle Paul wrote Hebrews, but we will look at a prayer recorded there also).

Eph 1:15-23 (Record of or Recorded?)

¹⁵For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷I keep asking 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. ¹⁸I 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, ¹⁹and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, ²⁰which he exerted in Christ

when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²²And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

[Eph 3:13-21](#) (Record of or Recorded?)

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

[Phil 1:9-11](#) (Record of or Recorded?)

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

[Col 1:9-14](#) (Record of or Recorded?)

⁹For 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. ¹⁰And 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, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you¹ to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. ¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

[1Thes 3:11-13](#) (Record of or Recorded?)

¹¹Now may our God and Father himself and our Lord Jesus clear the way for us to come to you. ¹²May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

[Romans 15:5-6, 13](#) (Record of or Recorded?)

⁵May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, ⁶so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

[Heb 13:20-21](#) (Record of or Recorded?)

²⁰May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, ²¹equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

[Other Helpful Prayers in the Bible:](#)

- The Disciple's Prayer: Matt 6:9-15; Lu 11:1-4
- The Lord's Prayer: Jn 17:1-26
- The Early Church's Prayer: Acts 4:29-31; cf. 1:24-25
- David's Prayer: Ps 51; Ps 32
- Solomon's Prayer: 1Kings 3:7-9; 2Chron 6:12-42
- Nehemiah's Prayer: Neh 1:4-11
- Daniel's Prayer: Dan 9:4-19
- Moses' Prayer: Ex 32:30-32; cf. Ex 33:12-23, Nu 14:13-19
- Ezra's Prayer: Ezra 9:5-15; cf. Neh 9:5-37
- Jabez's Prayer: 1Chron 4:9-10
- Joshua's Prayer: Josh 7:6-13 esp. vs. 7-9
- Hannah's Prayer: 1Sam 1:11 cf. 1Sam 1-10
- Habakkuk's Prayer: Hab 3:1-19
- Abraham's Prayer: Gen 15:2-3; Cf; Gen 18:22-33
- Jacob's Prayer: Gen 32:9-12
- Jehoshaphat's Prayer: 2Chron 20:1-30, esp. vs. 5-12