

# Paul, a Man of Prayer

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All of the men of the Bible were men of prayer. Back in the days of Seth and Enoch it is said, "Then began men to call upon the name of Jehovah"; and from that day down to the closing scenes of the Apocalypse, where we find John in the Spirit on the Lord's day, men called upon the name of Jehovah. Paul was a man of prayer, but he was no exception in that respect. Peter and James and John put special emphasis upon prayer in their Epistles and prayed in connection with their preaching. Just after Jesus left his disciples and ascended to heaven we read that they returned to Jerusalem and assembled in an upper room and "continued stedfastly in prayer." (Acts 1: 14.) We are told that the three thousand persons who were baptized on Pentecost "continued stedfastly in . . . the prayers." (Acts 2: 42.) When Peter was in prison, the disciples came together in the home of John Mark's mother and prayed. Also the whole church prayed earnestly for him. (Acts 12: 5-12.)

But we have a more detailed account of Paul's life than we have of any other apostle, and we can easily learn how implicitly he relied upon the Lord for strength and grace to sustain him in all his labors and trials. How often he prayed for his converts, and how often he requested them to pray for him, may be seen from the following quotations from his Epistles. To save space, we point out the nature and purpose of these prayers in a headline and then let the quotations speak for themselves.

## 1. PAUL PRAYED

"And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down and prayed with them all." (Acts 20: 36.)

"And they all, with wives and children, brought us on our way till we were out of the city: and kneeling down on the beach, we prayed, and bade each other farewell." (Acts 21: 5.)

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns unto God." (Acts 16: 25.)

"But our sufficiency is of God." (2 Cor. 3: 5.)

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. 4: 13.)

## 2. PAUL PRAYED FOR OTHERS

"For God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, how unceasingly I make mention of you, always in my prayers making request, if by any means now at length I may be prospered by the will of God to come unto you." (Rom. 1: 9, 10.)

"For this cause I also, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which is among you, and the love which ye show toward all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." (Eph. 1: 15, 16.)

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." (Phil. 1: 3, 4.)

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, before our God and Father." (1 Thess. 1: 2, 3.)

"For what thanksgiving can we render again unto God for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God; night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith?" (1 Thess. 3: 9, 10.)

## 3. PAUL ENJOINED PRAYER

"Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks." (1 Thess. 5: 17, 18.)

"Continuing stedfastly in prayer." (Rom. 12: 12.)

"I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and disputing." (1 Tim. 2: 8.)

"I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men." (1 Tim. 2: 1.)

"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." (Phil. 4: 6.)

## 4. PAUL REQUESTS OTHERS TO PRAY FOR HIM

"With all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints, and on my behalf, that utterance may be given unto me in opening my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." (Eph. 6: 18-20.)

"Continue stedfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving; withal praying for us also, that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds; that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak." (Col. 4: 2-4.)

"Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as also it is with you; and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and evil men; for all have not faith." (2 Thess. 3: 1, 2.)

"Brethren, pray for us." (1 Thess. 5: 25.)

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; that I may be delivered from them that are disobedient in Judea, and that my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints; that I may come unto you in joy through the will of God, and together with you find rest." (Rom. 15: 30-32.)

Let us notice the things for which Paul desired the saints to pray:

1. That the word of the Lord might run and be glorified.
2. That the Lord might open a door for the word.
3. That he might be given utterance and speak boldly.
4. That he might be delivered from evil men.
5. That the saints might accept his ministration.
6. That he might come to Rome.

All these petitions were granted to Paul, although he fell into the hands of the disobedient and was rescued by the Romans and by them was sent to Rome.

## 5. PAUL DEPENDED ON THE PRAYERS OF CHRISTIANS FOR DELIVERANCE

"For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope." (Phil. 1: 19.)

"On whom we have set our hope that he will also still deliver us; ye also helping together on our behalf by your supplication." (2 Cor. 1: 10, 11.) Where the Revised Version says "supplication" the King James says "prayer."

"Pray for us: for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honorably in all things. And I exhort you the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner." (Eph. 13: 18, 19.)

## 6. SOME OF PAUL'S PRAYERS AND BENEDICTIONS

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment; so that ye may approve the things that are excellent; that ye may

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# Death! Where Then?

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From time to time man is confronted with questions of great importance. The greatest question that could confront the sinner is: "What must I do to be saved?" The Christian's chief concern is, or should be, what he must do to be numbered with the faithful, since only those who are faithful unto death shall receive the crown of life. (Rev. 2: 10.) However, there are other questions of less importance which sometimes engage our attention. Who is there among us that has not been asked the question—yea, and thought more or less seriously about it, "Where are the dead?"

The spirit of man being immortal, when death overtakes us, we will go immediately into heaven or to an intermediate state. Our task at this time is to examine some Bible teaching along this line.

In the long ago it was said of man: "Then shall the dust [body] return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." (Eccles. 12: 7.) This passage is used by some in an attempt to prove that the saved enter heaven immediately after death. I suggest that this passage does not, and never did, teach such. At the time this statement was made man was not cleared from the guilt of sin. The blood of Christ had not been shed at this time; hence, man was not redeemed. This being the condition of man at the time that Solomon said that at death the spirit returns to God who gave it, he meant that the spirit of man entered into paradise (the intermediate state) at death. This is a self-evident fact, and it is equally evident that the passage does not teach more now than it did then. Jesus told one of the thieves on the cross that he would be with him in paradise. (Luke 23: 43.) Jesus said after his resurrection that he had not yet ascended to the Father. (John 20: 17.) The last words of Jesus were: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23: 46.) But his spirit went to paradise (Luke 23: 43), and not to heaven.

Stephen at his death uttered about the same words that Jesus did when he said: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." (Acts 7: 59.) Nothing is said that would imply that his spirit entered heaven. True, he saw heaven opened, but Ezekiel saw heaven opened (Ezek. 1: 1) and did not enter in. No guessing, for Jesus said long afterwards that no man but he had ascended into heaven. (John 3: 13.)

Further proof that the departed do not go at once to their final destination is found in the Savior's statement in John 14: 2, 3, where he said: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Note these facts: (1) The place was not prepared. (2) Jesus was to go to his Father's house (heaven). (3) He would prepare the place. (4) He would then return and receive them unto himself. Paul describes his return and our gathering together unto him in 1 Thess. 4: 16, 17.

What became of the intermediate place for the dead after the cross? We notice that people who died prior to the cross will sit in judgment along with us at the same time. (Matt. 11: 21-24.)

Still further proof that the Bible does not teach immediate entrance into the final state at death are: (1) One would be without the spiritual body that is given at resurrection day. (1 Cor. 15: 44.) Hence, one would not be equipped at death to enter heaven. (2) One would be entering before the judgment. This would not permit one to enter the joys of heaven, for such are said to be available after the resurrection. (Matt. 25: 14-23.) The judgment is the next great event after death. (Heb. 9:

27.) (3) One would be without the crown of righteousness which is to be given to us along with Paul at the judgment day. (2 Tim. 4: 8.)

2 Cor. 5 and Phil. 1 contain some statements by Paul that some have thought teach direct entrance at death. However, such conclusions are due to a failure to apply a very safe rule of interpreting the Scriptures—i.e., to interpret dark or difficult passages in the light of related plain ones. These passages by Paul seem to belong to that hard and difficult class. Peter attributes to Paul some writings hard to be understood. (2 Pet. 3: 15, 16.) At this point I wish to make this observation: There probably exists a closer relationship between the faithful dead and Christ than that which exists between living Christians and Christ. But there seems to be no necessity of making that relationship a personal one. There are different senses in which the Lord can be with man. The promise by him to be with the apostles in proclaiming the gospel did not mean that he would be with them personally. (Matt. 28: 20.) Paul while absent from the church at Corinth was with them in spirit.

We should not seize Paul's statements, "Depart, and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1: 23); and, "Be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5: 8), and make these to mean personally. This is done in spite of the fact that the Lord said the place (heaven) is not prepared for us (John 14: 2, 3), and the fact that we will not see Jesus as he is until he appears (1 John 3: 2). Jesus will not appear in person until the resurrection day. (1 Thess. 4.)

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be sincere and void of offence unto the day of Christ." (Phil. 1: 9, 10.)

"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word." (2 Thess. 2: 16, 17.)

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Heb. 13: 20, 21.)

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen." (Eph. 3: 20, 21.)

## Proof of Repentance

Why should we try to hold a man up before the people when we know he is in the wrong? "He confessed that he was guilty of sin." "Yes, that is what I have heard; but has he continued in the same sins?" "Well, I could not say as to that, as I have not kept in touch with him; but if he really repented, he will show that he has reformed." "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance." (Matt. 3: 8.) It is sure that God will forgive those who really repent of their sins. It is also true that God knows whether a man has repented or not. How can a man be sorry for his sins if he continues to indulge in them?—E. M. BORDEN.