

Paul's Prayers - An Example for Us to Follow

– What Do You Pray About? –

Where Is Your Focus?

What types of things do you pray about? Sometimes it seems that we tend to focus all our prayers on physical needs and desires - especially those related to personal prosperity and well-being: health, wealth and the "American dream."

But isn't this a little bit self-centered? Is this what Jesus called us to live for? Is this what he died for?

Sure, Jesus included "give us this day our daily bread," in his model prayer (Matthew 6:11). But that was only one small line in his entire prayer - and definitely *not* his primary focus. This prayer request for God to take care of our daily *needs* is not a guarantee that he will gratify our daily *wants*. Nor does it mean that we will live like kings, or that we will have "our daily steak." Just a few verses later, Jesus reminds us that it is *not* our business to worry about such things anyway... God has already promised to take care of them for us (Matthew 9:25-31). It's the *pagans* who worry about such things; we are called to focus on God and his kingdom, instead!

The apostle John prayed that his friend, Gaius, would enjoy good health and pleasant circumstances (3 John 2). Yet he didn't stop there, but continued by saying, "*just as* things are going well with your soul." To John, his friend's soul was more important than his friend's health and circumstances. His friend's spiritual condition was good, and John was praying that his friend's physical well-being would *match* his spiritual well-being. (If you prayed that your physical well-being would *match* your spiritual well-being, would you be well-off, or would you be destitute, sickly and starving to death?)

Many of the apostle Paul's prayers are recorded in Scripture, and they are very instructive about the type of focus we ought to have. Search the Scriptures: You will search in vain for even *one* instance in which he prays the way most people normally pray. It just didn't happen.

Below are some outlines that show the types of things that Paul prayed for, and that he encouraged others to pray for. Of course, he didn't necessarily pray for *all* of these things every time he prayed. And he probably prayed about other things, which are not mentioned. But the prayers that *are* recorded in Scripture are sufficient to show us a pattern, and to instruct us in the way we ought to pray.

A Few Preliminary Comments

In this study, we are focusing on prayer requests. But making requests is only one part of prayer: Praise and thanks to God, as well as confession of sin, are also a part of prayer. Though not a direct part of our focus, these other aspects have not been totally ignored. Our attitude toward prayer requests will have an impact on our attitude toward these other aspects of prayer. This is because our requests are a reflection of our values. As we allow the Bible's values to impact our lives (and our prayer requests), we will discover that our hearts and minds are increasingly ready for these other aspects of prayer.

We also need to remember that, even though everything written in these prayers was initially written to Paul's acquaintances, they also apply to us. It would be Paul's (and God's) desire that these things be a part of *all* of our lives. So, as you look at these prayers, let them guide your own prayer life!

PART 1 - Paul's Prayers for Those Who Were Saved

What did Paul pray about, when he thought about his Christian friends? In his letters, we can find seven different passages which illustrate some of the things he prayed for. Each passage will be examined separately, for some of them are too deep and rich in meaning, for them to be easily broken-down into separate components, so that all of the verses could be combined into a single outline. [An attempt to combine the basic elements of each prayer into a single outline is given at the end of this study - see "Appendix 1."]

1. That they would grow in spiritual maturity - 2 Corinthians 13:7, 9.

Read 2 Corinthians 13:5-10. Before this passage, Paul has had to rebuke the Corinthians (or at least some of them) for ongoing sin in their lives. He is fearful that some of them will continue in their refusal to repent. Because of this, he challenges them to examine their salvation, to find out if it is genuine (v.5). He seems confident that most will pass the test - and he hopes they will realize that he also passes the test (v. 6).

Paul prays that they will not do anything wrong, but only what is right (v. 7). Of course, his opponents may claim that this prayer has a hidden, self-centered agenda. They always tried to find fault with him, and might claim that Paul *really* wants to build-up a good reputation for himself. So he expresses the intent of his prayer: He is not so concerned about whether or not people think that he (and those with him) have passed or failed the test. Personally, he is compelled to stand strong with the truth (v. 8), but he is willing to have a reputation of "weakness" if it would be for the spiritual good of the Corinthians. His primary desire is for *their* perfection, or maturity - not *his own* reputation of "strength" (v. 9).

In previous chapters, Paul has had to write some harsh things to them. His enemies would claim that it was a pretension of "strength" - a strength that he would fail to have, if he were present (see 10:1-2). Yet everything Paul has said has been said for the purpose of building them up, not for tearing them down (v. 10). He does not enjoy having to speak in this "harsh" manner, and if they take heed to what he has written, then he will not have to be this way when he is physically present.

2. That they would live a life that glorified and honored God - Philippians 1:9-11.

Read Philippians 1:3-11. These people were special to Paul, and he had plenty of reasons to be thankful for them (v. 3). God had begun a good work in their lives - it was evident by the way they lived - and Paul was convinced that God would complete the good work he had begun (v. 6). Paul's prayer was an expression of his desire for this to happen.

Paul's ultimate goal was that they would live lives that resulted in praise and glory to God (v. 11). To do this in its fullest, they would have to begin with a foundation of love and knowledge. This foundation would become the basis of their perspective on *all* things, and would eventually have an impact on every part of their lives.

Love cannot be torn away from knowledge and insight. Knowledge and insight provide the framework that defines *genuine* love; love is the practical outworking of *genuine* knowledge and insight. And so,

the apostle prayed that their love, knowledge and insight would increase to the point of overflowing (v. 9). This would "spill out" into all their lives, and would give them the ability to discern what was best, the ability to know what really mattered in life (v. 10).

Of course, this discernment, if genuine, would affect the way they lived. As they turned away from doing things that were trivial (and at times sinful), and sought to do things that had lasting value, their lives would become characterized as being pure and blameless (v. 10). They would have "fruitful" lives, characterized by doing what was good (v. 11).

We must remember to give credit where it is due. Paul reminds them that this ability to do what is good is possible only because of what Jesus Christ has done (v. 11). *We* do these things, to the glory and praise of God, but we remember that it is *God* who made it possible for us to do them. We were once *dead in sins*; it is he who made us alive and able to do what is good. (Compare to Ephesians 2:1-10.) As Paul already mentioned (v. 6), it is *God* who began a good work in us (a work which enables *us* to do our good works), and he will bring to completion what he has begun in us.

3. That they would live a life that was "worthy" of God's calling - Colossians 1:9-12.

Read Colossians 1:3-14. God uses the good news of salvation and hope (v. 5-6) to change a person's life. When someone accepts the good news, faith and love begin to be characteristic of his life: faith (trust) in God, and love for God and people. Paul had learned about the faith and love that emanated from the lives of these people - it showed that God was working in their lives - and he was filled with thankfulness for what God was doing.

However, these people were still *growing* in their understanding of what this new life meant. They were still learning about how it should express itself in the way they live. And so, in this prayer, Paul prayed that they would grow in their ability to live a life that was worthy of such a glorious life-changing calling (v. 10).

To start, they would need to grow in their understanding of God's will. This would require them to focus on God's Word, which is the expression of his will. In doing this, they would grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding (v. 9).

Scripture does not separate knowledge from action. The person who claims to *know* the truth, but does not *live* the truth, does not really know it, in the way that the Bible requires. (In that case, he is no better off than the demons, who also know the truth - James 2 19b.) In this prayer, Paul says that the reason they need spiritual wisdom and understanding is so that they will be able to live *appropriately* - to live a life that is fitting for a person who belongs to the Lord, a life that is well-pleasing to God (v. 10).

What type of life comes as the result of having spiritual wisdom and understanding? It is a life that focuses on obeying the two great commands given by Jesus (Matthew 22:37-40), about love for God and for neighbor. Love for neighbor is fulfilled by an eagerness to do what is good for others - the apostle calls this a "fruitful" life. Love for God involves getting to know God better - not merely gaining additional knowledge *about* him, but getting to know him as savior and friend. (It also involves a desire for moral purity - a desire to become "Christ-like.")

Interestingly, though love for God is the greatest of these two commands, the apostle focuses first on their love for people, for "neighbors." This may be due to the fact that the person who is unwilling to

love other people *cannot* love God, who made those people - see 1 John 3:10 and 4:20. Those who want to be called God's "sons" (and "daughters") must love even their enemies (Matthew 5:43-48).

We have plenty of reasons for wanting to get to know God better. After all, he is the source of all our strength. It is because of his power, that we can have the endurance and patience (v. 11) that is often necessary, when it comes to loving our "neighbor" (as well as for getting us through any of the other trials of life).

When we know God, and realize all he has done for us, we have every reason in the world to be filled with joy and overflowing with gratitude for what he has done. After all, it is *he* who made us part of his kingdom, and able to share in the "inheritance" that will be ours in the future (v. 12). It is he who snatched us away from the "kingdom of darkness" and brought us into his glorious "kingdom of the Son" (v. 13). It is he who paid our debt and forgave us our sins (v. 14).

4. That their life would be characterized by a living faith and a growing relationship with God - Philemon 1:6.

Read verses 4-7. These people had a faith and a love that gave great joy and encouragement to Paul - who was always interested in their good. Since genuine faith always expresses itself, Paul's prayer was not that it would *begin* to exist, but that it would be exceedingly fruitful - that much good would be accomplished because of it. He also wanted them to grow in their understanding that every good thing ultimately came from Christ. It is when they give credit to the one who deserves it (Christ), that their expression of faith would accomplish the maximum good.

This concept of "sharing one's faith" does *not* refer to "soul winning," which is often described as "sharing the faith" with unbelievers. Rather, Paul prayed that, as a group, they would live-out their faith - that they would put it into practice in all that they did.

5. That they might know God better and would grow in appreciation of their future hope - Ephesians 1:16-19.

Read Ephesians 1:3-23. The apostle Paul begins this book with a focus on the wonders of God's gracious kindness - a kindness that began with salvation, but will continue for all eternity. The Ephesian Christians were recipients of this kindness - as could be seen by the faith and love (the results of salvation) that were present in their lives. And so Paul gave thanks to the God who made all this possible.

In his prayer, Paul wants them to get to know God better. Of course, he doesn't mean learning a list of facts about God, but getting to know God personally. Interestingly, we are not only dependent on God for our salvation and our wonderful future; we also depend on him to *reveal himself to us*, so that we can get to know him better! And so, the apostle prays that *God* will give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation. Then they will become capable of knowing God - and increasingly so (v. 17)!

One aspect of getting to know our God involves learning about the wonderful things he has done for us - things in the past and in the present, as well as the wonderful things he has in store for us, in the future. Here Paul focuses on the future: He prays that they may begin to understand the wonderful hope to which God has called us (v. 18). This is something we can look forward to, with great expectation; it is nothing like the world's "hope," which amounts to mere wishful thinking. It's a hope based on God's

own gracious kindness, which he has freely given to all who trust him. Our hope includes not only all the wonders God has in store for us, but also the presence of Jesus Christ, who will be with us forever.

Presently, we have the Holy Spirit, who is a guarantee that all this will someday take place (v. 13-14). But the apostle Paul wants to reassure us even further: Not only has God made a promise (whose certainty of fulfillment is guaranteed by the Holy Spirit), but he also has all the power necessary to accomplish what he has promised (v. 19). How great is God's power? It is *incredibly* great! It is the same power that God used, when he raised Christ from the dead and exalted him higher than all powers and authorities, whether they exist now, or in the future (v. 20-21)! And the amazing thing is that he did all this *for us*, the people who belong to Jesus. In God's sight, our connection with Jesus is so intimate, that he calls us Jesus' "body." Jesus is our "head" (v. 22-23)!

When we consider the way we began, dead in sin (2:1+), and consider the fact that God has made us alive (2:4+), and when we look at all the wonders God still has in store for us, what else can we do, but praise him for his glorious kindness (1:14)!

6. That they would experience the "fullness of God" - all the goodness and wonder that belongs to God's people - Ephesians 3:16-19.

Read Ephesians 3:1, 3:13-21. God had given Paul the task of proclaiming the good news of salvation to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Opponents of the good news often created much trouble for him, and in this instance, caused him to be imprisoned. But he was more than willing to experience these things, for the sake of those who would accept the truth. He was willing to experience *anything* that might result in good for them. And so, he urged them to not become discouraged, when they saw the suffering he had to endure (v. 13). It was willingly done, for their sake.

Paul wanted them to focus on the goodness of God, not on the temporary suffering he might have to endure, for their sake. And so he prayed that God would strengthen them and would open their eyes to the wonders of his (God's) love. He wanted them to experience everything that could possibly be a part of the wonderful relationship we have with God.

God has an unlimited amount of resources, to accomplish whatever he desires. His Spirit also resides within us, to bring this power into our lives. And so, to begin his prayer, Paul asks that God would give them the inner strength they needed. He knew that, on our own, we are weak; but he also knew that the Spirit would tap into God's unlimited resources, and provide the energy necessary for this strength (v. 16).

Paul wanted them to have a growing relationship with Christ, a relationship of trust that was based on the love of Christ for them. And so, he prayed not only that Christ would be at home in their hearts, and that their lives would be firmly grounded in love (v. 17), he also prayed that their *understanding* of this love would increase. He wanted them to realize not only that this love was immensely great, but that it far exceeded anything they could comprehend (v. 18-19).

Rather than a life of discouragement (as in v. 13), Paul wanted them to experience life in its fullness (v. 19) - a life totally immersed in, and energized by, a love that far exceeds our comprehension. Such a "full life" can only be found in God. And with the glorious riches of his power (as in v. 16), God can accomplish this in ways that go beyond anything we could ever dream (v. 20)! No wonder he deserves eternal praise, glory and honor (v. 21)!

7. That they would be able to share Jesus' glory - 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:3-11. Many of Paul's prayers focus on what his readers should do. Here, the main focus is on what God alone can do.

These people had a growing faith and love - something that Paul could be very thankful for (v. 3). However, others who opposed this way of life also opposed them, and were an ongoing source of persecution. They remained faithful, even under persecution, and developed a perseverance that would shine as an example for others to follow (v. 4).

Paul reminded them that a day of justice was coming. Their suffering would not be in vain, but would be rewarded generously. On that day, all of God's holy people (all genuine Christians) will give God praise and glory. These people (who Paul was writing to) would also have a part in that glorious occasion (v. 5-10).

Although they were experiencing trials for the moment, God had called these people to something wonderful. Here Paul prays that God would do what was necessary to make them worthy of that calling. He also prayed that God would accomplish all the good they desired, and would bless everything they did - everything that was an expression of their trust in him (v. 11).

Why did he pray this? First, it is because he desired that Jesus would be glorified and honored through what they did. (Giving God glory and honor is not just something that we are to do in the *future*; it is a privilege we can participate in *even now*.) Second, Paul knew that they, too, would be able to *share* in Jesus' glory, because of their union with Jesus. This was made possible - and it would someday take place - all because of the gracious (and undeserved) kindness of God (v. 12).

We who choose to associate with Jesus should not be surprised if we end-up suffering for him (compare to John 15:18-19 and 1 John 3:13). In Jesus' eyes, we are sharing in *his* suffering. Do not be discouraged! When we suffer in this way, we have every reason to take heart, because God has promised that those who are willing to share in his *suffering* will also be able to share in his *glory* (Romans 8:17; 1 Peter 4:13).

As we go through trials, God himself will protect us and strengthen us (1 Peter 5:10). The trials we endure will make our faith purer - it will prove whether or not it is genuine (1 Peter 1:6-7). And in the end, all of God's promises will hold true. Our faithfulness and patience during the trials of this life will *not* be in vain, or a waste of our time and our lives: Jesus, the one who was willing to suffer for *us* will freely share his glory and honor with those who are willing to suffer for *him* (2 Thessalonians 1:12)!

PART 2 - Paul's Prayers for the Unsaved

For most of us, the majority of people we meet in our daily lives are those who have *not* turned to God for salvation. So far, they have *not* "surrendered" to Jesus' kindness. How should we pray for such people? When we look at Paul's prayers, we find that he did not neglect praying for the unsaved.

This next list shows the type of focus Paul had, when he prayed for such people, or when he asked others to pray for them. As with the prayers described in the previous section, these are specific examples, which would not necessarily encompass *everything* he prayed, but would be sufficient to teach us the basic way to pray for the unsaved.

1. Prayer for the salvation of the people of his nation.
 - a. Prayer for the salvation of his relatives, the people of his nation (Israel) - Romans 10:1.
 - b. (See also Romans 9:1-5. Their salvation was one of his greatest desires. He would have even been willing trade places with them and experience *their* judgment, had it been possible.)
2. Prayer for the salvation of leaders and authorities.
 - a. Prayer that they would become "what I [Paul] am" (except for being bound in chains) - Acts 26:29.
3. Prayer for everyone who would be exposed to the message about Jesus. (This is a prayer for Paul - one that is also an indirect prayer for the unsaved.)
 - a. Prayer for Paul (and for those with him), so that the message about Jesus would spread rapidly and be honored by those who heard it - 2 Thessalonians 3:1.
 - b. NOTE 1: The hearers would honor it by accepting it as true, and by trusting Jesus for salvation.
 - c. NOTE 2: Paul also realized that many people *didn't* have faith - they were unwilling to trust God (see v. 2). Unlike the hearers mentioned in verse 1, these people would refuse to honor the message, by accepting it as true.

Two additional passages could be mentioned - both of which are commands, rather than examples of Paul himself praying. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Paul commands Timothy to pray for "everyone." One of the reasons is so that they may be saved. In Ephesians 6:18, Paul also makes a general statement, encouraging his readers to pray "all kinds of prayers." In this passage, he focuses more on praying for the "saints" (that is, for people who belong to God), but the phrase "all kinds of prayers" would most likely also include praying for the unsaved.

When compared to the PART 1 (prayers for those who belong to God), this list of prayer requests for the unsaved is rather short. It may be that Paul had a greater focus on the spiritual growth of those who *already* showed evidence of God working in their lives. But if so, it would *not* indicate that he had less concern for the unsaved - especially considering the fact that he would be willing to take their deserved punishment upon himself, if it were possible.

There are probably two reasons (at least) for this greater emphasis on prayer requests for those who belonged to God: First, he was writing to them, so he would naturally tell them what he desired for them. Second, as those who were saved began to grow spiritually, the changes in their lives would have an impact on the lives of their unsaved neighbors. And so, Paul's prayers for those who were *saved* would actually have an impact on the *unsaved*, as well.

PART 3 - Paul's Prayer Requests for Himself

There are several instances in which Paul mentions prayer requests for *himself* and (when applicable) for those who were with him. These requests are listed below. Note that, as far as his own life was concerned, Paul's focus *wasn't* that he would "have a nice day." As you examine these prayer requests, pay attention not only to

the requests themselves, but also to the motives or reasons he gives, for having such prayer requests. (Example: Who did he focus his attention on?)

1. Prayer for God's help, when he (and those with him) proclaimed the good news about Jesus Christ.
 - a. That God would provide the opportunity for him (and those with him) to speak and be heard - Colossians 4:3.
 - b. That he would know what to say - Ephesians 6:19+.
 - c. That he would proclaim the message clearly - Colossians 4:4.
 - d. That he would be bold, not afraid, as he proclaimed the message - Ephesians 6:19-20.
 - e. That the message would be accepted by many (that it would spread and be honored) - 2 Thessalonians 3:1.

2. Prayer that what he did would be accepted by the other believers - Romans 15:31.
 - a. NOTE: He was bringing a gift to the poverty-stricken Jewish Christians. This gift was from the non-Jewish Christians, and was an expression of their love for the Jewish Christians. Yet because of rumors spread by false teachers and others, there was always the potential of this gift being misunderstood and not accepted in the right spirit.

3. Prayer for deliverance from people who opposed him.
 - a. Deliverance from those who did not trust God - 2 Thessalonians 3:2. [These people had rejected the message Paul preached and wanted to keep it from spreading to others.]
 - b. For deliverance from unbelieving Jews in Judea - Romans 15:30. [Along with this, he asked them to pray that his "service" (mentioned above, in Section 2 of this outline) would be acceptable to the Jewish Christians. Why? So that he would be able to visit the people he was writing to, and could do so *with joy*.]

4. Prayer for deliverance from difficult circumstances and imprisonment.
 - a. NOTE: In these three verses, Paul is not *commanding* them to pray this way; rather he is *acknowledging* that they were already doing so.
 - b. For deliverance from severe hardships - 2 Corinthians 1:11. Because of their prayers, God would deliver Paul (and his friends). And when this happened, many others would then be able to express gratitude to God for that deliverance. [Note: This need for deliverance from deadly hardships was an ongoing need. What Paul (and his friends) suffered went far beyond what they would naturally be able to endure. Their deliverance would be possible only because they would be relying on God, not their own strength.]
 - c. For deliverance from chains & death - Philippians 1:19. Paul expected that, because of their prayers, the Spirit of Jesus Christ would use the things that had happened, for his deliverance. However, his primary desire was to exalt Christ under *any* circumstances, whether that meant life or death (v. 20). [If it were up to him, he'd rather die & see Jesus, but for the sake of the people, he was willing to remain alive (1:21-26).]
 - d. For his release from prison - Philemon 1:22. He expected God to grant what they prayed, so he told them to get ready for his return.

5. Prayer that he would be able to visit the people he was writing to.
 - a. So that he could be a blessing to them (that they might become spiritually stronger), and that he and they could be encouraged by *each other's* faith - Romans 1:10-12 (see also 15:32). [Their growing faith/trust was well known throughout the world. This fact brought great joy to Paul - Romans 1:8.]

- b. So that he could help them grow even further in their faith - 1 Thessalonians 3:10. [They were already a source of joy and encouragement to him, because of their growing faith and love - 1:6-9. This desire to help them grow further was an expression of his own gratefulness and love for them.]
- c. NOTE 1: This encouragement worked both ways. Paul and the people he wrote to were a source of encouragement and blessing to each other.
- d. NOTE 2: The author of the book of Hebrews is unknown, but some believe that Paul wrote it. If we include the book of Hebrews in our list, we would have one additional request for prayer that the author might soon be able return to his friends - Hebrews 13:19.

If we look at the general context of these prayers for Paul, there are some principles we can learn. These things are briefly mentioned here. (A more in-depth look at them can be found at the end of this study - see "Appendix 2.")

1. Paul was willing to do the types of things he asked others to do. Every time Paul *asked* the people to pray for him, he also prayed for them. [In the passages we have examined, he expressed his desires (prayers) for them *before* he asked them to pray for him. In some instances, he also asked them to pray for other Christians, before giving any specific requests for himself.]
2. Every time Paul mentions a request that they were *already* praying for him, he focuses on God as the one who would answer their prayers. He also mentioned his prayers for them, somewhere in the letter.
3. When Paul made general comments, such as asking the people to pray "constantly" (that is, to make it an ongoing characteristic of their lives), he wasn't asking them to do anything he didn't already do. He showed them, by his own example, how they should pray: Praying for them was an *ongoing* part of his life (Romans 1:9, Ephesians 1:16; Colossians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:11).

When it comes to prayer requests for Paul, it may be interesting to compare *Paul's* prayer focus to *the people's* prayer focus. The people focused on what would benefit Paul - his deliverance from enemies or his restoration to them. Paul's focus, however, was on what would benefit the people. His desire was that whatever happened to *him* would be for *their* good. They focused on Paul, as an expression of their love for him; Paul focused on the people, as an expression of his love for them. Each fulfilled the command, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39)! [Of course, when they were willing to yield their own wills (and prayer requests) to the will of their Father in heaven (who does all things for the good of those who love him - Romans 8:28), they would also be expressing love for *God* (Matthew 22:37).]

We should make it our desire to pray for others who are being used by God. When we do so, we are, in a sense, right there with them. As Paul told the Roman Christians, when they prayed for him, they were *joining him* in his "struggle" (Romans 15:30), in his work for the kingdom of God.

Getting Prayer Requests Answered

As we read what the Bible teaches us about prayer, we find that some passages tell us that God hears and answers the prayers of his people. However, others warn us that there are times when God does *not* answer our prayers, because we have asked with the wrong motives - James 4:3. (Technically, he answers them, but his

answer is "no.") This leaves us with the following simple "solution" for getting more of our prayers answered in the way we desire:

Being a disciple of Jesus (which is the same as being a genuine Christian) involves, by its very nature, a willingness to learn from Jesus' example. Because of this, we will endeavor to make *our* values match-up with *God's* values. The desires of our heart will begin to change; they will begin to match the desires of *God's* heart.

When this happens, the nature of our prayer requests will change. They will align themselves up with the will of God. And so, we will discover that our requests are increasingly answered the way we ask them. After all, our requests, when asked this way, will be an expression of what God *already* wants to do! And we will begin to understand what it is like to pray expectantly, not just *wishing*, but *knowing* that God will hear and answer what we have asked.

APPENDIX 1 - an Attempt to Combine The Different Parts of Paul's Prayers For The Saved Into a Single Outline

An Important Note:

This outline is only an approximation, based on the NIV translation. Some verses, may be capable of being translated in a slightly different manner - which would result in minor differences in the precise logical arrangement of various parts of the prayers. This means that certain details in the outline could need to be revised, if a different translation were used. However, the over-all message would remain the same.

An example of this would be Philemon 1:6. Does the active expression of one's faith result in a growing understanding of the good things we have in Christ... or does a growing understanding of the good things we have in Christ result in a greater desire to actively express one's faith? All translations show that there is a close connection between the two - and that was our focus in the main article (PART 1, above). However, in the following outline, which is based on the NIV translation, the active expression of one's faith is described as logically coming first. (Technically, if both are occurring in our lives, we won't have to worry about which one comes logically first!)

SECTION 1

The most extensive descriptions of Paul's prayers involve requests for those who had repented from their sins, and turned to God for salvation. This first outline lists some of his prayer requests for these people. The list in this first section focuses on the *ultimate goals* he desired for their lives.

1. That they would have a growing friendship with God.
 - a. That they would get to know God better - Ephesians 1:17.
 - b. That Christ would be constantly dwelling in their hearts - Ephesians 3:16-17.

Both of these requests are directly connected with the next item in this outline. (They are also based on what God would do in, and for, them - which is mentioned in SECTION 2, below.)

2. That they would know how wonderful it is, to belong to God.
 - a. That they would understand how wonderful their future is (hope/riches - v. 18), also that they would begin to understand how capable God is, to get them there (using the same power that he used to raise Jesus from the dead - v. 19-20) - Ephesians 1:18-20. [See also Colossians 1:12, in which he expresses thanks to God for the future inheritance which is theirs even now. (The fact that they *now* have it points to the certainty of its coming.)]
 - b. That they would have the power to grasp how great Christ's love is, and to know his love, as expressed in their lives - Ephesians 3:18-19.
 - c. That their lives would be filled with the "fullness of God" - that God (or the blessings associated with his presence) would be experienced in the totality of their lives - Ephesians 3:19.
 - d. That they would have a better understanding of all the good things they have in Jesus (as they "share" their faith - that is, as they live-it-out, together, as a group) - Philemon 1:6.

Because it is so wonderful to belong to God, they needed to know *how* to live, so that they could enjoy this relationship. The next item in this outline focuses on what Paul told them. (Of course, it is not just a matter of them *needing* to know these things. People who belong to God will also *want* to know these things, so that they can do them. God's children *want* to learn the ways of their "Father in heaven.")

3. That they would know how to live.
 - a. Perfect & mature (that is, spiritually grown-up), doing what is right - 2 Corinthians 13:9.
 - b. Doing what is best, so that they could live a pure and fruitful life - Philippians 1:9-11. (In doing this, they would be glorifying and honoring God.)
 - c. Living a life that is worthy and pleasing to God (fruitful & growing) - Colossians 1:10. [Strengthened by his power - v. 11.]
 - d. Filled with thanks to the Father (because he has brought us into the kingdom of his Son) - Colossians 1:12.

What is the purpose, or reason, for living this way? This last item in the outline tells us.

4. That they would reach the ultimate goal in life.
 - a. That Jesus Christ would be glorified in us (and us in him) - 2 Thessalonians 1:12.

SECTION 2

There were certain things that would be necessary, in order for these ultimate goals (see SECTION 1) to be reached. And so, Paul prayed not only for the *final outcome* to be accomplished in their lives, but also for the *means of reaching that final outcome*.

1. Things he prayed that *God* would do.
 - a. That God would give them the Spirit that gives wisdom and revelation/understanding - Ephesians 1:17.
 - b. That God would strengthen them (through the Spirit, who is the source of this strength) so that Christ could dwell in their hearts - Ephesians 3:16. [This strength could be contrasted with the discouragement, which Paul *didn't* want them to have - v. 13.]

- c. That God would fill them with a knowledge of his will (through the Spirit of understanding) - Colossians 1:9.
 - d. That God would count them worthy of their "calling" and would fulfil everything they set out to do (things done as an expression of faith in him) - 2 Thessalonians 1:10-12.
2. Things he prayed would happen to them.
- a. That their hearts would be enlightened (able to comprehend the wonderful things that come from God) - Ephesians 1:18. [Related to the item mentioned in "1a," above.]
 - b. That their love would increase (associated with knowledge and insight) - Philippians 1:9.
 - c. That they would be rooted in love [implied] - Ephesians 3:17.
 - d. NOTE 1: Most likely, God is actively involved in these things, just as with the things listed above. These are listed separately, because God's involvement is not *directly stated* in the verses.
 - e. NOTE 2: The things mentioned in the Ephesians verses would enable them to have a growing friendship with God. They are directly connected with the first item in SECTION 1, above, which focuses on the ultimate goals Paul had for their lives.
3. Something he prayed that *they* would do.
- a. That they would "share" their faith - Philemon 1:6.
 - b. NOTE 1 about this verse: This does *not* refer to "soul winning," which is often described as "sharing the faith" with unbelievers. Rather, Paul prayed that, as a group, they would live-out the faith - that they would put it into practice in all that they did.
 - c. NOTE 2 about this verse: Translations vary as to whether the *sharing* or the *understanding* comes first. However, they all show that there is a close connection between the two.

SECTION 3

Finally, we may want to ask *why* Paul prayed these things. In the context of several of these prayers, he tells us. Basically, there were two reasons for his desire to pray for them:

- 1. They had accepted the good news about salvation and Paul had heard about their acceptance of it.
 - a. They had accepted the testimony about Jesus - 2 Thessalonians 1:10+.
 - b. They had accepted the message of truth, the good news about salvation - Ephesians 1:13. [Note: Because of their acceptance of the truth, God gave them the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of their future inheritance - v. 14.]
 - c. Paul had heard about their trust in Jesus - Colossians 1:4, 9.
 - d. Paul had heard the good news about their trust/faith - 1 Thessalonians 3:6-7.
- 2. Their love for each other was visible and Paul knew about it.
 - a. They had love for the "saints" (= God's people) - Ephesians 1:15.
 - b. Paul had heard about their love for the "saints" (= God's people) - Colossians 1:4,9.
 - c. [The good news about their love - 1 Thessalonians 3:6. (In this passage, Paul focuses more on their faith - see the previous item in this outline. The two are connected, however, because love is the outworking, or fruit, of genuine faith.)]

APPENDIX 2 - a More In-depth Look at Patterns We Find, When We Examine Paul's Prayer Requests for Himself

This is a more in-depth look at some of the interesting patterns we can find, when we look at the general context of the prayer requests that are made (or requested) for Paul:

1. Every time Paul *asked* people to pray for him, he first prayed for them. Also, in two of these passages, he *first* asked them to make prayer a part of their lifestyle and to pray for Christians everywhere, before he asked them to pray specifically for him. When he finally did ask them to pray for him, his primary focus was on what would result in the most good for *others*, rather than on what would be the most pleasant for *himself*.
 - a. Romans 15:30-32 - Paul first prayed for them (1:9-12) and mentioned his prayer for the unsaved (10:1). When he asks them to pray for him, he mentions requests for things that would benefit others.
 - b. Ephesians 6:18-20 - Paul first prayed for them (1:15-19 and 3:14-19); then he asked them to pray for Christians everywhere. Finally he asks them to pray for him, with a specific emphasis on his proclamation of the good news - something that would be of benefit to others.
 - c. Colossians 4:2-4 - Paul first prayed for them (1:9-12); then he told them to make prayer a characteristic of their lives. Finally he asks them to pray for him, with a specific emphasis on his proclamation of the good news - something that would be of benefit to others.
 - d. 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2 - Paul first prayed for them (1:11-12). Then he asked them to pray for him (and those with him), with a focus on his proclamation of the good news about Jesus, and people's acceptance of it. He also asks for prayer that he (and those with him) might be delivered from those who did *not* accept the good news.
 - e. We do not know for certain who the human author was, for the book of Hebrews. Some people believe that Paul wrote it. If this were so, this would be the only passage in which there is no record of him first praying for the readers. But even in this passage, the author first asks them to pray for "us" - him and others - as a group, before he gives a specific request for himself. As with Paul's requests, this request is an expression of the author's love for those who were to receive his letter, for it expresses a desire that he (the author) might be able to be with them.
2. Every time Paul *acknowledged* the prayers of others for him, he focused on God as the one who would answer their prayers. Also, somewhere in each letter, he told them the things he prayed for them.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 1:10-11 - Paul expected God to deliver him (and those with him) from their trials, because of the Corinthian's prayers. He tells them that *many* people would be filled with thanks, because of what God would do, in answer to their prayers. [He mentions his prayers for them, in 13:7, 9.]
 - b. Philippians 1:19-21 - He expected that, because of their prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the things that were happening to him would result in his deliverance. However, his main desire was to boldly exalt Christ, no matter what came his way - life *or* death. [He mentions his prayers for them in 1:9-11.]
 - c. Philemon 1:22 - He expected to be restored to them soon, as a result of their prayers. His main focus was on the need for them to be ready for him! [He mentions his prayer for them, in 1:6.]