

Daily Readings

I hope this week of Thanksgiving you will take time to pray each day. These passages include some of the great prayers of the bible as well as some of the basic instruction from the New Testament. The Study Guide readings allow you to dig deeper.

Monday, November 23 – Read John 17. Other than the Lord’s Prayer recorded in Matthew 6 and Luke 11, this prayer, most commonly called the *Priestly Prayer of Jesus*, is the next most well-known prayer of Jesus. It is divided into three sections. In verses 1-5, Jesus prays to be glorified. His prayer for the disciples is the longest and most tender part of the prayer in verses 6-19. The prayer closes with a prayer for the church in verses 20-26. Here Jesus prays for all those who will believe because of the word of the disciples. Read this prayer out loud as you begin your day. As you finish your day, preparing for an evening of sleep, read verses 20-26, knowing Jesus is praying for you.

Tuesday, November 24 – Read Psalm 51. When King David is exposed for his conspiracy to kill Uriah and take Bathsheba as his wife, he comes to God to ask forgiveness. This prayer is one of great confession and repentance. Pray this prayer as you lay before God all that you have done to cause pain. Pause at verse 10, **“create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me,”** knowing that God’s grace is full and complete. God’s forgiveness is beyond our comprehension.

Wednesday, November 25 – Read Ephesians 1:15-23. Paul is praying for the church in Ephesus. As he gives thanks for their faith, he prays for the revelation of Christ, wisdom and hope. Beginning in verse 20, Paul gives praise for the work of Christ and the glory Christ brings to the world. **“...far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come, and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”** This is one of the greatest affirmations of Christ’s glory in Paul’s letters. Can you pray this prayer with confidence in your life and work? If not, why not?

Thursday, November 26 – Read Psalm 23. This is the most well known prayer in the Old Testament. **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”** These words have rung through the halls of churches for centuries. Use this Psalm and one of the prayers listed in the prayer focus for your Thanksgiving meal. Spend time around the table counting your blessings. After reading this passage, list five blessings for which you can give thanks.

Friday, November 27 – Read Luke 1:46-55. This prayer by Mary, the mother of Jesus, is often called the *Magnificat*. Mary has just been told by the angel of God that she is giving birth to God’s son. This song of praise by Mary gives thanks for the glory that her soul will give to God because of the child that she carries. As you read this passage of scripture, can you pray the same prayer? **“My soul magnifies the Lord.”** In what ways does your soul magnify God?



STUDY GUIDE & DAILY READINGS

Sunday, November 22, 2009

Overflowing Blessings

Philippians 1:9-11 — *The Word from the Bible (TNIV)*

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 for the day of Christ, ¹¹being filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

Introduction to Philippians

The church at Philippi was Paul’s **“joy and crown”** (4:1). Of all his churches, it gave him the most satisfaction. So Philippians is a letter of joy, brimming over with expressions of gratitude, affection and love.

The message Paul shares with the Philippians is a message that needs to be heard by the 21st century church. Paul paints a picture of a church that is in partnership with Christ. This church accepts Jesus as Lord, patterning all action and ministry after Christ – **“taking the form of a servant.”** The church Paul talks about is always exalting the Lord and finding strength and direction through the presence of Christ — **“that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it”** (verse 6). There is confidence and trust that finds its expression through the fruits of the Spirit, living life as a witness, and knowing that ultimate citizenship is found in heaven.

Every time Paul thinks of his friends in Philippi, he is filled with joy. The entire letter is filled with personal intensity. Most of Paul’s letters include in the greeting a prayer of thanksgiving, but none of these prayers compares in depth of feeling with this one. Affliction, gratitude, confidence and joy fill the mind of Paul, even though he is in prison, as he thinks of the one church that never caused him trouble or anxiety.

Philippians 1:9 — A love that overflows

In verse nine, Paul connects insight and knowledge to love. Love grows out of reflection, introspection and intentional consideration. Paul’s prayer shows us that we can hardly pray for growing love apart from understanding. Both the Phillips translation and the New English Bible make this clear in their translation — **“My prayer for you is that you may have still more love – a love that is full of knowledge and every wise insight.”** (Phillips) **“And this is my prayer, that your love may grow ever richer and richer in knowledge and insight of every kind”** (NEB). **“That your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight.”** (NRSV).

Love calls for and seeks knowledge. It is not blind. It does not overlook faults and weaknesses in others, but sees them clearly, looking beyond them to **“the heart of things”** and continuing to love. Love does not downplay truth, or speak in circles to avoid confrontation, but speaks the truth so that change and healing may be possible.

The essence of this love is found in the word translated **“abound,” “grow ever richer and richer”** and **“may overflow.”** In other words, God’s love placed in us will not be limited by human standard. The more we know and understand about this love, the more it increases.

Philippians 1:10 — A love that is “sun-tested”

Verse 10 picks up in the middle of the sentence with these words, ***“so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ”*** (verse 10). The pure love of Christ multiplies our ability to understand and gain insight. In this new understanding we see our lives in a different light. Now we can see the right way to go and to live boldly in this new way without fear. The translator Weymouth renders this ***“that ye may be men of transparent character.”*** In addition, the translator Moffatt also used the word ***“transparent”*** for what the KJV translates ***“sincere,”*** the RSV translates ***“pure”*** and the NIV translates ***“blameless.”***

As an adjective, this Greek word is difficult to translate and appears in the New Testament only in this verse and in 2 Peter 3:1. The noun form occurs in 1 Corinthians 5:8, 2 Corinthians 1:12 and 2:17. Neither the noun nor the adjective form is common in classical Greek, and the derivation of the words is not clear. The word may come from a combination of two Greek words — “the sunlight,” and “to judge.” The word would thus literally mean “sun-judged” or “sun-tested.”

Two ancient practices provide insight for relating the meaning to our lives. One resulted from the practice of second-rate sculptors who would produce statues from blemished, defective stones, filling the cracks with wax and painting over the blemishes. In time, the sun would melt the wax, peel the paint, and reveal the glaring imperfections. Thus a “sun-tested” sculpture was a sculpture that had stood the test of time and sun – or in human terms, to be free from pretense and sham.

If this is the case, then “sun-judged” was to stand in the light of God’s truth and the judgment of our brothers and sisters, with no need to hide or to conceal our thoughts and desires. In Ephesians 5:8, Paul urged this church to ***“live like men who are at home in daylight”*** – in other words, to be transparent, sincere and without blame.

Philippians 1:12 – Bearing fruit

Paul closes this prayer with a blessing — ***“being filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.”*** This is a beautiful expression for our life as participants in the gospel: ***“fruit of righteousness.”*** For Paul, righteousness was a right relationship with God. ***“The fruit of righteousness”*** was the results of a relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. He knew the work of the Spirit in his own life — the Spirit produced the fruits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

We are often confused about the basis for our relationship with God. Many believe that our relationship is dependent on how well we bear the fruits of God’s Kingdom. In Paul’s mind, it is just the opposite. As we are drawn into a right relationship with the God of all love, then we find the resources to bear the fruit that God created us to bear. ***“Being filled with”*** puts us in mind of trees whose every branch produces in this earthly life ***“the fruit”*** Paul described in Galatians 5:22-23.

Thoughts to Consider

This passage reminds us that our relationship with God begins with God’s action toward us in Jesus Christ. We do not need to earn God’s love — God gives it freely. Furthermore, our ability to be disciples of Christ grows out of this relationship of love. As God has loved us and as we are willing to receive God’s love, then we are able to do the works of God.

Paul’s prayer includes the image of overflowing abundance of pure love that brings the good things of life – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control (Galatians 5:22).

On this Thanksgiving week, let’s look at what it means to live a life overflowing with God’s love – a cornucopia of God’s blessing and fruits.

Prayer Focus

Trietsch is a praying church. This morning, as you worship, one of our prayer volunteers is praying for everyone in each section of our worship center. We believe that prayer changes lives and hearts for good and for God.

We invite you to join these volunteers by praying for those persons around you. We believe these prayers will have an immediate impact on those for whom you are praying.

Remember... someone is praying for you. Here are a few prayers to guide you.

Thanksgiving

— *Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882)*

For each new morning with its light,

For rest and shelter of the night,

For health and food,

For love and friends,

For everything Thy goodness sends.

A Thanksgiving Prayer

— *Harry Jewell*

We Give Thanks

Our Father in Heaven,

We give thanks for the pleasure

Of gathering together for this occasion.

We give thanks for this food

Prepared by loving hands.

We give thanks for life,

The freedom to enjoy it all

And all other blessings.

As we partake of this food,

We pray for health and strength

To carry on and try to live as You would have us.

This we ask in the name of Christ,

Our Heavenly Father.

From “Prayers for God’s People”

— *Thomas P. Roberts, editor*

O God of all Creation: You have cared for the earth, and have filled it with your riches. Abundance flows in your steppes, through the pastures and wilderness. You provide for our land, softening it with showers, bathing it in light, and blessing it with growth.

The hills sing with joy; the meadows are covered with flocks; the fields deck themselves with wheat; and together they glorify your name!

On this occasion of our Thanksgiving, we as a nation take rest from our labors to consider your many blessings. We thank you for our freedoms, and for the opportunity to contribute our skills, our attributes and our values toward the good of society.

We thank you for the mixture of our cultures, blending us into one people under God. Help us to be a light unto other nations, and to further the cause of freedom and justice all over the world.

We remember those who are less fortunate than we. We lift up in prayer the victims of poverty and racism, and all those who suffer from forms of political and economic oppression. Let the word that goes forth from our mouths speak of your peace, and let us proclaim our hope in Christ as Savior of all humankind.

We pray for those caught this day in the cross-fire of hatred and national strife. Especially we pray for those soldiers who find themselves far away from family and friends.

We pray that you will bless all those who gather here, as we have come to experience your presence among us. Give us your guidance, O God, and empower us for your work. For we claim nothing for ourselves, but return all honor and glory unto you, and offer our thanks and praise. Amen.