

Paul's Pattern Of Thanksgiving And Intercession

If someone were to ask you for Bible passages that show a pattern for prayer, where would you turn? For a general pattern, maybe you might turn to the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). For confession of sins, it would be hard to beat Psalm 51, or the prayers of Daniel, Nehemiah, or Ezra (Dan 9:3-19; Neh 9:5-37; Ezra 9:6-15). But how many of us would turn to Paul's prayers as a Biblical pattern of thanksgiving and intercession?

At the beginning of most of his letters, Paul the Apostle thanks God for the Christian churches and intercedes for them (see below). He constantly thanks God for the reports he has heard about their faith in Christ and labors of all love for all the saints.

He also intercedes to God for them. That they would be filled with joy. That they would abound in their knowledge of God. That they would be filled with spiritual wisdom and understanding. That they would walk worthily before God and bear all manner of good fruit. In sum, Paul thanks God for the grace He has given Christians and asks God that they would know the full depths of God's grace. In other words, Paul is asking for their spiritual maturity. Paul uses words like fill, increase, not lacking, and abound to describe his intercession, his longing for the Christian churches. He wants them to live in the wealth of what God has done for His people and gives them now. When we don't know God, what He has accomplished for us in Christ, nor what He gives us now, we live shriveled, impoverished Christian lives. That is why so often Paul prays for a certain kind of knowledge for his fellow Christians. Ignorance of God and His work is poverty. Knowledge of God and His work is eternal life. What must change in your prayers to follow this Scriptural pattern of thanksgiving and intercession?

Rom 1:8-15: First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

1 Cor. 1:4-9: I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— ⁶ even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— ⁷ so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



Eph 1:15-23: For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ 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 one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Col 1:3-14: We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, ⁷ just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf ⁸ and has made known to us your love in the Spirit. ⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. ¹³ He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Phil 1:3-11: I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.



1 Thes 1:2-10: We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you,⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.⁶ And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with the joy of the Holy Spirit,⁷ so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.⁸ For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.⁹ For they themselves report concerning us the kind of reception we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,¹⁰ and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

2 Thes 1:2-4: We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.⁴ Therefore we ourselves boast about you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring.

2 Tim 1:3-7: I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day.⁴ As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy.⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands,⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Philem. 1:4-7: I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers,⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints,⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

