

I Wish I May...

By Mary Kane

I am a praying woman. I wish I could say that I've always been that way. I wish I could say that I've spent hours in prayer everyday. At least I have a pretty consistent prayer time. During the school year, I always use my drive to work as prayer time. Usually most of my prayers center on the people I love the most: my husband, my sons, parents, sisters, other family members and friends.

At this stage in life, my boys seem to give me the most to pray about. Sometimes I pray for my sons in a general way such as "Lord, help my boys to be strong against the enemy this day," or "In all things, Father, let Erik and Scott put you first today." At other times I have a much more specific agenda, "Lord, help Erik find a job in which he will work

with godly people who will teach him how to walk closer with You." Lately, I've been praying for Scott to hear very specifically from God about what career path He should choose. I've also let God know that it would be quite all right if he called Scott to be a pastor. Aren't you glad that we have that kind of freedom in Christ? We can bring Him our general prayer requests and ask God to work His will, and we can bring Him our specific prayer requests and our wishes concerning our requests and ask God to work His will. I like to say that "If we ask God specific questions, He will give us specific answers." We just need to remember to be okay with that "God working His perfect will part."

Please turn to 2 Corinthians 13 and read verses 1-9. (For the purpose of this study, we will only touch briefly on the troubles that Paul dealt with in the church in Corinth and then concentrate on the type of prayer that Paul mentioned in this section of scripture.)

According to the text, what seemed to be the problem in the church in Corinth?

At this time in biblical history, the Bible had not been completed. The churches depended on the teachings of the apostles to learn how to walk with Jesus. At the church in Corinth, false teachers had penetrated the church and tempted the Corinthian Christians to replace the Grace of the cross with the bondage of the law. As a result

of this false teaching, the Corinthians began to question Paul's authority as an apostle of Christ and demanded proof that Christ was speaking through him. Paul, in return, rebuts this request beautifully:

Where does Paul tell his accusers to look for evidence of Christ speaking through him (verse 5)?

Paul tells them to look for proof in their own hearts! I love the Amplified Bible's accurate rendering of this verse, "Examine and test and evaluate your own selves to see whether you are holding to your faith and showing proper fruits of it. Test and prove yourselves [not Christ]. Do you not yourselves realize and know [thoroughly by an ever-increasing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you are [counterfeits] disapproved on trial and rejected?"¹

What has Christ been speaking to you in your heart?

What do you need to do with what He has been teaching you?

Please read verses 7-9 again.

Do you find anything remarkable about Paul's attitude concerning his accusers in these verses?

I find it noteworthy that Paul continues to pray for the welfare of those who are trying to do him harm. Not only is he following Christ in that he does not return evil for evil, but Paul is also trusting God to use this situation to strengthen himself and the church. Satan is doing the best he can to distract Paul from his mission, disciplining the Body of Christ. But, Paul does not fall into the trap of defending himself—God is his defense. Paul continues praying for and instructing those given into his care while keeping his eyes on Christ.

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What three things did Paul pray would be accomplished in the Corinthians despite their attacks against him?

First, Paul prayed that they would do no *evil*. The original word for *evil* in this text is *kakos* which means among other things wicked, base, injurious and destructive (*BLB*). It's worth noting that Paul considered the Christians at this church capable of doing evil things despite their salvation. I have on more than one occasion heard Christians say "She must not really be saved because she did." That comment used to greatly trouble me; I used to think there was something terribly wrong with me, because after I got saved I had to continually fight my sin nature. At times I failed grievously. Thankfully, I learned through good teaching that there was nothing wrong with me that didn't trouble every other believer. We may be sanctified, purified and justified, but we will not be free from committing sins until we see our Savior face to face. Even though we will not be sinless during this lifetime, we should see progress in our lives in overcoming sin.

Take a moment to evaluate yourself.

Do you see an area of sin that used to trouble you that is not so troublesome now?

How have you progressed?

If you see progress, thank your Holy Father for His work in conforming you to the image of His Son. If you don't see progress, don't be discouraged. Pray right now for strength to overcome your weaknesses. Often times we cannot see progress within ourselves. In my own life, I've noticed that the closer I walk with God, the more glaring my faults become—it can seem as if I'm making no progress at all!

Second, Paul prayed that the Corinthians would do what is *honorable*. In this passage *honorable* means beautiful, good, excellent, noble and

admirable. Notice that the Corinthians had the choice between doing evil (destructive) deeds or honorable (admirable) deeds. We also have the same choice.

Without becoming overly critical of yourself, bring something to mind that you have done recently that was a *destructive* deed.

Next time, how can you choose to do something admirable?

I'm thinking of the harsh words I just had to say to my husband recently. Next time, I pray to keep my mouth shut until we can discuss things calmly. As I heard over the weekend, "If God can shut the mouths of the lions, He certainly can shut mine."

Third, Paul prayed that the Corinthians would be made complete. The original word used for *complete* in this text is very interesting, *katartisis*. *Katartisis* means to be equipped, trained and instructed. It is God's will that we be made complete and fully equipped to serve Him to the best of our ability. This is not equipment that we have made or purchased for ourselves. God supplies us with this equipment free of charge at the exact time we need it.

What has God equipped you to do since you've become a Christian?

If you've been a Christian for a long time, has God recently equipped you for a new work?

If so, please describe what He's bringing about in your life at this present season.

Katartisis is derived from the Greek word *kartartizo* which means among other things "to repair, to adjust, make one what he ought to be, perfectly joined together." This word is also used to describe the "mending of nets." Due to our sin nature and the damage we inflict upon ourselves through our sinful choices, we all need to be repaired, adjusted and mended. Thank you, Father, that You not only have forgiven us, but You are also committed to our healing.

How has God repaired, mended and adjusted you since He called you to His wonderful kingdom?

I had a lot of deep wounds that needed healing, a broken heart that required mending and years of wrong thinking that demanded radical adjustment. Some issues God healed quickly. Other issues have taken more time as God worked carefully and slowly with my fragile heart. Thank you Father that You are the Great Physician.

Now, let's turn our attention to the word used for *prayer* in verse 7 of this passage of scripture, *euchomai*. This word means "to wish, to pray to God" (*BLB*). This word is a little different from the other words for prayer that we have studied thus far, in that the wishes of the one who is praying are included in the prayer request. The usage of *euchomai* in this passage seems to take Paul's prayer request to a deeper level than simple intercession for an enemy. I think it's safe to assume that Paul's heart was involved in his prayer request for the Corinthians.

I have at times prayed very quick almost grudge-like prayers for those who have hurt me. I probably would have dropped the Corinthians and moved on to those who would have appreciated my efforts. Paul, however, expressed to His Father his own personal wish that his oppressors be healed so that they could be better equipped to serve the spread of the Gospel. He completely omitted any requests for God to pay them back for the mistreatment he had received at their hands.

Think of someone who has mistreated you. Please spend a moment in prayer and ask God to heal, mend, restore and adjust that person, so he/she will be thoroughly equipped to minister to others. It is far better to ask God to heal those who have mistreated us than it is to simply pray that they leave us alone!

Please close by reading 3 John 1:2. Please consider this verse to be my personal *wish* for you this day. Our Father loves you deeply!

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