

people in Philippi. And in verse 19, he told them he would be delivered, in the way God wanted him to be; because they *were praying for him*.

James four tells us we “**do not have, because we do not ask**”. God will help and bless us in many ways, because we are His children; but He will not help us as much as *He wants to* and as much as *we need* for Him to, if we don’t pray. He sets the rules and this is His rule.

In prayer, we must be **in earnest**. In chapter four Paul says, “**Devote yourselves to prayer**”. Make it a daily habit; even if it is only reading a short Bible passage and talking to God for a few minutes. Then you should pray, “*without ceasing*” as God comes to mind during the day (1 Thessalonians 5).

Prayer must be **honest**. Paul says, “**let your requests be made known to God**” (4:4-6). If you or someone you love is critically ill, tell God you want healing – because you do. If He doesn’t give it, then, like Jesus in Gethsemane, say, “*not my will but Yours’ be done*”.

How do we find strength to do this? Paul said it comes from the “**bountiful supply**” (Amplified Version) of the Holy Spirit’s resources. The result is a peace that even we cannot understand (4:4-6). Prayer has its deep, profound side; but it is also, so simple a child can do it.

As a little boy was walking upstairs to bed,
he said to his family, “I’m going to say my
prayers – anybody need anything?”

That sounds simplistic, but faith like that shakes heaven.

Paul looked back **at the people** at Philippi who had helped him; and thanked them for being his “**partners in the gospel**” (v5) and for the times they helped him financially (4:16), even though they lived in “poverty”. They had also just sent him a gift and one of their members, to stay with him and help him (Philippians 2:19-30; 4:14-18). This freed Paul

to share the gospel and to write and encourage Churches.

A preacher needs a lot of partners. In my first church in rural Oklahoma, an old cowboy took my hand and said, “Preacher, I can’t read good and I sure can’t sing. But every Sunday morning you will find the grass and weeds cut and all the buildings clean and ready to go”. That was 61 years ago and I can still see his face. He was my partner. Paul called what the people at Philippi did for him, “**a fragrant offering pleasing to God**” (4:10-20).

Too many of us, in our pride, make the mistake of not letting people help us. And we rob them of the blessing that comes to them. I read not long ago, about a young black man from Boston, walking home from work. He heard gunshots, saw a car full of thugs on a drive-by shooting spree and jumped behind a wall. When he saw a group of children in the street, he rushed over and pushed them out of the line of fire. A bullet pierced his spine, as he sheltered a little boy who fell. After the shooting, he was paralyzed from the waist down. A reporter asked him if he had it to do over, would he do it again. This father of three young children said, “Yes.” The reporter said, “Why? –you didn’t know these children.” His reply was, “It was something I knew the Lord wanted me to do.”

We see this in our families. In her 40’s a lady lost the use of both arms in a car wreck. Her little ten-year-old daughter was feeding her some oatmeal one morning. She looked at her and said, “Honey, it seems like only yesterday that I was feeding you just like this.” The little girl said, “I know Mama. **We are taking turns.**”

If someone needs your praise, bestow it,
If you treasure them, let them know it.
Do not wait till life is over
And they lie beneath the clover.
What you have inside you, should be said;
For they cannot read their tombstones
when they’re dead.