

United States Naval Academy  
Protestant Chapel 1100 Service  
Series: Midshipmen's Prayer – Third Stanza – “Protect Those in Whose Love I Live.”  
Title: A Protection Plan  
Philippians 1:3-11

When my father passed away last year, I spoke at his funeral on behalf of my family and tried to find a few words to sum up such extraordinary character, class and candor. I did not have a gregarious father, and he certainly was not overly affectionate. He was simply direct. My father had a catch phrase he would say each time my brother and I left the house: “Remember your last name.” As I grew older, I learned he wanted us to know there was a long line of people who came before us. They established our family as a people of faith and a people of prayer. I quickly learned that my father was trying to prepare me for the eventual day I would leave home. My father told me, “I want you to remember who you are. As a Carter, you come from a family that understands what it means to pray.”

When you begin to analyze your own prayers, what is the theme? What are you praying for? For that matter, do you know how to pray?

Many of you here are in an unusual place because you are not really sure about who you are. On the flip side, many of you are in an unusual place because you are secure in who you are, but just not sure how you manage to navigate these waters away from your family. As parents, it is hard to watch your children leave, but it is your hope that your children have the foundation to propel them toward success. In this glorious text, Paul says, “I thank my God...”

This is the first part of the Midshipmen's prayer where we see intercessory prayer. “Protect those in whose love I live.” Every time I wanted to do something I wasn't supposed to do, I would thank God for my father's message. I could not disappoint my family, and I could not disappoint the family name. Here is the other aspect of my father's message. He wanted me to know, just as I am telling you today, “You are a child of God.” As a child of God, there are rights and privileges you have. The best privilege is access to God through prayer.

I am standing here today because someone saw fit to pray for me. Somebody cared enough to call my name out to God and ask Him to wrap His hands around me. God has a special place in His heart for people who cry out for others. The Bible speaks of numerous people who pray for others. Moses, Hezekiah, Elijah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Isaiah pray for the people. In the New Testament, Jarius prays for his daughter, the Synagogue leader prays for his servant and Jesus prays for his disciples. God moves on behalf of His children when they are moved to pray for others. However, in order to ensure your prayers reach the ears of the Father, you must have a relationship with him. That is why Paul emphasized “his” God. It was a personal relationship. And the target audience in Paul's letter was supporting the ministry. In this text, Paul is thanking the people of Phillipi for their care of his ministry. They continued to provide for him financially, and they consistently supported his ministry through prayer and other emotional support. They cared for him deeply, and he was passionate about them just as much, if not more.

When people speak of being homesick, it should be a sense of joy and delight. When someone says they are homesick, it means someone loves and cares for them, and it means they love someone else. Paul was homesick. His words say he longed to be with the people of Phillipi. While you may long to be with someone, take heart that God will provide for you as long as you stay in line with His will, and stay in line with His ministry. God brought you here to the Naval Academy because He has plans for you, and it is now your responsibility to walk in that authority and anointing.

Paul called himself a slave to the Gospel. While slave has become a derogatory name in our culture, Paul was calling himself a servant because he knew what his service was. Paul was not ashamed to share the Word of God. Paul was not worried about telling people who God was even if it cost him his life. Paul's statement was a reflection of Deuteronomy 15 where God speaks of a slave not wanting to leave his master because he knows it is better to be with the master than on his own. God wants you to know it is much better to be in his company, than trying to do things on your own. Be not dismayed God has plans to wrap His arms around you and carry you to higher heights than you thought you could go. God took you away from your home so you could create a new home here. You are being shaped to be the leaders of tomorrow so you can keep the home you love so much safe.

Beloved, that is also the message here. You cannot do things your own way. Your new family, the United States Navy, the Midshipmen and the chapel family want you to succeed. We need you to succeed. There is a partnership and brotherhood that is built because of the bond, the fraternity, the union of being part of this fantastic institution. You should be overwhelmingly excited each time you get to wear the nation's cloth and serve this glorious country. Now, let us focus on another sensitive issue. Everyone is aware the Navy and the Naval Academy has taken a hit because of allegations of sexual assault and sexual misconduct. This prayer says, "Protect those in whose love I live." You can't protect someone if you are preying on them. It is your obligation as a shipmate to support one another. When you see a classmate struggling, you help them. We are demanding that you intercede on behalf of your shipmates and your classmates. We hold you in high regard because you earned a spot to be here. Not everyone who applies to the United States Naval Academy gets in. In fact, there are approximately 1000 people who wanted your spot, but you were chosen for a purpose. Your purpose was to come and sit at the feet of the sharpest minds in the country. Your purpose was to grow as a servant and as a leader. Your purpose was to develop skills and expertise the country needs you to have. Your purpose was to look out for the weak and support freedom and democracy. This is the finest Navy in the entire world, but unless someone special like you decides to change the culture, and change the image, it will continue to take blow after blow, suffer black eye after black eye and lose the trust and respect of the people who need us the most. You are called to protect. You are called to serve.

When you ask God to protect those you love, you are asking God to blanket those who mean the most to you with His love. God has always, and will always look out for those who call upon Him. My son, Bryson, once drew a picture of a superhero. He told me his superhero was the strongest, the fastest and the smartest superhero in the world. He told me his superhero could fly, and he told me his superhero could see through walls. Looking closer at the picture, I noticed a small figure in the top corner of the page. I said to him, "Son, I see something off in the corner. What is that?" He responded, "Daddy, that is Jesus looking out for my superhero." What makes you special, what makes you gifted, what makes you proud, what makes you protected is Jesus looking out for you. As long as you are praying for God to protect those in whose love you live, you are asking God to send His son Jesus to look out for them. Walk in the authority you are given. Walk in the anointing you are blessed with, because Jesus is your protection.