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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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## **Paul's Prays for the Perfection of His Ministry Partners, Part 2**

### **Philippians 1:1-11**

Illustration: Jonathan Edwards: "Hypocrites Deficient in Private Prayer", Sermon 1742

"I would exhort those who have entertained an hope of their being true converts, and yet since their supposed conversion have left off the duty of secret prayer, and do ordinarily allow themselves in the omission of it, to throw away their hope. If you have left off calling upon God, it is time for you to leave off hoping and flattering yourselves with an imagination that you are the children of God. Probably it will be a very difficult thing for you to do this. It is hard for a man to let go an hope of heaven, on which he hath once allowed himself to lay hold, and which he hath retained for a considerable time. True conversion is a rare thing; but that men are brought off from a false hope of conversion, after they are once settled and established in it, and have continued in it for some time, is much more rare."

We readily agree with the point that to have no desire whatsoever to pray in secret where no one can see you shows that your faith is merely outward show... But I wonder about the title of the sermon: "Hypocrites Deficient in Private Prayer"

I wonder if we could travel back in time to 1742 asked the humble Mr. Edwards if his prayer life was everything he would want it to be, I am sure he would say that he also was deficient in private prayer... not that he never prayed, but that he didn't pray as much as he should; not that he never prayed in faith, but that he didn't pray with perfect faith; not that he asked for all the wrong things to spend it on his carnal pleasures, but that still his prayer life did not perfectly conform to God's eternal purposes

We are ALL deficient in private prayer in one way or another

To remedy this ill, it seems that we can do nothing better than to sit under the instruction of one of the greatest men of prayer the world has ever seen, the Apostle Paul

His epistles contain many examples of his actual prayers, and here in Philippians 1:9-11, we have such an example

We began this study in three steps last week... looking at just the first:

Three Steps:

1) The Character of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 3-8)

2) The Content of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 9-11a)

3) The Goal of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 11b)

### III. The Character of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 3-8)

**vs. 3-8** *I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

A. Thankfulness

**vs. 3-8** *I thank my God every time I remember you.*

B. Remembrance

C. Consistency

**vs. 3-4** *I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy*

D. Joy

E. Reasons

1) Philippians partnership (fellowship) in the Gospel

2) Paul's absolute confidence in the sovereignty of God to finish in us what He begins

F. Fellowship

**vs. 5** *because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*

**vs. 7** *for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.*

Here, the fellowship is in the work of the Gospel... something we all share together

it's no one person's responsibility to do the work of the gospel

all Christians alike share fellowship in the Gospel... your internal journey to perfection in Christ is in part MY RESPONSIBILITY

so also is the advance of the gospel to unreached people groups in Asia and in the Muslim world

we share this together in Christ

so also the Philippians were sharers in Paul's ministry through their gifts and prayers

Paul's prayer life for the Philippians was his partaking, sharing, holding in common what Christ was working out in their lives

#### G. Confidence

***vs. 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

#### H. Affection

***vs. 7-8 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.***

Now, let us take in the content of Paul's prayer life!!

***Romans 8:26 In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for***

***James 4:2-3 You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.***

We need to be instructed on WHAT to pray for... how to pray ACCORDING to GOD'S ETERNAL PLANS AND WILL

***1 John 5:14-15 This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us-- whatever we ask-- we know that we have what we asked of him.***

So, let's sit at Paul's feet not just for the character of his prayer life, but also for its content:

#### IV. The Content of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 9-11a)

***vs. 9-11 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-- to the glory and praise of God.***

So many people misunderstand the purpose of prayer in the advance of Christ's Kingdom

A.W. Pink: "The prevailing idea seems to be, that I come to God and ask Him for something that I want, and that I expect Him to give me that which I have asked. But this is a most dishonoring and degrading conception. The popular belief reduces God to a servant, our servant: doing our bidding, performing our pleasure, granting our desires." Prayer is not intended to change God's purpose, nor is it to move Him to form fresh purposes. God has decreed that certain events shall come to pass through the means He has appointed for their accomplishment. [Prayer] is the way and means God has appointed for the communication of the blessings of His goodness to His people."

George Mueller: The great point is, that we ask only for that which it would be for the glory of God to give to us; for that, and that alone, can be for our real good.

Martin Luther: "Prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but laying hold of His willingness."

Paul shows us here what are the kind of things we should be asking God for as we pray for each other:

#### A. Love Abounding More and More

##### 1. Starting point: love

Love is the point of the gospel... to transform us from self-centered God-haters to a passionate love for God

***Matthew 22:37-39 "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'***

***1 Timothy 1:5 But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.***

##### a. love for God

Love for God: for His marvelous attributes, for His mighty works throughout history, for His incredible future promises

Love for God the Father, Love for God the Son, Love for God the Holy Spirit

Love for God's eternal plan

Love for God's perfect word

If you had none of this love, you would not be a Christian

But it must increase... you must do it more and more

b. love for Christians

You've shown your love for me in your gift and concern... but you have divisions and conflicts amongst yourself

c. love for the lost

2. Love ABOUNDING MORE AND MORE

“Abound” = a rich feast, a full supply, overwhelming, like a cornucopia

- a. dynamic... a great increase in love
- b. always yearning to grow in love for God and for others
- c. you have love... I just want it to abound more and more

***1 Thessalonians 4:9-10 Now about brotherly love we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers, to do so more and more.***

Every Christian is taught by God to love... if you did not love, you would not be a Christian. Love is the great hallmark of redemption

But so also is GROWTH... if there is life, there must be growth!! The Christian life calls for a constant increase in love

Paul PRAYS for an increase in love... showing that He believes that growth in love is a direct gift from the God who is love

B. Knowledge and Deep Insight

- 1. People talk about “head knowledge” and “heart knowledge”
- 2. That's an acceptable distinction if head knowledge is not disparaged as some insignificant thing

Some people say “head knowledge” is worthless... what really matters is “heart knowledge”

I say all heart knowledge begins as head knowledge... thus head knowledge is precious and valuable

- 3. Paul wants a perfect unity between love and knowledge

***And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight***

Love without knowledge is sentimentalism and idolatry

Knowledge without love is cold formalism and hypocrisy

4. Before we were converted, we did not know God at all... now for the Christian, knowing God is the central passion of life

***John 17:3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.***

***Philippians 3:8, 10 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord... I want to know Christ, and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings***

5. First word here is “epignosis”... deep, personal knowledge

knowledge ABOUT God and His word

knowledge OF God personally

Paul wants the Philippians to know God’s Bible

Even more, Paul wanted the Philippians to know the God of the Bible personally

Practical application: a deep and thorough study of God by means of His word... recognizing that only if God gives the knowledge will it come...

6. Second word is related to the word for “aesthetics”... a discernment of what is beautiful and attractive

C. Discernment: Good from Evil, and Good from Excellent

***vs. 9-10 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best***

1. The result of love’s growth in knowledge is an ability to discern
2. Discernment is a refined sensibility... like a connoisseur’s taste

Illus. Diamond connoisseur can immediately discern the color, cut, carat, and clarity of a diamond

Art connoisseur can immediately discern difference between a genuine Rembrandt and a skillful forgery

Coffee connoisseur can immediately discern the beans that were blended to form this particular cup of coffee

Wine connoisseur can tell at one taste the vintage and year of the glass of Merlot

It comes down to a super-refined sensibility... a discernment

Christians who are mature can discern with similar refinement

3. What are we to discern?

a. good from evil

***Hebrews 5:14 But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.***

b. God's general plan from what could not be God's general plan

c. what is best from what is merely good

***vs. 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best***

***NASB Philippians 1:10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent***

4. ALSO not just discern it but APPROVE of it... to choose it and want it

***Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.***

Summary: Paul wants their love to grow more and more in their knowledge of God and of His word with the result that they have a refined ability to discern... to be able to look out over the mass of possibilities and KNOW clearly what God's best is... what is the excellent thing that God is calling them to do

And not just to discern it but to delight in it and choose it

NOTE: The longer we go on in the Christian life, the more we find ourselves choosing between paths that may EACH be God's will, but only one of them CAN be!

Example: Should we concentrate on one people group to evangelize, or many? If one, then which one should we focus on?

Or, how much of our missions money should go to Lottie Moon and the IMB, how much should we retain for local missions and personal contact with missionaries

Or, Should I marry this person, who is a godly Christian and who meets all the Biblical requirements

Or, Should I invest time in a ministry to homeless or to homebound? Either one COULD be God's will

#### D. Purity of Life

1. The outcome of this abounding love and knowledge is a refined discernment to know what is God's best and then delight in it

2. The result of that is a PURE LIFE

***vs. 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ***

3. “Pure” literally mean tested by the sun: the sunlight was the brightest light they had available to them in the ancient world

to discern if something was PURE they would hold it up to the sunlight and see if there were any impurities

if the object passed the trial by sunlight, it was called “sun tested”... PURE

4. “Blameless” = free from accusation by conscience or by the law

***RSV Acts 24:16 So I always take pains to have a clear conscience toward God and toward men.***

5. The outcome of abounding love filled with knowledge and discernment is PURITY and HOLINESS... freedom from wickedness, lust, covetousness, rage, selfishness

Paul’s desire is to see the Philippians growing in godliness through constant transformation of their minds and hearts

He wants them carefully discerning what is excellent... loving what is excellent... choosing what is excellent... thriving in what is excellent

Internal growth into perfection in Christ

External advance of the Kingdom of God

E. Perseverance

***vs. 10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ***

1. “Until the day of Christ” = until you stand face to face with Christ on Judgment Day

2. “Day of Christ” mentioned earlier... will be mentioned later

***Philippians 1:6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

***Philippians 2:16 as you hold out the word of life-- in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.***

Day of Christ is the day in which Christ will judge the world in righteousness:

***1 Corinthians 1:8 He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.***



**Acts 17:31** *“For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead.”*

3. Paul continually thought about that day... and continually set it in front of his people

**2 Corinthians 5:10** *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

**Romans 14:10-12** *For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. 11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" 12 So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*

This is the same concept Paul speaks about in Philippians 2:

**Philippians 2:9-11** *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

This is the “day of Christ Jesus”... when everyone will appear before Him to be judged

4. He wants the Philippians thus to PERSEVERE in their race until the finish line... to make it all the way to the end

**Hebrews 12:1** *Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

He wants the Philippians to persevere, to be blameless until that day, free from wickedness, pure from the defilements of the world

He also wants them to overflow in fruitfulness:

F. Fruitfulness

**vs. 11** *filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ*

1. The gift of perfect righteousness comes by simple faith in Christ the moment we are converted

**Philippians 3:9** *and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-- the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.*

2. But that gift of positional righteousness does not lay dormant... it moves out into a daily practical righteousness

3. The FRUIT of righteousness is a harvest of righteous acts that glorify God

- of temptations and sins put to death by the Spirit

- of prayers prayed for God’s glory in the hidden prayer closet
- of money given to advance the gospel when the left hand didn’t know what the right hand was doing
- of evangelism done in the context of persecution
- of courage shown in the face of great opposition
- of gentleness and love shown to other believers
- of generosity in sharing this world’s goods with those who needed it more

So Paul prays for discernment to protect the Philippians **NEGATIVELY** from what would defile them: pollutions of the sins of the world

Paul also prays **POSITIVELY** for an abundant harvest, a bumper crop of practical acts of righteousness that flows from Christ...**MUCH TO SHOW** on the Day of Christ

So far, we have seen

- 1) The Character of Paul’s Prayer Life (vs. 3-8)
- 2) The Content of Paul’s Prayer Life (vs. 9-11a)

Now... what was the ultimate **GOAL** of Paul’s prayer life?

## V. The Goal of Paul’s Prayer Life (vs. 11b)

**vs. 11b “... to the glory and praise of God.”**

### A. Our Salvation is Not an End of Itself

1. The ultimate salvation of the Philippians a worthy thing... worth more than the whole world itself

***Matthew 16:26 What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?***

2. That the Philippians would **KEEP** growing in love, knowledge, discernment, purity and fruitfulness is a **WORTHY** thing... worth all of Paul’s efforts and suffering

***2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.***

3. Paul does pray for this... but it is not the ultimate goal, the final end of Paul's prayer life

No... as vital as the salvation of human souls is, there is a higher priority:

#### B. The Ultimate Goal is the Glory and Praise of God

Illus. SBC in St. Louis, Rick Warren, "Can anyone step to a microphone and tell me something of greater worth and value than a human soul? Is there anything more worth living for than the salvation of a single human soul? If you can think of anything, step to the microphone and tell us!"

1. Salvation is not the ultimate end... God's glory is
2. This is established here in Paul's prayer

***vs. 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-- to the glory and praise of God.***

- a. the Philippians righteousness will exist and be put on display on Judgment Day
- b. they will be glorious and spectacular, and will shine like the sun in perfection
- c. but all their radiance will really be borrowed rays of glory... it will really be God's glory through Christ put on display that day

***Revelation 21:11 [The New Jerusalem] shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.***

***Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.***

In heaven, every righteous act done by the saints on earth will really be a display of God's perfect glory

No one will boast on that day of anything but the perfect salvation God has worked for us all:

Christ was the Alpha and the Omega of that salvation... its beginning and its end

Our salvation will be a display of God's attributes: His mercy, His grace, His love, His righteousness, His perseverance, His holiness... these are the rays of glory that will shine through us that day

For this reason, Paul closes the entire epistle

***Philippians 4:20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

## VI. Application

### A. Understand Paul's Prayer Life

#### 1) The Character of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 3-8)

Thankfulness Remembrance Consistency Joy Reasons Fellowship Confidence Affection

#### 2) The Content of Paul's Prayer Life (vs. 9-11a)

1. Love Abounding More and More
2. Knowledge and Deep Insight
3. Discernment: Good from Evil, and Good from Excellent
4. Purity of Life
5. Perseverance
6. Fruitfulness

#### 3) The ultimate GOAL of Paul's prayer life (vs. 11b)

### B. Imitate Paul's Prayer Life

Don't just learn how Paul prayed... PRAY LIKE PAUL

So many prayers are offered in church for earthly, temporal things

Even prayers for physical healing should take a backseat to this kind of praying

Illus. "More prayers are offered to keep saints out of heaven than to help them on their journey to heaven."

Practical hints:

Get a copy of all of Paul's prayers in the New Testament

Put it with your prayer lists and pray through the words, applying them to specific Christians you know... people in your family, in this church, around the world

Ask God to teach you to pray the way Paul did

Concentrate on spiritual growth of the church in its two great journeys

COME TO CHRIST FIRST!!!!