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Completing the Work

Philippians 1.3-11

Series: Near to the Heart of God

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The Village Church at Shell Point

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I. Introduction

A. Series – Near to the Heart of God

1. Prayers of the NT

B. Motivation

1. We can all still grow

2. One of the most significant ways – prayer

a. Prayer is one of the challenging aspects of the Christian life for me

3. Years ago – did a study of the prayers of the NT

a. Discovered I didn't pray like them!

b. My prayers were weak

c. Often self-centered

d. Lacking in theological substance – didn't reflect enough on whom I was praying to

e. Especially discovered that my prayer priorities were not the same as the NT authors

II. The Prayers of Jesus

A. What Jesus Taught

1. So-called "Lord's Prayer"

a. Really, our Lord's instruction on prayer

b. We often use it liturgically; sometimes even sing it

c. But really meant as a pattern or a framework for all legitimate prayer

2. If you analyze this instruction, and analyze the prayers of the NT (and even the psalms!) you'll discover many echoes and allusions

3. Address: **Our Father**

4. **Petitions – God-centered**

a. **God's name hallowed**

b. **Kingdom come**

c. **Will be done**

5. **Petitions – Human-centered**

a. **Daily bread** (provisions)

b. **Forgiveness**

(1) As we forgive!

- c. **Temptation**
 - (1) Self-awareness of our inherent weakness
- B. **How Jesus Prayed**
 - 1. Two examples
 - 2. **John 17 – Jesus’ Priestly Prayer**
 - a. Climax of Jesus’ final time with disciples – Olivet discourse
 - b. Relationship with the world
 - c. **Saved from the World**
 - d. **Safe in the World**
 - (1) Sanctification by the Word
 - (2) Preservation of the Saints
 - e. **Unified for the World**
 - (1) Unity as with the Trinity
 - (2) Basis for the world recognizing Jesus came from God
- C. Move now to the prayers of Paul
 - 1. More like our own
 - 2. Still challenging
 - a. Some of the ways my prayer life has been affected have been the prayers of Paul
 - b. Have become the basis of how I pray for others
 - 3. Challenge us to evaluate our times of intercessions
 - a. Corporate
 - b. Personal

III. **The Prayers of Paul**

- A. Text – Philippians 1.3-11
 - 1. Philippians 1:3–11 (ESV) —
 - a. 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,
 - b. 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,
 - c. 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
 - d. 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.
 - e. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all,
 - f. because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace,
 - g. both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.
 - h. 8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
 - i. 9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,
 - j. 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

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

B. **Attitude and Approach**

- 1. **Philippians 1:3** (ESV) —
 - a. 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you...
- 2. **Thanks God**
 - a. In all my remembrance – every Time
 - (1) Indicates **Frequency** of prayers
 - b. **Remembers them**
 - (1) Indicates occasion of prayers
 - (2) Ex: Cotton Mather (diary, February, 1684)
 - (3) “When I have been sitting in a Room full of People, at a Funeral, where they take not much Liberty or Talk, and where yett much Time is most unreasonably lost, I have usually sett my Witts a work, to contrive agreeable Benedictions, for each Person in the Company.
 - (4) “In passing along the Street, I have sett myself to bless thousands of persons, who never knew that I did it; with secret Wishes, after this manner sent unto Heaven for them.”
 - (5) “Upon the sight of:
 - (a) A tall man: Lord, give that Man, High Attainments in Christianity; lett him fear God, above many.
 - (b) Children at Play: Lord, lett not these Children always forget the Work, which they came into the World upon.
 - (c) A Very little Man: Lord, bestow great Blessings upon that man, and above all, thy Christ, the greatest of blessings.
 - (d) A Man carrying a Burden: Lord, help this Man to carry a burdened Soul, unto his Lord-Redeemer.
 - (e) A Man on Horseback: Lord, thy Creatures do serve that man; help him to serve his Maker.
 - (f) Young People: Lord, help these Persons to remember their Creator in the Dayes of their Youth.
 - (g) Young Gentlewomen: Lord make ‘em wise Virgins, as the polish’d Stones of thy Temple
 - (h) A Shop-keeper, busy in the Shop: Lord, lett not the World cause that Person to neglect the one thing that is needful.
 - (i) A Man, who going by me took no Notice of mee: Lord, help that Man, to take a due Notice of the Lord Jesus Christ, I pray thee.”
- 3. **Philippians 1:4** (ESV) —

- a. 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy...
- 4. Prayers = **Requests**
 - a. **Joy** – emotional state of mind when praying
 - b. **Always** – frequency of joyful praying for the saints
 - c. When you pray for the saints, do you always have a joyful attitude?
- 5. **Philippians 1:5** (ESV) —
 - a. 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
- 6. Partnership in gospel = **koinonia** – reason for Paul’s joy
 - a. Koinonia – fellowship; cf Chinese Church always talked about others in the church as co-workers
 - b. From first day until now – **Consistency** of their partnership
 - c. Do we think of the history we have had together as believers in this place, the fellowship we share in the gospel, as occasion for joyful praying?
- 7. **Philippians 1:6** (ESV) —
 - a. 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.
- 8. Sure = **Confident**, persuaded
 - a. He = God
 - b. Began = **God initiated our salvation**; why we can pray with such thanksgiving!
 - c. Bring it to completion = **epiteleo – finish**, complete
 - d. At the day of Christ – until He returns
 - e. Observation
 - (1) Paul’s confidence arises from his observation of the faithful, consistent response of the Philippians
 - (2) However, his confidence is not in the Philippians but in God
 - (3) He is persuaded that what he sees in them is the work of God, and his confidence is that if God began it, He will complete it
 - f. Would Paul have the same confidence in us?
 - (1) Do we pray for others who are like the Philippians in this way?
- 9. **Philippians 1:7** (ESV) —
 - a. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all,
 - b. because I hold you in my heart,
 - c. for you are all partakers with me of grace,
 - d. both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.
- 10. **In imprisonment and defense of the gospel** – Paul’s circumstances
 - a. In spite of his circumstances, he still has them in his heart!
 - b. Philippians share in God’s grace with him, no matter what

- (1) Didn't matter what happened to Paul, the Philippians would be faithful partakers of his ministry with him
 - c. This verifies legitimacy of Paul's feelings
 - (1) Sometimes feelings are mistaken
 - (2) Paul received confirmation about feelings
- 11. **Philippians 1:8** (ESV) —
 - a. 8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.
- 12. **Paul's desire for them**
 - a. Pastor's heart – really desires to see them
 - b. Affection of Christ Jesus
 - (1) **Affection = bowels** (lit, spleen), seat of gentler affections of Jews
 - (2) **Of Christ** – greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends
 - (3) Paul has adopted that kind of love
- 13. All of this puts Paul in a position to pray for his fellow believers
 - a. He hasn't yet started to pray for them!
- C. **Content and Purpose**
 - 1. Content of Prayer
 - 2. **Philippians 1:9** (ESV) —
 - a. 9 And it is my prayer
 - b. that your love may abound more and more,
 - c. with knowledge and all discernment...
 - 3. **Prayer = request**
 - a. Paul's intercession
 - 4. **Love = agape**
 - a. Willful love; decision based
 - 5. **Abound = exceeding a fixed measure**; overflowing
 - a. Word used for a flower coming into full bloom
 - 6. **Knowledge = epignosis**
 - a. Strengthened form of gnosis
 - b. **Full or complete knowledge**, intimacy
 - c. Participatory, relational knowledge
 - 7. **Discernment = aisthesis**
 - a. **Moral discernment** – discriminate between good and bad
 - b. Organs of discernment need to be trained to function
 - 8. Observations
 - a. Paul doesn't desire a mushy, romanticized love
 - b. Paul desires they have a love with knowledge, depth of insight, discernment
 - c. Requires spending time with each other
 - (1) That means being together in person!
 - 9. Purpose of Prayer
 - 10. **Philippians 1:10** (ESV) —

- a. 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...
- 11. **Approve what is excellent**
 - a. **Approve = dokimos**, discern; used of metals
 - b. **Excellent = diaphero**; that which is essential in fulfilling the law or Christian life; implies setting priorities (bad, good, better, best)
 - (1) One of the great sins of the contemporary church – not doing things expressly forbidden, but neglecting the best
- 12. **Pure = heilikrines** – found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun’s light (heile = sun’s rays; krino – to test)
- 13. **Blameless = aproskopos** – not giving offense; when under the microscope, nothing is found
- 14. **For the day of Christ** = time when Christ brings to light all that is hidden
- 15. Cf references to day of Christ
 - a. V 6 – Paul is confident that God will complete what He started until that day
 - b. Vv 9-10 – indicates how God will do this
 - (1) Abound in knowledgeable love
 - (2) Approve what is excellent
 - (3) Pure and blameless (sanctification)
 - c. Paul is confident in what God is doing, and he prays specifically toward that end
 - (1) **Your kingdom come, Your will be done...**
- 16. **Philippians 1:11** (ESV) —
 - a. 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness
 - b. that comes through Jesus Christ,
 - c. to the glory and praise of God.
- 17. **Filled with fruit of righteousness** – end result, or fruit of this love and discernment of what is excellent
 - a. Implication is that to lack these things will be to display unrighteousness
- 18. **That comes through Jesus Christ** – means of producing fruit
 - a. Christ in you, the hope of glory
 - b. Christ is our sanctifier!
- 19. **To glory and praise of God** – ultimate purpose
 - a. Remember – God began the work; God will complete the work
 - b. Paul prays to that end so God will be glorified
 - (1) **Hallowed be Thy name!**

IV. **Application**

- A. What is your attitude and approach to intercession for the saints?
- B. Are you praying for your brothers and sisters in this way?
- C. Are you growing in knowledgeable and insightful love?
 - 1. And praying for it in others?
- D. Are you able to distinguish the good from the best, most excellent?

- E. Are you transparent before God and man?
- F. Is Christ accomplishing the fruit of righteousness in you?
- G. Ask someone to pray this way for you!