

**The Gospel According to Philippians**  
**Gospel Praying**  
**Philippians 1:1-11**  
**Sermon Outline**

**Introduction:** God's great love drove Paul to pray. Why did Paul pray? For what did he pray? And what does all this have to do with us?

**I) Notice that Paul prayed**

**A) He worked hard, but hard work was never a substitute for praying**

*Romans 1:8: First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you*

*1 Cor. 1:4: I give thanks to my God always for you*

*Eph. 1:16: I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers*

*Col. 1:9: We have not ceased to pray for you...*

**B) Why did he pray?**

He knew where real change comes from

Faithfulness was Paul's "job"; results were God's

**C) Chances to pray at EPC:**

Morning of Prayer: Sat., Sept 26, 9 am – 1 pm

First Fridays: October 2, Nov 6, Dec 4

Weekly: 9:45

**II) For what did Paul pray?**

**A) That love will grow**

*v.9: ...abound more and more*

- Already there
- Takes time
- The essential thing

**B) That love will be "trained" by knowledge and discernment**

*v.9: ...with knowledge and all discernment*

**C) That we will genuinely love what God loves**

*v.10: so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless*

- Pure: unalloyed, inside and out
- Blameless: a public life no one can fault
- Approving what is excellent:
  - *Phil 4:8-9: ...whatever is true...honorable...just...pure...lovely...commendable...any excellence...anything worthy of praise*

**III) Responding to Paul's prayer:**

The Good News:

A grim possibility:

The place to begin:

### Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) For Paul, prayer was as much a part of his work as anything else he did. He urged all of us to make it a priority in Colossians when he wrote, “Devote yourselves to prayer.” Why is prayer so important? What gets in the way of praying as much as you should: You don’t know how? You don’t have time? You never see any answers? Something else?
- 2) Paul prays that our love will abound more and more, which calls our attention to at least three things: (i) For the believer, the love of God is already there—it just needs to grow; (ii) the growth of God’s love takes time—we need to be patient; (iii) God’s love is the essential Christian virtue—without it nothing else, whether doctrine or discipline or programs, works. Do you agree with these three implications? Are any of them particularly striking to you at the moment? Why?
- 3) The Philippian church was a particularly affectionate church. For this reason it is not surprising that Paul prayed as he did for them, notably that their love would abound more and more in knowledge and discernment. By “knowledge” he does not mean merely head knowledge, though that is involved; he means understanding and welcoming who God is, what he is up to, and what is important to him. By “discernment” Paul means the ability to see how the truth about God applies in any given situation. Why is it important that genuine and deep affection in a community be supplemented by “knowledge” and “discernment?” Recall a story in which the absence of knowledge and discernment lead to unhealthy results. Recall a story in which all three worked together well with good results.
- 4) To “approve what is excellent” (vs. 10) is to be living proof, inside and out, that to value and live by what God values is the best, most satisfying, way to live. Think of and share ways that you have come to such proof in your own experience.
- 5) In Titus 2:10 Paul writes that Christians in all work situations are to “show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.” Have you seen professing Christians “disproving” the teaching about God by their public behavior? Have you ever done so? What happened and what, if anything, can be done about it?
- 6) Paul expands on what he means by “approving what is excellent” in Phil 4:8-9. Read over that passage and discuss ways in which you can improve your thought-life.
- 7) Reflect on the following: “There is always the grim possibility that we will discover in the Lord’s Great Day at the end of history that we have wasted our lives—that we have not contributed to the lovely harvest of excellence that Paul anticipates in Phil. 1:11, but rather to cities like the one in the film *Wall-e*, lifeless and filled with trash, or the one in “*I am Legend*”, filled with nothing but empty weed-studded streets by day and violent mutants by night. All of this debris and violence will, of course, be swept away. The question is, will anything we have done remain? Will we ourselves remain? The place to begin, if we want our lives to count and to remain, is the place where Paul begins, in serious conversation with the God who sent his Son to make all things new for those who trust in him.”
- 8) Pray Phil 1:9-11 at least once every day this week for three people: yourself, a friend who claims to be a follower of Jesus, and a friend who claims not to be a follower of Jesus. See what happens!