

Philippians 1:9-11 Praying for Excellence

Already Mentioned Resources:

- [Praying With Paul](#) by DA Carson
- [Pray Big: Learn to Pray Like and Apostle](#) by Alistair Begg

New Resources:

- [The Secret Key to Heaven: The Vital Importance of Private Prayer](#) by Thomas Brooks
- [Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions](#) by Arthur Bennett

Philippians 1:9–11: ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Four Movements—Paul prays for:

- 1) Abounding, Knowledgeable, Discerning Love
- 2) **So That They Would Approve What is Excellent**
- 3) **And So** Be Pure and Blameless When Christ Returns
- 4) All **to the** Glory and Praise of God

I. **Abounding, Knowledgeable, Discerning Love**

A. “And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more...

B. ...with knowledge and all discernment”

II. **So That They Would Approve What is Excellent**

A. “...so that you may approve what is excellent”

- **Carson writes**, “*The pursuit of such excellence does not turn on transparent distinctions between right and wrong. It turns, rather, on delicate choices that reflect one’s entire value system, one’s entire set of priorities, one’s heart and mind. That is why Paul prays that the love of the Philippians might abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight: he wants their hearts and minds to become profoundly Christian, for otherwise they will not discern what is best*” (128).

B. Paul’s View of What is Most Excellent

- “I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.....Not that I have already obtained

this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:8, 12-15).

- Carson writes, *“Paul cannot be satisfied with the status quo. Knowing that we are destined for the perfection to be achieved when Christ returns, already Paul wants us to press toward it”* (131).

III. **And So Be Pure and Blameless When Christ Returns**

A. “...and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

- **Philippians 1:6:** “And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

B. “....filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.”

IV. **“To the Glory and Praise of God”**

A. **Glory of God and Excellence**

- Carson writes, *“In all our pursuit of excellence, we must never worship excellence. That would simply be idolatrous”* (139).
- *“If we are concerned over these things because we sense in them a church that has sunk in to contentment with lukewarmness and spiritual mediocrity, if we try to change these things because in our hearts we are zealous for the glory of Christ and the good of his people, that is one thing; if on the other hand our concern over these matters is driven primarily by our own high, perfectionist standards, we will be less inclined to help, and more inclined to belittle. Our own service will become a source of secret pride, precisely because it is more competent than much of what we see around us”* (Carson 140).

B. **Two tests for our motives in pursuing excellence:**

- *When we are unsatisfied with something (in our spouses, the church, or in our kids, friends, etc.), are we motivated to help and serve in love for others and Christ, or are we critical?*
- *“If the things we value and want to see happen are taken away, is our joy in the Lord undiminished? Or are we so tied to our dreams that the destruction of our dreams means we are destroyed as well?”*