

Copyright © Two Journeys Ministry

Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

[www.twojourneys.org](http://www.twojourneys.org)

Please use in accordance with the copyright policy found at [twojourneys.org](http://twojourneys.org)

## **Paul's Prays for the Perfection of His Ministry Partners, Part 1**

**Philippians 1:1-11**

Illus. The Unfinished Castle

In September of 1899 it became known that millionaire George Boldt planned to build a castle on Heart Island in the Thousand Islands region of the St. Lawrence River in upstate New York. It was to be a gift of love for his cherished Louise and he planned to present it to her on Valentine's Day, her birthday. All work was to be done by the finest of artists and master craftsmen, landscape gardeners, electricians and masons, all using the very best materials. Money would be no object. The wooden "cottage", originally known as \*Hart House, was removed from the island in sections. Part of it was slid across the frozen ice of the river to Wellesley Island. Work began in 1900 and the Power House with its clock and chimes tower was built. This structure would provide electricity for the island and the castle. The Boldts spent their summers in Alster Tower while work was progressing on the castle. In January of 1904, after four years of building, work on the castle was nearing completion and was finished as far as the interior woodwork. From Europe sculptures, carving, mosaics, and tapestries had been purchased to adorn the walls for this extraordinary gift of love.

Then a telegram arrived ordering all work stopped. Just one month before she would have been 42, Louise Augusta Kehrre Boldt, George Boldt's beloved wife, was dead of a heart attack. The planning, the hammering and the building stopped as "three hundred workmen dropped their tools and left the island, never to return". The castle was left unfinished with fountains, sculptures, Italian mantelpieces, imported tapestries and fine furniture, some of which was already on the island stored in crates, never reaching their destination in the mansion. It is said that George Boldt never set foot on the island again. George Boldt died on December 5, 1916 at the Waldorf-Astoria.

The Apostle Paul saw the Philippians as a work in progress... an incomplete mansion in which God would someday live perfectly by His Spirit... because they were an incomplete mansion, and because Paul knew that God would never stop working on them until they were perfect, He prayed for them... and He prayed with immense joy:

***vs. 4-6 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.***

So it is with each of you who are Christians... God has begun a good work in you and He will never rest until it is complete... until you are a perfect dwelling place for Him to occupy by His Spirit... until you are perfect in body, soul, and spirit

Today we will study how Paul prayed for the Philippians growth in perfection

## I. Background History of the Church at Philippi

### A. A Glorious History of a Church Planted by Faith

1. Vision of the man of Macedonia
2. Women assembling at river for prayer
3. Lydia, dealer in purple cloth
4. Stayed at Lydia's house... there the church began
5. Demon-possessed girl
6. Beaten by the authorities
7. Singing praises in jail in the middle of the night... this was Paul at his best in Christ

### B. Evidence of Love in the Letter

***1: 7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart***

***1:8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.***

***2:17-18 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.***

***4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!***

### C. Encouraging Tone

***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.***

***2:12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed***

***4:10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.***

Paul dearly loves this church... and for this reason he is writing this epistle... to help them in their journey in Christ

## II. Opening Greeting: Saints, Overseers and Deacons (vs. 1-2)

***1:1-2 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

### A. Including Timothy

1. Later will introduce him as leader
2. They already met him... he was with Paul when he planted the church
3. Includes him here in top-billing as though the letter was from him

Note: Throughout the letter, Paul speaks in first person... there can be no doubt this letter is from him

Uses “we” “our” “us” only a total of 10 times

Uses “I” 78 times, “me” 24 times, and “my” 26 times = 128 times in 104 verses

By contrast: Ephesians uses (I, me, my) only 33 times in 155 verses

Also talks about Timothy in the third person in Philippians 2...

This letter is DEFINITELY from Paul... what is more, it is an intensely personal letter from Paul

### B. Bondservants

1. Very strong title Paul uses frequently for himself
2. Patterned after Christ’s own servant example and servant command

***Philippians 2:7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.***

***Matthew 20:26-28 whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.***

3. Patterned also after Paul’s own emphasis on the Christian life as servants of Christ

***1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.***

The highest calling a Christian can have is to be a bond-slave to Christ Jesus

To bow the neck and take Christ's yoke on our necks, and submit fully to him as our master

### C. Saints in Christ Jesus

#### 1. Roman Catholic view of "sainthood"... saints are few and far between

Illus. Criteria for canonization... Example of Mother Theresa

- Process can only begin at least five years after person's death
- Local bishop amasses data, documents, writings, testimonies of the person
- All of it sent to Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Sainthood
- Official biography written by Vatican scholar
- Panel of eight theologians and a promoter of the faith judge the case
- If vote is favorable and pope agrees, the person is declared "Venerable"... able to be venerated as a saint
- BUT for full Beatification, one miracle due to the intercession of the saint is required... the miracle must be authenticated by medical experts and a panel of theologians
- Middle Ages: Long and sordid history of worship and veneration of saints... relics were worshiped; even the smallest part of a saint's body was seen to have healing power
- By the time of Luther, there was a huge traffic in relics, cathedrals and shrines built around desire of pilgrims to see and touch saint's artifacts... or bones... or clothes

#### 2. Biblical view is simpler: a saint is simply a Christian... a true believer in Christ

***Romans 1:7 To all in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints***

***Acts 9:32 As Peter traveled about the country, he went to visit the saints in Lydda.***

#### 3. Word = "holy ones"... "set apart unto God for His sacred use", made holy for Christ

### D. Overseers

1. One of two offices in the New Testament
2. Here: episkopos "bishops" literally "overseers"

Idea is those who "watch over your souls"

***Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.***

***1 Peter 5:2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers***

“Elders” (presbuteras) and “overseers” (episkopos) are used interchangeably in the New Testament

Acts 20:17 Paul summoned the “elders” (presbuteras) of the church at Ephesus; Acts 20:28, he called them “overseers” (episkopos)

***Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.***

Pastors, elders, overseers are all titles for the same office in the church

I believe the distinction between “lay elders” and “ordained elders” is hard to sustain Biblically... I believe our church should have elders, and eventually will have elders as we grow into a more faithful New Testament model

I also believe the Bible is clear that this role of spiritual oversight in the church was done and should be done by men... godly men who are set apart by the way they live their lives by the criteria set out in 1 Timothy 3.

#### E. Deacons

1. Second clear Biblical office... a set of recognized church members
2. Clearly recognized role in the church
3. Word means “servants”... what is not clear is the role they played in the life of the church

#### F. Grace and Peace to You

1. Delightful greeting
2. Ongoing need, constant need for grace... cannot exist in Christ for an instant without His sustaining grace

Now... after the greeting comes the letter... beginning with Paul’s example of prayer for the Philippians

Paul is our role model for a healthy prayer life...

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

1. Paul's example of thankfulness is the key to his main message of joy in the Lord always
  - a. thankful people are not complaining people
  - b. thankful people are humble people... giving glory to God
  - c. thankful people are fulfilling their purpose for existence by turning away from sin

**Romans 1:21** *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

2. What Paul commands in Philippians 4 he models in Philippians 1

**Philippians 4:6** *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

3. Regular pattern: Paul thanked God for other Christians all the time

Romans 1:8, 1 Corinthians 1:4, Colossians 1:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:2

4. Paul's thanksgiving for the Philippians faith and fruitfulness shows his doctrine of God's sovereignty in salvation

**Romans 6:17** *But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted.*

#### B. Remembrance

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

1. Paul constantly remembered the Philippians... this shows that he was not self-centered, even in his suffering

Illus. Just like Christ... who while suffering on the cross was constantly thinking of others: "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing" "Here is your son, here is your mother" "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Paul also focused on the Philippians and their needs... not his own

2. Paul's mind was filled with his experiences with them... the conversion of Lydia by the river, the church in her house, the driving out of the demon from the slave girl, the public humiliation, the Philippian jail, singing in the dark with Silas, the earthquake, the Philippians jailer and his whole family converted
3. These memories caused him to overflow with thanksgiving for the Philippians and for his own role in leading them to Christ
4. Memories should lead us to prayer... thankfulness and intercessions

#### C. Consistency

1. Paul's prayer life was one of consistency... a constant rising of the incense of prayer from his mind and lips
2. Not sporadic but consistent and faithful

***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***

3. He covered ALL of them in prayer every day, and more than once a day
4. He persevered, praying again and again, never giving up

George Mueller: "Satan will not mind how we labor in prayer for a few days, weeks, or even months, if he can at last discourage us so that we cease praying, as though it were of no use."

Andrew Murray: "Of all the mysteries of the prayer world the need of persevering prayer is one of the greatest. That the Lord, who is so loving and longing to bless, should have to be asked, time after time, sometimes year after year, before the answer comes, we cannot easily understand. It is also one of the greatest practical difficulties in the exercise of believing prayer. When, after persevering pleading, our prayer remains unanswered, it is often easiest for our lazy flesh, and it has all the appearance of pious submission, to think that we must now cease praying, because God may have His secret reason for withholding His answer to our request. It is by faith alone that the difficulty is overcome."

#### D. Joy

1. His prayer life was characterized by joy as he prayed for them
2. So many of us look on prayer as drudgery... for Paul, his prayer life was a joy and it energized him

***1 Thessalonians 5:16 "Be joyful always; pray without ceasing..."***

Prayer was Paul's language of joy in the fellowship he had in the gospel with all the churches he'd planted

3. Paul fed his joy by praying more and more for the Philippians... joy in knowing God was working out his purposes in their lives and in his

#### E. Reasons

*vs. 5-6 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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.*

1. Paul's joy had a root cause... it was connected to reality, to fact, to truth
2. Some are joyful through ignorance

Rudyard Kipling, "If": "If you can keep your head when all about you Are losing theirs and blaming it on you..."

Jokester: If you can keep your head while all about are losing theirs, you probably don't understand the situation.

Illus. **Ostrich: It is a MYTH that Ostriches hide their head in the sand**

An *ostrich* is big, fast, and strong (it can weigh 300 pounds, run 40 miles an hour, and administer dangerous kicks with its powerful legs), but it will sometimes use an unusual approach to escaping detection: it lies still on the ground with its neck outstretched. This practice may have given rise to the legend that when pursued, an ostrich will hide its head in the sand and act as if it cannot be seen.

So the ostrich does NOT hide its head in the sand... but some people avoid facing reality and are joyful simply through ignorance... children can play in a concentration camp because they does understand their true situation

Paul was mature: he faced reality squarely... and found IN REALITY true reasons for joy

Two reasons given here

3. Their partnership in the gospel... from the first day and now renewed
4. Paul's confidence in Christ's sovereignty to finish His work in them

#### 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.*

1. Paul prays out of fellowship in the gospel... "partnership" = "fellowship" = **koinonia**
2. Here the word refers to the tangible money they sent to help him



### 3. Vital word... full sharing in, holding in common

Illus. Ancient Greek society had a sense of the self and of societal obligations... what was for each individual and what was to be shared be everyone in the city. The shared things were called **koinoj**... the language of the New Testament was **koine** Greek... the common tongue shared by all

Certain land in Greek society was called “common” land, each member a partaker or sharer in the harvest from it

In Paul’s way of thinking, when you became a Christian, you became a sharer of everything that was Christ’s... His suffering and His glory; His passions and His purposes; His work became your work, and His people became your people

*Philippians 2:1 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion*

*Philippians 3:10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death*

### 4. This was the pervasive attitude of all the early Christians

*Acts 2:44-45 All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*

*Acts 4:32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had.*

This attitude extended to all areas of life... not just material possessions. If one brother had a struggle, everyone felt it

*2 Corinthians 1:7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.*

*Hebrews 10:33 sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated.*

*2 Corinthians 11:28-29 Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?*

Our true fellowship is with God the Father and God the Son... thus we have fellowship with each other

*1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

***1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.***

The ultimate goal of our salvation is FELLOWSHIP in the divine nature itself

***2 Peter 1:4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.***

6. 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.***

1. The ground of any fruitful prayer life is confidence in the sovereignty of God
2. Why pray to God if He is not sovereign???
3. **BUT GOD IS SOVEREIGN** over all of life and over all of the salvation process
4. Christ began your Christian life
5. Christ will perfect it as well!!!

***Hebrews 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith***

6. Some think in context this only refers to the good work of sharing financially in Paul's ministry... these scholars focus on the immediate context of the money the Philippians sent to share in Paul's ministry

7. BUT they forget what the money signified to Paul... they forget what Paul said about the money in Philippians 4

***Philippians 4:17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account.***

Paul cared only about the Philippians spiritual health... what mattered to him was that the money was evidence that they were still walking with Christ, growing with Christ, making progress to final perfection in Christ

Paul is absolutely confident here that God does not start things He doesn't finish!!!

***Luke 14:28-30 "Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? 29 For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, 30 saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.'***

***John 6:39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.***

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.***

1. As we've already seen... Paul has a great deal of affection for the Philippians
2. His love for them was the furnace that heated up his prayer life...
3. The more you love Christ, the more you will pray for Christ's people

#### 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.***

- A. Love Abounding More and More
- B. Knowledge and Deep Insight
- C. Discernment: Good from Evil, and Good from Excellent
- D. Purity of Life

E. Perseverance

F. Fruitfulness

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

*"... to the glory and praise of God."*

## VI. Applications

### A. Confidence in Christ's Sovereign Perseverance

*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.*

Develop this confidence in Christ

Use it to fight sin and abound in spiritual fruit

### B. Praying According to God's Will

Concentrate on following Paul's pattern

Discern what your own are of weakness is... perhaps perseverance, perhaps joy, perhaps thankfulness

Perhaps you don't pray for other Christians hardly at all... only when one of them is in the hospital

Learn how to pray as Paul did for the Philippians

### **Sheet on Paul's Prayer life**

### C. Church government

Challenge to learn what elders and deacons are at First Baptist Church

Some Baptist churches have elders based on passages like Philippians 1:1

Are laypeople called to be elders, or are only pastors elders?

### D. The Glory and Praise of God

Salvation

## Sanctification