

## **Prayer for Abounding Love**

### **Phil. 1:3-11: Gospel-Rooted Prayer**

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#### Exegetical Outline

Argument: Paul's prayer for the Philippian church was ultimately shaped by the priorities of the gospel (its partnership, its advancement, and its effects), and all of his desires for them were filtered through this lens. It provided the true context for the relationship itself. Therefore, our prayers and concerns for one another should reflect this same priority.

- I. Thankfulness for Gospel Partnership (3-5)
  - A. Remembrance (3)
  - B. Regularity (4)
  - C. Joy (4)
  - D. Reason: gospel (5)
- II. Confidence in Gospel Advancement (6-7)
  - A. Initiated (6)
  - B. Expected (6)
  - C. Grounded: gospel (7)
- III. Yearning for Gospel Growth (8-11)
  - A. Content of Growth (9)
    - 1. Heart (Love)
    - 2. Mind (Knowledge)
    - 3. Will (Discernment)
  - B. Reason for Growth (10)
    - 1. Approve excellence
    - 2. Be pure and blameless
    - 3. Filled with righteousness of Christ
  - C. Result of Growth (11)
    - 1. Glory and praise of God

#### Homiletical Outline

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## I. Introduction

### A. “Gospel-Centered”?

Good evening, it’s great to be back with you! And it really *is* great to be back with you, because as everyone knows the real trick is probably not so much to be *invited* to speak, but to be invited to speak *again*...So this is an encouragement (although it could just be a shot at redemption, I’m not sure...)

But anyway, our topic tonight, and the title of this message is “Gospel-Centered Prayer”. Now I know that, honestly, that sounds like a fairly *boring* title. And I wanted to change it, because that phrase is just all over the place, isn’t it? Gospel-centered living, gospel-centered homes, gospel-centered...cooking...? It seems like it goes on and on...

But unfortunately it just captures the idea *too* well, so I stuck with it. But I do at least want to *define* it, because what does that phrase *mean*, anyway? What *is* the gospel, first of all? And what is it supposed to be at the center *of*? And what kinds of things can we *actually* consider to be “gospel-centered”? Well, we don’t have time to answer any of those questions tonight. But we do have to get the idea of “gospel” into our heads somewhat, because the passage we’ll be looking at is from the beginning of Paul’s letter to the Philippians, and Paul just seems to be *fixated* on the idea of “gospel”. The word pops up *nine* times in it, and this is a short little letter! So, we better be sure we have an idea what it means.

Well, it means “good news.” That’s pretty much it, that’s all there is to it. It literally just means “good news.” Comes from the Old English word “god-spell”, meaning “good tidings” or “good story”, which was a direct translation of the Greek word *euangelion*...etc. etc., this is one of those things that you probably either already know it, or you don’t care. So anyway, doesn’t really matter—it means “good news.” Now in the context of the New Testament, of course, the “good news” that’s being announced is that God the Son has taken on human flesh as Jesus of Nazareth, lived a perfectly righteous life, died a substitutionary death that satisfied God’s righteous wrath against sin, and conquered death and sin forever when he was raised from the grave three days later. This was the first fulfillment of God’s grand, sweeping plan to redeem a fallen, corrupted earth full of fallen, corrupted people, and to call out a people for his own possession who will one day live together in his presence in a restored and renewed world for all eternity, to the glory of his name. *That* is the gospel we’re talking about.

Now, our question for *tonight* is: if we agree, and we do, that the gospel is everything, that it affects every aspect of our existence as believers, and that everything from our marriages to our cell phone plans should be “gospel-centered”...then what effect, in all seriousness, should the *gospel* actually have on our *prayer*? And specifically, how should a concern and a passion for

the gospel actually *shape* our prayers for *one another*? How does the gospel shape our prayers for one another.

And to answer that question we'll be looking at a prayer that was offered and recorded by the apostle Paul in his letter to the church at the city of Philippi. And so as you're turning to the letter to the Philippians, and before we jump into the text, let me try to set the stage for you just briefly...

## **B. Context**

So the apostle Paul had personally founded the church in the city of Philippi, which was in the Roman province of Macedonia, or the northern region of Greece, during his second missionary journey, probably sometime around the year 50. And you can read that account in Acts, in chapter 16, where Luke describes Paul's vision of the Macedonian man, calling him to come and plant the gospel in that region, and it was during *that* trip that Paul established a local church at Philippi with the help of Silas. You might remember that the two of them were actually imprisoned at Philippi before eventually being released...when God sent an earthquake, and the magistrates decided, incidentally, to let them to leave.

Well, by the time Paul writes this letter to the Philippian church, which we now have preserved for us in our Bibles, probably five, maybe ten years later, he's once again been imprisoned. Now, we don't know exactly when or where—it *could* be that he's writing from a prison in Rome, or Ephesus, or Caesarea; there are several possibilities because Paul actually made a bit of a habit of getting himself imprisoned. But in reality the exact location is not all that important for understanding Paul's point in the letter. What we need to know is what he tells us: that he's been "imprisoned for Christ" as he says in chapter 1 verse 13.

Well, as is often the case in Paul's letters, the opening section of it really serves as an introductory framework for everything that follows. And in this case, the opening section is a prayer. It's a prayer that Paul offers on behalf of the Philippian church. And this prayer, which is found in verses 3-11 of the opening chapter, very much sets the agenda for the themes and major ideas that Paul addresses in the rest of the letter.

But what is most interesting is that those themes and major ideas actually have very little to do with the particular circumstances that either Paul *or* the Philippian church were facing. That's part of the reason why we get frustrated trying to figure out exactly when and where the letter was written—Paul just isn't very concerned with discussing the details of his imprisonment or even his specific occasion for writing. We'll see that his attention is much more sharply focused on one single, overarching concept: and that is the *gospel*. This is the theme that dominates all of Paul's thought, all of his relationships, and, as we see here, all of his prayer *over* those relationships. And it's this notion of truly gospel-saturated prayer, specifically with reference to our relationships with other believers, that we want to explore here tonight.

What we have in Philippians 1:3-11 is a very clear model of the way a deep-rooted belief in the biblical gospel should *shape* our prayer—in this case, our prayers for fellow believers in our

local church body. It gives our prayer new *reason*. New *content*. New *results*. And certainly, a new *hope*. And no, that was not a *Star Wars* reference..

So without further ado let's read Paul's prayer in Philippians 1:3-11, and then spend some time pulling out his priorities and considering them and thinking through at least three specific ways they helped to formulate his prayers for his people in terms of his thankfulness for their gospel partnership, his confidence in gospel advancement, and his yearning for gospel growth.

### C. Text [Read Phil. 1:3-11]

## II. Exposition

### A. Thankfulness for Gospel Partnership (3-5)

So as we noted, we're looking to identify some specific ways the gospel informs Paul's conception of the Philippian church and, as a result, his prayers for them. And we're going to put these under three major categories. So here they are. First, we have Paul's thankfulness for their gospel partnership in verses 3-5. Second, we have his confidence in gospel advancement in verses 6-7. And third, his yearning for their gospel growth in verses 8-11. So as we progress through the prayer we'll consider these three aspects one by one.

So here at the beginning, in verses in 3-5, we see first Paul's **thankfulness for gospel partnership**. He writes, "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

By now, as we've continued this series, we've gotten a good sense that thankfulness is a major theme in Paul's prayers, *especially* when he thinks about the transformative work that God has accomplished among all the different congregations he oversaw (Rom. 1:8, 1 Cor. 1:4, Eph. 1:16, Col. 1:3, 1 Thess. 1:2, 2 Thess. 1:3). And so, as in many of his other letters, Paul is expressing his gratitude in his **remembrance** of this particular group of believers. He intentionally *reflects* on his experiences with them, probably thinking back to the time when they were lost, and contrasting it with the amazing growth that God has worked in them since that moment when they first heard and believed the gospel. We can imagine Paul's eyes moistening a little as he reminisces on those earliest conversations he had with them, when he first explained the liberating truth of the gospel to them piece by piece and watched as the Holy Spirit began to stir their hearts to belief in Jesus the Messiah.

The idea of remembrance certainly also means that Paul brings them to mind and lifts them up in prayer *often*—it's on a **regular** basis. The phrase "in *every* prayer of mine for you all" implies that there was more than *one* prayer! We know from Paul's other letters (Col. 1:3, 1 Thess. 1:2-3, 2 Thess. 1:3) that he made it his *habit* to *thank* God with frequency and fervency for each of the churches he had planted—and even some that he had *not* planted, in the case of the church at Rome (Rom. 1:8). Paul consistently uses terms like "always", "constantly", and "I do not cease" (Eph. 1:16) to describe the regularity of his thanksgiving for God's work among these local

assemblies. I have to wonder how the regularity of our own thanksgiving for God's work among us, or at least *my* own, would compare to Paul's on this point...

But another phrase in verse 4 prevents us from imagining that Paul is giving thanks for these believers in the detached way that we might—as a chore to complete, or a duty to perform, or as a box to check. No, Paul emphasizes that it's "**with joy**" that he makes these prayers of thanksgiving. If you're familiar with the rest of the letter to the Philippians you might know that "joy" continues to be a *huge* topic of concern for Paul as over and over again he urges them to *rejoice* (1:18, 2:28), *have joy* (1:25, 2:29), *complete my joy* (2:2), *be glad and rejoice* (2:17-18), *be cheered* (2:19), and *rejoice in the Lord* (3:1, 4:4). He considers the Philippians themselves to be his "*joy and crown*" (4:1) and he *rejoices* in them (4:10). This is what you call inspired redundancy, or as Paul puts it in chapter 3, "To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you." (3:1) It's either that or Paul has been reading a lot of John Piper, with all this talk of joy.

But seriously, why all the smiles? Doesn't it all seem a bit sunshiny and flowery when you remember the actual situation—that Paul's been *imprisoned*, probably in *hostile* territory? That the Roman government is on the verge of, or maybe by this time has already *begun* its systematic persecution of Christians, which will eventually lead to Paul's own execution? Well, verse 5 gives us the **reason** why Paul's outlook was so optimistic. He tells the Philippian church that the *reason* for his constant, joy-filled prayers of thanksgiving for them is "because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now." *This* is the true foundation for Paul's prayer, and it's the seed that gives rise to *all* of his thoughts and desires concerning the Philippians, which he now expresses in prayer. The gospel of Jesus Christ. And not only the gospel itself but the *partnership* of these believers with Paul *in* the gospel. It's what defines their relationship, and it's the ultimate context for *all* of their interactions.

Later in the letter Paul explains what he means when he refers to their "partnership" in the gospel. We could also translate this word as "fellowship", but I actually like "partnership" in this context. Because from the time they believed, "from the first day until now", as Paul says, the Philippians had supported his ministry, through their prayers (1:19, 4:10), their finances (4:14-18), and their people, as they had sent one of their own men named Epaphroditus to attend to Paul's needs in prison. And apparently Epaphroditus nearly lost his life in the process (see that in 3:25-30).

So when Paul says that the Philippians have been his partners in the gospel, he doesn't just mean that...they're Christians too. He doesn't even just mean that they all attend the same church. He means that together they have *invested* themselves in the spread of the gospel—that they have literally poured out their blood and sweat and tears to make known the message of redemption in Christ. And doing so has created a bond among them that's so much deeper and richer than anything that can be known outside of it. *This* is the thought enters Paul's mind when he makes remembrance of the Philippians. *This* is the source of his joy and his thanksgiving for them.

I wonder if we even come close to thinking of each other in this way. When you look around this room, what do you see? Or, *who* do you see? Friends...a few strangers...some combination? Lump it all together as "the people I go to church with"? Or...do you see *partners in the gospel*?

Do you see people who are gathered here tonight because God himself has brought them together *specifically* so that they might pour themselves out, physically, emotionally, financially, *sacrificially*, for the sake of *his* work, and *his* glory. Start to see that...and we'll start to understand what Paul was so thankful for here.

## **B. Confidence in Gospel Advancement (6-7)**

So Paul's gospel-centered prayer for the Philippians *begins* with his thankfulness for their gospel partnership, but it certainly doesn't end there. In verses 6-7 Paul now turns his attention to the future and expresses his **confidence in gospel advancement**. This is the second of our three categories.

He writes, "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. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."

Once again it's brilliantly clear that Paul prays for the Philippian church in the *context* of the gospel. Previously he's given thanks for their reception of the gospel and their investment in its spread. Now, that initiation of God's work among them in the gospel provides the basis for Paul's confidence in its completion. I know that's a little dense, so let's break that down a bit more clearly.

In the first part of verse 6 Paul expresses his certainty that the work of the gospel has been **initiated** among the Philippians. God has started it. Paul makes reference to the one "who began a good work" in them. For a verse that is often quoted out of context, it's useful to see here that it actually refers not to an individual believer but to the Philippian church as a whole. So while the local church is certainly *made up* of individual believers in whom God is working, the emphasis here is on the *corporate* nature of that work, which began when Paul first presented the gospel message to them and, through that, Christ began to call them to himself. Paul wants the Philippians to think of themselves as a *unit* of people in whom God is working and will continue to work. The gospel produces unity.

This recollection of the gospel transformation God has *initiated* among the Philippians is what causes its completion or its fulfillment to be **expected** in Paul's mind. He says that the Lord "will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." As we've often seen, there is an *already-but-not yet* dynamic to Paul's thought. By that we mean that in Paul's mind, with the coming of Jesus, with his death and resurrection, the *end* of all things, the "last days" that were anticipated by the Old Testament, have *already entered into* the present. *But* they have *not yet* been totally fulfilled—not until the day of Christ's return. So as believers we live in this period *between* Christ's first and second comings, where the end of all things has been secured but has not yet fully played out.

What bearing does all this have on Paul's prayer for the Philippians? It means that by their belief in the gospel message, the Philippians have *entered into* the last times. Paul realizes that God has raised them from spiritual death and given them new life. In Christ they're new creations, and on

the “day of Jesus Christ” that work will be brought to full “completion”. One emphasis of Paul’s prayer is to give thanks for that truth, and to encourage the Philippians themselves not to lose sight of it as they endure both the physical and the spiritual sufferings of the present age.

In verse 7 Paul again explains his **reason** for asserting all of this, introducing it, just as he did in verse 5, with the word “because.” He writes that it’s “because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace.” This is simply another way of saying that they’re his partners in the gospel, as we’ve already seen. With Paul, the Philippians have benefited from the glorious grace of God through their faith in the death and resurrection of Christ.

And that partnership is continuing even now, Paul says, “both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.” How can the Philippians *continue* to partake of grace with Paul and partner with him in the gospel even in the midst of his imprisonment? He explains it in the next paragraph, when he says that “what has happened to me has really served to *advance* the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” (1:12-14) So, by providing for him through their prayers, their resources, and their personnel, the Philippians have helped Paul to continue his gospel ministry even from a Roman prison cell. God is *still* using him, and them, to make the word of Christ known and draw people to himself. And this fuels Paul’s confidence in gospel advancement all the more.

Are we *really* confident that Jesus is advancing his gospel through Clearcreek Chapel? Because it’s clear that he has begun a work among us. We may not know exactly where that work will lead, or how he’ll finish it, but we can be confident that he *will* complete it. At Clearcreek Chapel and among all the local bodies of his people. I hope that motivates us to partner in the gospel even further. To dig deeper into whatever gifts and resources we we’ve been given, and offer them sacrificially as instruments for God’s continuing work among us.

### **C. Yearning for Gospel Growth (8-11)**

So we see that the gospel itself is the motivating factor in Paul’s prayer, both in his thanksgiving for the church’s partnership as well as his confidence that the work will continue to advance.

And as our third and final aspect of Paul’s gospel-centered prayer, in verses 8-11 we see his **yearning for their gospel growth**. Beginning in verse 8 Paul writes, “For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.” Paul summons God as his witness here to stress the *sincerity* of this “yearning,” which he indicates is a reflection of the “affection” of Christ himself. I like that word, “yearning.” It’s an old word, and I like old words. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* says that to “yearn” means “to long persistently, wistfully, or sadly;” and also “to feel tenderness or compassion.” So it’s a rich word that captures Paul’s meaning here very nicely.

The “yearning” here certainly includes Paul’s desire to be reunited with the Philippians, but surely it communicates more than *just* that. In fact it *has* to communicate more, if it’s reflective of Christ’s own affection, since Christ is *always* present among his people and doesn’t

experience the pain of separation from them. And what's called Christ's "affection" here is literally his *gut*, it's where we get our word "spleen". It's the kind of affection that you can *feel* deep in your stomach about the people you care about the most.

Do you feel that when you think about your partners in the gospel here at the Chapel? I mean *feel* it, deep in your *gut*, this wistful longing, this *yearning* for their growth in the gospel? I wonder if, in our constant focus on our *own* spiritual growth and battles against sin, if we neglect our responsibility to show equal, if not even a *greater* concern for the growth of our brothers and sisters...

Anyway, Verse 9 does clarify the **content** of Paul's "yearning" more specifically as he introduces the final element of his gospel-centered prayer. He says, "And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment..." It seems that in this short phrase Paul is summarizing his desire that the gospel should transform the entire *being* of each Philippian believer: heart, mind, and will, so that no aspect of the person is left unchanged. The gospel awakens new affections in the heart, in the form of *love* that now abounds, both for Christ and for his people. It imparts new *knowledge* to the mind, so that it now clings to the truth and refutes error. And it produces *discernment* in the will, so that it now pursues new priorities and uses a new kind of judgment in decision-making. All of these transformations are *effects* of the gospel—the redemption of the whole person, and the raising of him or her as a fundamentally *new* creature through faith in Christ.

So if verse 9 describes the *content* of Paul's yearning for gospel growth, then verse 10 supplies the **reason** for it. Paul hopes that these transformations will occur "so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ" Once again, the two aspects of this hope reflect the already-and-not-yet dimensions of Paul's thinking. Approve what is excellent *now*, and so be pure and blameless *then*, on the day of Christ.

Later in the letter, in a passage that's familiar to us, Paul further explains what he means when he says to "approve what is excellent." "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is commendable, if there is any *excellence*, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about *these* things." (4:8-9) Paul prays that, because the hearts, minds, and wills of the Philippians have been redeemed, and as they're continually *being* redeemed, they will increasingly be conformed to the heart, mind, and will of God himself in "approving what is excellent." When Paul thinks about his Philippian brothers and sisters, *this* is the effect of the gospel that he desires for them.

Or at least part of it. Paul goes on to say that he desires this *so* that they will be "pure and blameless for the day of Christ." In saying this Paul's affirming that the pure and blameless record of Christ's righteousness, which the Philippians had received when they first believed, will continue to serve as the unwavering basis for their standing before the Father until the very end, until the day of Christ. Until then, it's going to be reflected in their increasing conformity to his image in terms of their desires, thoughts, and actions. They'll be "filled with the fruit" not of their own righteousness but "of the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ." And



therefore they will “approve what is excellent.” So again, directly connected to Christ’s gospel work.

Finally, in the last phrase of his prayer, and at the end of his description of his yearning for their gospel growth, Paul describes for the Philippians its ultimate **result**. And, this could be considered its deepest *purpose* as well. All of it—from their partnership in the gospel, to the continuing advance of the gospel, to the outworking of the gospel in terms of their growth—is designed to occur “to the glory and praise of God.” It was for the sake of his own glory that God called the Philippians to himself through Paul’s declaration of the gospel message. It was for his glory that he granted them faith to believe it, and that he moved their hearts to support Paul’s continuing mission. This entire process, from beginning to end, in the Philippian church and in every church that gathers together as a result of Christ’s work, exalts the glory of the grace and mercy of God as its deepest and most fulfilling purpose. And true reflection on these glorious truths, on the part of Paul, or the Philippian believers, or the believers of Clearcreek Chapel, can *only* result in the *praise* of his great name.

### III. Application

Well, as we come to the end of our survey of Paul’s prayer here, we might find ourselves wondering what to do with it. I hope that throughout our study of it we’ve already been able to make some points of contact with our own experience. The connections are simple, but they may not be easy. We should be asking ourselves, *has* the gospel message of Jesus Christ shaped our prayer life in this way, especially in thinking about and praying for one another and for our local body of believers? And if not...why?

Of course, the *wrong* thing to do at this point would be to create a checklist. “Thank God for gospel partnership. Have confidence in the advancement of the gospel. Yearn for gospel growth.” An approach like that couldn’t be farther from Paul’s intention in recording this prayer for us.

Yet, these *are* some clear and practical guidelines that we might use to evaluate our prayer life—especially our prayers for our local church, and our brothers and sisters in Christ. If we’re careful to remind ourselves that each of these three dimensions of Paul’s prayer was thoroughly grounded in the completed work of Christ and motivated *by* it, as we saw, then certainly we can and should seek to cultivate those desires and implement those principles, by the power of the Spirit, into our own practice.

So in review, we saw first Paul’s **thankfulness for gospel partnership**. In our prayer, do we regularly set aside time to reflect on God’s gracious work in the lives of our brothers and sisters, and to be moved to give him thanks for it? Do we think about the investments of time, gifts, and resources that other people have made, week by week and year by year, so that gospel work can continue, at Clearcreek Chapel and beyond? I know I don’t. We would do well to examine our hearts and determine whether thanklessness, pride, and independence are preventing us from recognizing and appreciating the beauty and the majesty of God’s glorious work right under our noses.

Second, we saw Paul's **confidence in gospel advancement**. Because Paul had seen the beginning of the results of God's work among the Philippians firsthand, he had every reason to believe beyond a shadow of a doubt that the same God would see that work through to completion—even if Paul *didn't* see it. That certainty motivated Paul to pray for it all the more—to beseech God to be faithful in finishing what he had started. Again, that isn't the way I naturally tend to think about prayer, but we'd be wise to begin actively taking into account all that God has *already* done among us as we petition him to do more. And in the meantime, we can rest confidently in the knowledge that a day will come when he will faithfully fulfill every promise he has made, and we will experience the fullness of the redemption that we have already tasted in the spiritual life we've now received.

Third, and finally, we saw Paul's **yearning for gospel growth**. As he reflected on the good work that God had begun among the Philippians, and as he gained confidence that God would one day complete it, Paul's heart was stirred to *yearn*, to long tenderly and compassionately even to the point of wistfulness or sadness, for the further expression of gospel transformation in the lives of the Philippian church. Does that sense of longing characterize our prayers for one another, and for our church as a whole? Are we filled with a *desperation* to see our brothers and sisters "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ"? *Again, I know* that I'm usually not. But a heart that's overwhelmed with the glorious truth of the gospel *will* express love that "abounds more and more, with knowledge and all discernment." And it will earnestly desire this same transformation for others.

And of course, all three aspects of this thoroughly gospel-rooted prayer have at their center, and as their motivating factor, the "glory and the praise of God." As believers, this is the truest and deepest purpose behind everything that we do—why should prayer be any exception?

At this point, as we close, I hope you're sensing, like me, that your prayer life *doesn't* reflect these priorities, these desires, these expectations. Because that would indicate that, like me, you're being convicted of your failures in this area. And maybe others. And *maybe*, just possibly, you're sitting here tonight and this whole message has basically gone in one ear and out the other because honestly you really don't pray at all, and it's never even occurred to you that it could be done the wrong way, or for the wrong reasons. Maybe you're not even sure that there's a God who will listen.

Well, if you fit into one of those categories, and you probably do, the *last* thing you should do is to despair, or to feel hopeless. The good news—you might call it the *gospel*—of Christianity is that it's *made* for people who are convicted of their failures. So, instead of being frustrated with yourself, and getting discouraged, or just ignoring it altogether—which are all things that I sometimes try—instead, look to the same one Paul was looking to when he prayed this prayer. Because ultimately, the power of the gospel that motivated Paul to pray in this way is not a string of words or even a set of beliefs—he's a person. He's the God-Man Jesus Christ, who lived a righteous life and died a wrongful death and was raised again to the right hand of God to take away the sin of his people. The sin of any who would admit their own insufficiency and call on his name and be redeemed.

So it's *my* prayer tonight that you'll join me in joining him, and in acknowledging our inability and our failure to prioritize the gospel, in our thinking about one another, and our prayers for one another, and in any other area, and really our outright rebellion against our Creator and Redeemer. And let's rest in the forgiveness that he purchased by his blood on a cross—in such a way that our focus on that gospel message spills over into our prayer for others and for our local church as well. And in fact, let's turn to him in prayer together now.