

Overcoming Hurdles (Philippians 1: 9-11)

- We all recognize that there are people peculiarly gifted with a ministry of prayer
- The Bible in no way condones the response of some: ‘I am not gifted that way’
- Wherever we are in our Christian walk, we can all say ‘Lord, I should be further’
- Are we willing to say, ‘Lord, we are dangerously dry, our prayers are shallow’
- Our knowledge of God is weak, we all long to pray with greater fervency
- Paul’s prayer is an antidote against the malady of dryness & prayerlessness

I. Paul Prays for What Is Excellent

- This prayer for love is not an end in itself but a vital means to an important end
- Paul prays that their love increase so they may approve what is excellent (v.10)
- What excellent things does Paul pray for in their lives. The text gives 3 clues
 - 1) Knowledge & discernment: *connection between* love, knowledge & discernment
 - Without constraints of knowledge & discernment, love turns sappy & sentimental
 - Christian knowledge: mature grasp of Gospel, sound instruction & full experience
 - All discernment: a moral perception across the entire scope of life’s experiences
 - 2) “Excellent” In those tough decisions, you need discernment for what is excellent
 - 3) 2nd clue is found in content of the excellent things for which Paul prays (vs. 6)
- There’s no room for drifting along, Christians are to be active in growth, positively improving their growth until it is capped by perfection at Christ’s return
- We can’t discern the excellent unless our love grows in knowledge & discernment
- This excellence Paul prays for cannot be attained unless we are praying for it

II. Paul’s Prayer Is Tied to a Long View

- Love’s increase depends upon 2 things, ‘so that you may discern what is excellent
- 3rd, “filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ” means:
- Being characterised by conduct, actions & words God Himself judges to be right
- This basket of righteous qualities is the fruit of righteousness through Christ alone
- Paul is the first to state that ‘righteous living’ only comes through God’s grace
- Note what Paul says (v.10) “for the day of Christ” this is our key motivation
- Believers are always to live with the day of the Lord firmly set before them
- This means when Paul prays this prayer, what he is really praying for is revival
- We are called to pray for what is best, excellent, all with day of the Lord in view