

# Prayer Life of Paul for the Saints

by David Smithers

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*Paul's prayer life, characterized by thankfulness and apostolic persistence, is a model for effective ministry and relationships.*

**Duration:** 1:01:31

**Scripture:** Colossians 1:9, Colossians 1:12, 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:1, 1 Thessalonians 4:5

**Topics:** "Spiritual Growth", "Sanctification"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of being filled with the Spirit of God and having the power to encourage and love others in a practical way. He highlights the need for believers to be able to affirm and uplift one another, rather than just going through the motions of small talk. The speaker also discusses the significance of growing in faith and love towards one another, as well as the importance of sanctification and living for God's glory. He encourages the audience to change, grow, and mature in order to be used by God to impact others and demonstrate the power of God's grace in their lives.

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## Transcript

Good morning. Did you guys notice this is like the ever-shrinking pulpit? Did you notice that? So I'm going to lift it up here so I'll start in a good place, so I won't have to aggravate my ability to be able to read my notes. Alright, well that's good stuff, Travis, thank you.

Let's take the time just to pray a little bit more, can we do that? I know we've already done a fair amount of that, but let's just pray and ask God's continued blessing. We just thank you, Father, for your goodness, for your grace, for your mercy, Jesus. We just bless your name.

We thank you that you don't give us what we deserve, but God, you just pour your grace out to us, Lord Jesus, to empower us, to equip us, to enable us, God, to do that which we cannot do in our own strength. God, just encourage our hearts, Lord Jesus, this morning, this weekend, during this time of retreat. God, just encourage our faith, God, to believe you for great things, to believe you for new things, to open up our hearts and that the eyes of our understanding would be enlightened.

Lord Jesus, to see new things, to grasp it, to comprehend things, to apply things fresh, God, we just lay down all of our burdens, all the stuff that inhibits and impedes our progress with you, Jesus. We say, help us, Father, just lift us above all the things that somehow, God, over the months and weeks, perhaps years even, have tripped us up and slowed us down, Lord Jesus. Just refresh us, refresh us, God, this morning.

God, I just pray that you would put all this together, help it to make sense, the material that would be concise and clear and point clearly to Jesus as the source of all things. Thank you, God. Just help us and be with us.

Praise your mighty name. Praise your name. You are good.

We say you are good, Lord. You are faithful. You are loving.

You are gracious. You are kind, God. Thank you for bearing along with us, suffering along with us, Lord Jesus.

Thank you that your purposes are clear this morning. Your intent is not changed. You haven't resorted to plan B with us, Lord, that you're still wanting to do the best thing in our life, Lord Jesus.

We just ask you to help us understand that. God, for any in here that have a spirit of hope or discouraged or just felt like they're on a lesser track than where you originally purposed for them, God, I just pray that you'd minister to them in Jesus' name. Thank you, God.

We thank you for a brand new day, a brand new day, a fresh start, a new beginning, a new opportunity, a new portion of grace to apply to our lives, God, to appropriate by faith. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

Amen. Okay, well, last night I introduced the topic of the prayer life of Paul and Paul's apostolic priorities, the things that he emphasized over and over again when he was ministering to the Church of Jesus Christ. Depending on which theological camp you may come from, you may emphasize a certain portion of Paul's teachings or another portion of Paul's teachings.

You might really emphasize a particular doctrine at the expense of some other doctrine or truth or part of Paul's teachings. And this is readily and clearly seen all over the Church today. We just kind of gravitate towards what suits us best a lot of times.

But as I introduced last night, I've been very blessed just to notice and take note of how Paul introduces his teaching, his greetings in all of his letters, his prayers in all of his letters emphasize certain things. They build a platform on which he then gives instruction to the Church of Jesus Christ. Now, we go through the niceties, don't we, when with one another.

Sometimes they're not so nice. Sometimes we're not so good at it. But we make some effort to kind of say, hey, how are you doing? We strike up a conversation, a little bit of small talk, a few little familiar facts, something to kind of help us all settle down in to conversing, that awkward experience that we try to tackle, some of us for more than others.

But we tackle regularly with one another. But I want to tell you that the greetings and prayers of Paul in his letters are not just human niceties. They're not just little introductions.

They're not just cliches or certain little terms that Paul repeatedly uses, you know, just kind of get things going and started. They are part of the inerrant, holy, inspired word of God, those words just as much as any other part of the instruction of Jesus Christ or the apostles or the prophets throughout the whole body of Scripture. Amen? And if you just kind of sweep past that, oh yeah, greetings to the church, let me get on down to the meat of stuff.

You know, that's kind of our attitudes about Paul's introductions. And I believe if we've handled them that way, which I confess I have in the past, we are missing certain things that Paul considers very fundamental to how to gain influence and access to a person's life. Now, we're talking about deeper waters this weekend, and certainly that's one thing we'll touch upon this morning in my talk, is that was always one of Paul's emphasis, not to leave people in the same place, but to charge them and encourage them to go deeper and grow in the grace of God.

Amen? But the whole ability to be able to give that kind of instruction and just approach somebody that kind of way comes from some certain platforms that Paul builds in the beginning of his letters. He gains authority not only through his title as an apostle, but how he interacts with other people. So I hope all of us in this room are not merely those who just want to go deeper with Jesus, but want to help others go deeper with Jesus.

Amen? Every one of the epistles was written for that purpose, to encourage people to go deeper with Jesus. Now, how many of us in this room haven't struggled with the awkwardness or the challenges that face us so often when we try to give away something that we so are wonderfully enjoying? Amen? God does some fresh work in your life. He helps.

He takes you deeper. And you want to help other people go deeper with Jesus, but somehow we don't know how to get there to help them understand what we're talking about. Amen? Anybody else ever struggled with that? Anybody ever made anybody angry trying to do that? Anybody hurt anybody's feelings trying to do that? You know, what I have found is so often what oftentimes takes us six months, a year, two years to get a real grasp and understanding into, we try to cram down somebody's throat in a week.

Have you ever noticed that you try to do that? And it just, you know, it's like force feeding anybody. It's not kind of a comfortable situation. And, you know, by virtue of the fact that I'm a little older than most of you, I probably just made a whole lot more mistakes in this area than most of you guys in the room.

And I want to save you some grief, and I'm trying to learn from Paul on how to avoid making some mistakes. We talked about last night, first and foremost, when Paul starts praying for the saints of God, he always starts off with thankfulness. Amen? He says, I thank my God for you on every remembrance.

I mean, that, when you look at all the prayers of Paul throughout all the epistles, that is the most consistent and striking feature about his prayer life, is he's a person who doesn't just take time to focus on his needs in his prayer, but takes time to consider others and say, man, I am totally thankful for you. I am blessed by you. I recognize the progress you're making.

I see the grace of God in your life, and I am thankful to God on every remembrance of you. Amen? That's awesome stuff. But, you know, some of us, we don't want to stroke anybody to kind of get an open door to talk to them, so we avoid all those niceties, don't we? Don't we? You guys, again, if you're just trying to manipulate somebody, by no means, don't put that on.

But do not underestimate the power of affirming and encouraging and praising what God's doing in somebody else. Amen? Do not underestimate that. And if you're not a person who doesn't know how to do that, you're not going to be very successful when giving people instruction to take them deeper.

You know, Paul does a lot of things in his letters, doesn't he? Sometimes he just lays out nice doctrine. He creates some systematic theology. Sometimes he gives some very particular instruction according to the

need of the moment.

Sometimes he gives some strong correction for the need of the moment. Amen? But it doesn't matter where he starts. It's still in a posture of affirmation and thankfulness for the people that he's going to talk about.

What is that? Is that just kind of going through the ropes, kind of just a system of principles that he's applying because he knows, well, I know I need to start here. No! He starts with understanding the worth and the value of a human soul. Amen? He recognizes that people are precious to God.

I mean, by the way, you know, after all, Jesus died for each and every one of us. Amen? Doesn't that speak something to our value to God? And so often the very saints that Jesus paid such a high sacrifice to save, we treat rather harshly and inconsiderately, don't we sometimes? Paul reminds the saints that where you start is by thanks and praise. Amen? Hey, and I just encourage you.

That was kind of last night's message. I'm not going to redo the whole thing for you this morning in case some of you guys are worrying. But let me just encourage you.

You know, this is what I love about kids. You know, it says unless you become like a little child, be converted, change like a little child, by no means will you enter into the kingdom of God. One of the attributes and characteristics of little children is when they see something good, they say something good.

When they like something, they say they like it. When something's kind of cool to them, awesome, they say it. Amen? But we got too much together to do this.

We feel too weird. You know, we're too insecure to do this so often. Little children don't care.

But I really do want... I mean, my seven-year-old man, he's the king of this. Whatever's in his head just pops out of his mouth. And sometimes that's not pretty, but a lot of times it is awesome.

It is awesome. You guys, when you see good things in people around you, say it. You know, brother, when you do that, you know, when Tom Rich just smiles the way he smiles and worships Jesus, I mean, I get blessed.

That's a good thing. Amen? When other people share the Scripture and they start pouring through it and they're just going through all the Word, you know, and they're excited about something new Jesus is teaching them, you know, that just thrills my soul. That's a good thing.

Amen? Let's say it. There's so much that goes without saying that we should be saying. And if we just took a little bit of extra time and worked through our weirdness and our own insecurities to say what is so obvious to everybody, we would find it easier to dialogue, communicate with one another, and open our hearts to one another.

Amen? You cannot have access to people's hearts and people's souls to mature them and disciple them in Jesus Christ where there is no trust. And when you don't affirm people and thank God for people and bless people and take the time to show that they have value and worth, you will not be able to establish trust and you will not. The door of their heart will be locked.

And you may be able to say, well, they're stubborn, they're rebellious, they just don't want to receive the Word of God, but that's not always what it's about. Sometimes that's what it's about. Sometimes it's just

that you haven't taken the time to establish trust and they're not convinced that you really love them yet and they're not convinced that you're concerned for them yet.

Amen? You guys hear what I'm talking about? We can pre-chart about a lot of things here in this group, can't we? Can we pre-chart about this? Paul takes the time to say, I just thank the Lord for you. And the door of their heart starts to swing open a little bit. He sees that we have value.

He sees that we have worth. He sees that the grace of God at our work in our life is worth something. I can trust this man.

I can open my heart to this man. I can receive what this man has to say to me because I know he has my best interests at stake. Amen? Amen? That's why, you guys, you need pastors, people in your life.

Not just teachers, not just instruction in your life. You need people who will shepherd you and take the time to say, hey, I love you. I'm concerned.

I'm concerned. I see what's going on in your life because some of the teaching never sticks until it comes in that kind of spirit. Amen? First and foremost, Paul said, applied apostolic gratefulness.

He was thankful. That's why he had access. And you guys, you think it's a, you know, I don't know, David.

Look at the letters. Look, I dare you to go back and look at all Paul's prayers and see. He says, I thank God.

He says it over and over and over again. Another thing, the only thing second to Paul's emphasis on thankfulness for the body of Christ is his emphasis on how much he prays for the body of Christ. The people that he addresses, first and foremost, he says, greetings.

I recognize the church thus and such a place. I'm the apostle Paul. I have this apostleship given to me by the Lord Jesus Christ.

He may vary in his details about explaining how he got this office, but then he goes real quickly into a prayer, which first and foremost, he starts saying, I'm thankful for you. But then he goes from there to saying, I pray for you. I pray without ceasing for you.

I pray night and day for you. I spend spirit serious time praying for you. Amen.

This is another very important thing in setting the platform on which instruction can be given and received. When you understand that someone is taking the time not just to say, oh, bless you, but really has prayed for you and prayed for you and prayed for you and prayed for you. They have to pray for someone like that.

You have to take time to think about someone. Amen. You let them and their need and their situation and their calling occupy your thoughts for a while, long enough for you to devote some serious time to prayer.

Again, this undergirds and resupports the fact that this man cares deeply for these people. Amen. When you come up, when it's built on these kind of two emphasis, thankfulness and serious prayer and devotion and sacrifice.

When your ministry is built on these two things, you will, you will have access to somebody's heart. And, you know, even as we're going over this, you know, think about it. Think about the people who really gave you access to their heart.

Now, there are those moments, those incidents when God just shows up and does something and, you know, kind of in a supernatural way, breaks open a situation where you can minister in an extraordinary way. I'm not talking about those situations. I'm talking about more the run of the mill, typical type of ministry time that you have with people.

Typically, the people that you have ever really had access to are people who are confident that you appreciate them. You are thankful for their lives. You recognize the grace of God in their life and that you're willing to sacrifice something, spend labor and time and prayer so that they'll go on deeper with the Lord.

Amen. Wouldn't you say that's true, that the people have really opened their heart to you to understand those two things? But, you know, sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. And we're not even paying attention.

With these people, I'm really letting them know how grateful I am for them. And with these people, I'm really, they see how much I'm praying for them and love them. And these people don't.

But we're emphasizing the instruction, the teaching. Amen. Without understanding that doormat, that welcome mat that actually opens the door to let you have that opportunity.

Amen. Let's be wise and understand if we're going to help people go deeper, we've got to have a welcome mat out in front of our ministry. Amen.

That says, thank you. Thank you for what you're allowing God to do in your life. I'm thankful to the Lord for what he's doing.

And also, I'm going to pray. I'm going to labor. I'm going to sacrifice so that thing can continue to grow and mature in your life.

Amen. Let's look at this apostolic persistence in prayer. It's really uncanny.

I was so convicted last week as I was just looking at the apostles prayer life. I was going, oh, my goodness, I don't pray for my people like this. I don't pray for my friends quite this way.

I was just struck at the heart. I mean, this guy is talking about several churches that he has influence in over and he's talking about really spending serious time praying. Romans 19, for God is my witness.

That's a nice way of saying I'm not lying to you. I'm serious. You know, as for God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son, that without ceasing, I make mention of you in prayer in my prayers.

I make mention of you always in my prayers. You know, double emphasis without ceasing. I'm always praying about you.

I'm always praying for you. I'm always praying for God's best in your life. I'm always doing this thing.

I can't really help myself but utter up a cry throughout the day, every day, all the time that God's work of grace would be established in your life. Amen. Can you honestly say you have that type of prayer life for the people that you're trying to teach? For the people you're trying to instruct? Oh, you've discovered this new thing, this deeper thing that God wants to do in your life.

You want to take some other people there and you try to, you know, get it all right through their head. You know what I mean? You're pounding on their brain with this teaching without taking the time to express thankfulness and to hope that the door would be well oiled through some fervent prayer and intercession. Amen.

Stuff just works a lot better when you pray for it. Isn't that right? To get a hearing with other people, to get an opportunity to share. But it's amazing what prayer will do.

Prayer for God's favor. Prayer for God's blessing on your words. Prayer that even make any kind of sense or coherent.

You know, some of us struggle with that from time to time. Anybody else? Ephesians 1 15 and 19. Therefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you.

That's what we talked about last night. Making mention of you in my prayers. Again, we talked about last night that the attitude of thankfulness and gratefulness for the saints of God just makes it easier to pray for the saints of God.

If you haven't first acknowledged that God's doing something good in someone's life, it may be difficult for you to pray for something better and more to happen in someone's life. Does that make sense, you guys? You know, have you ever noticed when you're real critical about someone? Oh, that doesn't look good. You know, this and that.

And you bicker and complain. Yeah, everything looks dark when you think about that person. Suddenly, man, as you reviewed all the problems, the hope was draining out of you.

And then it came time. Well, now we need to pray for this person. Right.

OK. You shoot a token prayer of God have mercy. You know what I'm saying? Where if you would have taken a little bit of time to say God's doing something good there and you encourage yourself about God is at work.

Praise God for good brothers. I need people to help me do this all the time. My wife helps me do all this time.

You know, sometimes I feel like with some saying, I'm going, man, I've had it up to here. If they do that one more time, I'm just going to unload on them. You know, anybody else do that? You know, you just feel freaked out.

And then and then they come on somebody else and says, hey, remember, or you know what I heard? You know, really, you know, just some glimmer of hope that God's doing something that you didn't happen to notice because you're so been out of shape at him. And suddenly hope fills your heart. And it's OK.

A second wind to minister again. Amen. Aren't you glad that somebody gets a little bit of hope in their heart about ministering to you and me? Amen.

Praise God that somebody didn't give up on us. Praise God that somebody recognized that there was something worthwhile in our life to say praise Jesus for that. You know, she may be a knucklehead in this area and have a hard day, but God's doing something there.

I have to acknowledge that's the grace of God. Praise God. And oh, Lord, do more.

Amen. I'm talking about you, me and you. We're not talking about getting you to focus on anybody else.

I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers. Now, I want you to notice the kind of the rest of the character of Paul's prayer, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of truth. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened that you may know what is the hope of his calling.

What are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints? And what is the exceeding greatness of his power towards us who believe according to the working of his mighty power? Praise God for these people. Oh, Lord, do more for these people and take them deeper. Amen.

Grow them. Don't leave them the same. You'll find, you know, a lot of people love the apostle Paul's writings because they remind us of who we are in Christ.

Amen. They're the for some books on on self-esteem. They're, you know, the backbone are Paul, apostle Paul's teachings.

But let me tell you, Paul never exhorts you about who you are in Christ without then later telling you to go deeper in Christ. Amen. There's a lot of ministry out there that wants to pat you on the back and say, man, you're great in Jesus.

Praise God. Thank you. Thank you, Lord.

And I'm talking about that this morning. Amen. I'm talking about the good again, recognizing the good.

But I'm talking about the nature of apostolic preaching and teaching and instruction as we see it in the letters of Paul. It recognizes the good. It gives grace.

It gives gratefulness and praise for the good that's going on in your life. But it doesn't want you to be content with that. It wants you to go deeper.

Amen. It's something you'll always see about Paul's writings. You know, you might think you have a handle on this doctrine that's part of the teaching of Paul or this doctrine.

But if you're not a person who knows how to be thankful and prayerful and get people to go deeper in the Lord, you're not really following the Paul's apostolic instruction. Amen. Amen.

Philippians one, three and six. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. Here he goes again being grateful.

It's playing the glad game, isn't he? Some of you guys don't know what that is. It's all right. Always in every prayer of mine, making request for you all with joy, with joy.

What does this say about Paul's prayer for the saints? It's unceasing. He's praying always for them, but it's with joy. He has a sense of anticipation and hope when it comes to the saints of God.

Amen. With all joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. You'll notice his emphasis is on Jesus, the one doing the work.

That's why he has hope. That's why he has joy. We have hope and thankfulness and joy when we consider the body of Christ, not because we're something, not because we're anything, but because Jesus is everything.

Amen. Because Jesus is the author and the finisher of our salvation. Praise God.

I'm glad that, you know, Jesus has a good work ethic. Don't you? You know, he's not one of these guys that starts a project and leaves it alone. And always, you never met one of those guys always starting something new, never finishing anything.

That's not our God. That is not Jesus. When he starts a job, he sticks with it.

He stays with it and he finishes it. Amen. Are you letting him finish what he started? Amen.

Colossians 1, 9 and 12. For this reason, we also since the day we heard of it, talking what's going on in the church here, do not cease to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power for all patients and long suffering with joy, giving thanks to the father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

For we have great joy and consolation in your love because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by by your by you, brother. He goes on. You know, Paul, if you want to stick with this thing that we call ministry and really have an active part in the body of Christ and encouraging other people to go deeper, you have to be able you have to be able to recognize the good that's going on in somebody else's life.

You have to be able to chart the progress a little bit. Amen. Because you know what? We're farmers.

Amen. We're sowing seed. We're raising a crop.

It's growing in us. It's growing in other people. And if you don't believe, if you don't see progress, you're going to lose heart and become discouraged.

Amen. And so, you know, if you have an eye always to see the problem and never to see the progress, you'll find that you'll start to run out of steam in your ministry. I'm not talking about inventing it.

I'm not talking about being absurd and pretending that something that's really a mess is something that's really good, but really having God's perspective about one another's life in your time of prayer, in your time of praise to the Lord for what's going on in people. Amen. You guys, I tell you what, we struggle the most in these areas with people that we're actually the closest to.

Husbands with wives. How about kids with their parents? That's a touchy one, isn't it, for college students. Sometimes you can't see any of the.

There may be seasons where you can't really appreciate the benefit of your dad or mom's instruction or their guidance in your life. You become ungrateful. You don't fulfill the fifth commandment.

You stop honoring your parents and then a blessing is ripped off from you and things goes south from there. You know, but it doesn't just apply to our parents. If we if we can't see the blessing that people are contributing to us around us, we'll stop honoring them and we'll stop being an effective tool of ministry to them.

Amen. And they won't trust us anyway. Amen.

Want your parents to trust you? Be a blessing to them. Recognize where there are being a benefit to your life. Amen.

Recognize the good things that they are doing for you. You may have. They may have done it as long as you can remember.

You always taking it for granted. Never seen its worth or value. Honor it, bless it and see if you don't have a better hearing.

You don't have an open door in their life. Amen. We need that.

With our husbands, our wives, our children, our parents, people that are around us that are so close to us. So often we're breaking simple principles and protocols of love and trust, and then we're frustrated and wonder why we don't have access to people's hearts. Amen.

This is relational stuff. This is where we're living. This is where we're at.

This is what we need. You guys, you know, I don't care how much doctrine, you know, I don't care how much theology, you know, I don't care how much you boast of praying long hours and doing this and that. If you can't live this type of stuff out, it doesn't matter.

You don't got it. You don't got anything to prove that you got a lot of grace going on in your life if you really blow it here. I'm talking to myself, talking to you guys.

Amen. Second Thessalonians 1, 11 and 12. Therefore, we also pray always for you that God would count you worthy of this calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you and you and him according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray always for you. I see what God's doing in you, and I'm praying that God continues to do that in you. I'm praying for you.

You know, praise God that there are certain people that you have in your life that you can call them and know when you ask them to pray, they'll really pray. Amen. That is.

I mean, some people say, oh, I'll pray for that brother. We better stop right now because unless we do it now, I'm not convinced it's going to happen. You know, and sometimes I recognize that about my own life is that, oh, man, we better do it right now.

You know, if I wait, it might not happen. But praise God there. All of us have those people in our life that pray and pray and pray.

Or just when you call them, you pray. I love Darren Ely for that reason. I can call him.

I tell him, hey, pray for me as I'm going to this and such a place. I have confidence he'll do it. And I know I can feel the difference.

And I got other guys in this room I do the same thing with. Amen. Do you pray for people? You can't expect an open door when you haven't prayed.

It's not by our might. It's not by our power. It's not by our intellectual persuasion that we're going to awe them and get them to go for what we're talking about.

This is a spiritual thing. And if you put more emphasis on the intellect than you do on the spirit, that's revealed because you're emphasizing doctrine more than you're spending time in prayer for the door to be open. Amen.

How about Colossians 1:3? We give thanks to the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There he goes being thankful again, praying always for you. I'm praying for you.

I have authority to speak to you because I recognize God's work in your life. And I prayed for you. You know, translated means I love you.

I care for you. I've laid my life down for you. That's the platform.

That's how he lays it all out in the beginning. He can go on to say anything to him from there. Amen.

When you approach somebody, when you entreat somebody, when you instruct somebody, are they convinced of these two facts that you are thankful and that you are prayerful concerning them? Are you having trouble talking to somebody, ministering to somebody, making an impact on somebody? Evaluate. Look, does your ministry look like the Apostle Paul's? Is it really apostolic in the sense that you are thankful for them and you spent time praying for them? If you're not having progress, it could be because you just haven't laid the welcome mat out correctly in this apostolic fashion. You haven't made it as easy as it's supposed to be by skipping these two things.

You're making it more challenging than God intended to be. And who needs to make it harder than it's supposed to be? Amen. I mean, this thing talk about ministering to people.

We're just trying to do something simple, right? Just trying to convince people of eternal values and see them born from above and the live transform being recreated into the image of Christ. Just a piece of cake, right? This isn't challenging stuff. We better be praying and we better not be making it harder than it needs to be.

Amen. But again, sometimes we just feel too weird about being thankful. Sometimes we just feel too insecure with who we really are to really love people in an affectionate, relevant way.

And so we just want to stumble through it, just charge in there and try to say things that we haven't been given permission to say yet. Amen. OK.

I think you guys are getting a little bit now. Second, Timothy one, three and four. I thank God whom I serve with a pure conscience as my forefathers did.

And without ceasing, I remember you in my prayers night and day. Couldn't you have just left it at praying always for you or maybe that unceasing word? But I mean, he's like triple emphasis, always unceasingly night and day. The guy is saying, hey, I'm laying my life down for you.

Are you listening to me? He says. Amen. Hey, trust is earned.

You may not like it. And when it's lost, it has to be re-earned. Amen.

Amen. You may not like those rules, but that's the reality. And that's the truth.

When we do our bad conduct or carelessness, hurt and offend other people. You know, we cannot lay it on them. We have lost trust and it will take time to regain that trust.

And it's usually going to be through patience and long suffering, love and compassion and taking the time to really let them know that we care about them. Amen. Amen.

Amen. of sacrifice and labor of love that he is pouring out for the people that he's trying to minister to. Amen.

God, help us have mercy on us, have mercy on us. Those of us who aspire to be ministers, we cannot do this without praying. And it's not just about spiritual mechanics.

So, yeah, we've got to kind of turn this switch in the heavens up here and then turn this and adjust this dial and then miracles happen. That's not what I'm talking about. This is relational as much as it is anything else, as much as it is just complying with certain spiritual principles, is when you lay your life down for someone, you earn and gain access to someone.

Amen. That's exactly how Jesus did it. In case, you know, the whole planet was mistaken on what the father's heart was all about towards them.

Jesus came down in the form of a man to love, to lay down his life, to sacrifice for them so they didn't have any misunderstanding about who he was and how he wanted to do this thing. Amen. And it is the love of Jesus that compels us.

Amen. It is the sacrifice and long suffering of Jesus that compels us to say, this is a man, this is a God that is worthy of my absolute, utter abandonment and submission. Amen.

Amen. Isn't that why a wife entrusts herself to her husband through that time of engagement and and, you know, getting to know one another? She was convinced that he loves her and has her best interest at heart and stake. He's willing to lay down his life and sacrifice for her.

And as a consequence, she opens herself up and she trusts him with every part of herself. Amen. This is the imagery that God has given us concerning being a Christian, a bride, us trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

He's done everything to show us that he is worthy of our trust. Amen. But you know what? When it comes to us being advocates or ambassadors for our bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, trying to win others into the bride and bring them into the family of faith, we cannot operate contrary to the very principles that

Jesus displayed for us in winning us.

Amen. Does that make sense to you guys? You want to give apostolic instruction. You want to have access to people's hearts.

You've got to do it this way. You've got to be thankful. You've got to be prayerful.

They got to be convinced that you love them, that you're laying down your life for them, not just through nice words and little glib cliches and pats on the back. I'm talking about through prayer, through sacrifice, as Paul is demonstrating for us. Amen.

Praying night and day exceedingly that we see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith. Now, what would you say to somebody that came up to you and said, hey, I want to perfect some things. And you go, whoa, what are you doing? You back up.

Give me a little bit of room. You know, you go perfect some stuff in yourself first. You know what I mean? That might make us a little bit intimidated, wouldn't it? Not with these people.

Not with Paul. Because he loved them. Amen.

They were convinced of his love. He saw the good stuff. He pointed the good stuff out in them.

They know that he just wasn't trying to tweak them apart from who they were as people. He cared for them. Amen.

See that praying unceasingly, praying always night and day exceedingly thing allows you to say certain things to people that other people can't get away with. Amen. You know, I praise God for some good brothers in my life that can say some hard things to me.

You know what I mean? Smack me around a little bit when I need it. You know, but usually those brothers have let me know without a shadow of doubt how much they love me. They've been there for me.

They've encouraged me. Remember last night, as I said, if you don't, you need a little bit of equal time, don't you? You can't expect to always be saying the hard things to people when you haven't ever spent a breath saying something good to them. The people that have access to my life, and more than likely to your life, real access to make a difference, not just to hit you in the head with some truth.

The real power to make a difference. Those are people that said, hey, I see what God's doing in you. That's a blessing.

That's good. You know, man, your God is using you. God wants to do this and such.

Amen. You might be saying, well, get on with it. We got it.

I don't think we do got it. Amen. We don't have this, you guys.

And really, you know, we want to talk about going deeper until we get some of this stuff. We're not going anywhere. We may think we're deeper.

I don't care. You can make them shake and bake, rattle and roll, you know, quote unquote. And the spirit, if you don't got this stuff, you don't got anything.

This is what Jesus said. Isn't that right? And, you know, we know we give the head nod. Yeah, that's good, David.

That's good. I know that's true. I know that's true.

How much time we spent in prayer about it? God, I am not satisfied with this part of my heart. This part of my heart stinks. It's rotten.

It's black. It doesn't care about people. It doesn't love people.

I don't know how to encourage people. I care more about what's comfortable for me than I care about what's best for them. God, have mercy.

Help me to be able to communicate and articulate the love of Jesus in a relevant way that makes a difference and quit blaming it on them. Amen. It's so easy to blame the here.

I believe as a minister of God, if you don't like what you're seeing as a result of your ministry, you've got to take the responsibility first and foremost. Hey, you know, the people to hear us do make a difference. You know, I tell Sean this, too.

You don't like your worship meeting sometimes. You go, but look at yourself. Don't look at them too hard.

If I don't like how my message went, I don't look at the people too hard. I said, God, where do I where's the hole in me? Because it's so convenient to blame the here, isn't it? It's because we naturally the old man has this rotten thing within it that loves to blame other people and never take responsibility. If I'm going to air, I want to air.

Actually, I'm taking too much responsibility myself to be quite honest. Not that we want to be unbalanced or in error at all. But you see what I'm saying? Our natural tendency, the way we lean is to blame somebody else for what's not going right with the thing that we're trying to do.

That's where you guys have to say amen. All right. Amen.

I'll give you there. You got one, two cues. OK.

Apostolic thankfulness, Paul's thankfulness, his gratefulness. His prayer, his sacrifice of love that that laid a welcome mat, that laid the open the door wide, that created an atmosphere of spiritual hospitality and an exchange of heart. But he does this so he can charge people to go deeper.

Amen. He's always all about, you know, we do not rest in our sufficiency in Christ. We do not camp out and just have a party because Jesus loved us and forgave us of our sins.

Praise God for that. But we don't stop there. Do you hear what I'm saying? If we really understand who God is and what the mission of Christ is and what the mission of the apostles was, we want to go deeper.

They were always all about charging us, pushing us, urging us to go deeper. Now, they earned the right to challenge us to go deeper through love and gratefulness, sacrifice, prayer. But that's where they're trying to get us is to go deeper.

Amen. Are you content where you are with Jesus this morning? We aren't, but we kind of are sometimes, aren't we? We're kind of conflicted. God help us.

Have mercy. Well, let's just underscore this emphasis, this apostolic charge to go deeper, to grow. You know, growing means changing, and that's what scares us.

You ever seen a kid that a little kid that grows real fast as a growth spurt that didn't have to get larger clothes? You know, we want to grow. We want to mature. We want to become this man or woman of God, but we really don't want to change our wardrobe.

You know what I'm saying? If you're growing, you're changing, and it demands that you change some garments sometimes. And we get so comfortable in what we've been wearing and what we've grown used to that we just don't like to get out there and try something new on because there's a risk involved. You know, I might look weird in this.

Is this my color? You know, you know, all that goofy stuff. Is this match? You know, does this make me, you know, whatever? You know what I'm saying? That's the kind of that goofiness also applies to us in the spiritual matters, too. We don't like to take risks.

You know, this is why putting on this heart of gratefulness, that's why loving people in such a way. A lot of us just are not comfortable with this. We just, let's confess it.

I don't got a clue on how to do that. I don't know how to talk to people. I don't know how, you know, it freaks me out to hug people.

You know what I mean? Just to look in people's eyes for, you know, more than 30 seconds, that kind of makes me feel uncomfortable. Anybody else ever deal with this stuff? You know what, you can't love people without touching them. Jesus proved that.

Jesus could have done all of his miracles without ever touching one single soul. But by touching them, he says, he imparted warmth, he imparted grace. He said, I want to connect with you.

You're valuable. You're precious. Hey, did your mom ever communicate that she loved you without touching you? I don't think it doesn't work that way, does it? You can't show people that you love them without touching them.

Without looking them in the eye. Without taking the time to speak words of kindness and grace, amen? Without spending time, and this stuff is just uncharted territory for so many of us, amen? And let's admit it, you guys, at the age that many of you all are at, you're still figuring out who you are, and what you're supposed to look like, and how you handle yourself. And you feel awkward at times.

And you say, Jesus, change me. I want to be the man or woman of God that you want me to be. Well, that means you've got to change.

You've got to bust out of your comfort zone and reach out and love people, amen? I don't know if there's anybody in the room that it freaks out more than me, to be really quite honest. I mean, I'm socially dysfunctional, as I've already stated on many previous occasions. But it's not an option.

You've got to grow. You've got to change. Oh, here we go again.

I've got to meet new people. You know, here we go again. I've got to talk.

Make small talk. Yeah, yeah. Smile.

You know, praise God for the spirit of God inside you that gives you little inner prompters and cues. Now, grin. You know, okay.

Hi. You know, look them in the eye. I know you want to turn your head away, but look at them.

Look at them. Hey, see that? And then suddenly the spirit of God starts to speak to you. Something you notice that's good about them and starts to remind you.

Okay, now say that. Oh, I don't want to say that. You know what I mean? You're going through that whole thing.

Hey, you can talk about being the spirit-filled man or woman of God, but if you don't know this, you don't got anything. If you can't, don't have the power of God to give somebody an encouragement and love them in a practical way, let's forget about it, okay? You're going to turn the world upside down and convert thousands? I don't think so. You know, you can't tackle a word of affirmation.

Oh, your mouth's quivering, your lips are twisting because they just can't hardly get in the right shape to form that sentence. Amen? Hey, I'll be quite honest. It's a whole lot easier for me to preach up here than it is to talk to some of you guys one-on-one.

You know, it is. It is. That seems squirrely.

I know that seems weird, but that's the truth. There's certain places that I can function and be relaxed in. Other ones, they just still scare me.

But you know what? I don't get to pick and choose. I'm called to love people. That's what ministry is.

I'm called to serve people. I'm called to encourage people. I'm called to see the good in people.

So that means I got to do this thing and I got to do the other thing. Amen? And you got to do it, too. You've got to do it, too.

And, you know, sometimes we get in a little... Okay, I had no idea that this was actually going to go here. Okay, so this is kind of free stuff right here. This is extra.

But, you know, we've just got to learn how to do it. We've got to learn how to overcome these things. And we become comfortable with certain dialogues.

We were talking about this. I can't remember. It was a lesson we did the other day at our church.

But, you know, I so often used to say, Oh, yeah, I'm not into small talk, you know. I'm just, you know, let's talk about theology. Let's talk about real things.

I can do that, you know. And I loved to do that. I loved to debate and talk about stuff.

And I could get going on all that. I'd done a little bit of reading on some of it. And I had a couple little handles to help me feel secure.

So, yeah, I could go and do my thing. But then all of a sudden, you know, somebody just wanted to talk about what's going on in their life or what's going on in their family or this and such. And suddenly, oh, I could apply a spiritual principle to that.

But to really land it, dial down a little bit and look the person in the eye and let communicate that I was really concerned for them so I could minister grace to them was altogether another thing. And sometimes we have little props and little channels that we're used to walking in. But then there's these other areas that God wants to push us over on into, wants us to learn and bring this beside that good thing that God has taught you how to function in.

Does this make sense, you guys? We've got to change. We've got to grow. We've got to mature.

God wants to use you guys. God wants to impact Texas A&M through your lives. God wants to use you to take people deeper and show them that the grace of God isn't just provided so they can have forgiveness of sins, but so they can have the power over their besetting sins.

Amen? But you've got to develop some people skills that will allow you the permission to help people get there. Amen? Or else this is going to take some sovereign act of God that just was apart from everybody for it to happen. And typically, that's not how discipleship happens.

And it's awful convenient because it doesn't cost us anything. Amen? You following me? Is this making sense, Riley? Okay, thank you. Okay, thank you, brother.

Apostolic growth. Now I pray that God... Well, 2 Corinthians 13, 7, 9. Now I pray to God that you do no evil, not that we should appear approved, but that you should do what is honorable, though we may seem disqualified, for we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And this also we pray, that you may be made complete.

One of the things that you find Paul praying about also in being thankful and interceding night and day without ceasing in an exceedingly great way, he prays and emphasizes, go deeper, be free from sin, be mature, be complete. But I want you to notice, you guys, the love and thankfulness is what allowed him permission to say these type of things to these people. Amen? This is apostolic instruction.

It's never, you're okay where you're at. It's go deeper, become more like Jesus. But you're never going to get the opportunity to say that.

You're never going to get a hearing from somebody without some of the other stuff. It all goes together, you guys. It all goes together.

And when you look at the greetings and apostolic prayers of Paul, they have all these five elements that I mentioned yesterday. Thankfulness, gratefulness, this unceasing labor in prayer, this emphasis of growing deeper and maturing, being free from sin, this emphasis of walking in love with a strong emphasis on grace as the means to get there. Amen? And does your instruction have those elements? Does your ministry, is it really apostolic? Does it have those elements? Colossians 1, 9 and 12, For this reason, we also since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you and ask that you be made filled with the knowledge of His will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

I want you guys to be fruitful, Paul says. Don't stay where you're at. I give thanks for what's going on in your midst.

I love you. I've been praying for you, but don't stay where you're at. Go deeper.

Go deeper. And you guys, some of you guys aren't going to go deeper unless you start applying some of these other elements. Amen? Your ministry isn't going to really sing and have an impact on people's lives until you start bringing all these things together.

We love the emphasis. I emphasize on this, or emphasize that, or this or that, and so often we reach for one thing as I exhorted you guys a couple weeks ago at the expense of hanging on to something else. What I love about Paul is he's a man of balance and he understands to have an access to people's hearts, to charge them strongly to flee from sin and be mature and fruitful, he has to lay a groundwork of love and thankfulness through prayer and intercession.

Amen? He grabs this thing but hangs on to this thing. You know, you go to this place, it's all, oh man, you're great, you're awesome, you're doing wonderful, you're a new creature in Jesus Christ. They go on and on and on.

But then they never charge you to go deeper. But you know, why go deeper if you're doing so great today? They don't help you understand and see the need to go deeper in the Lord. It's natural as a child of God to want to grow and mature into the thing that we were created for.

Amen? We have been predestined to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. We're not grown up, so we look just like Jesus. Amen? So yes, let's encourage people about where they're at, what God's doing, what God's done, but we don't leave them there.

We don't leave them in an immature state as a kind of awkward, gangly, spiritual teenager. Amen? We want them to mature into a well-or-balanced man and woman of God. Amen? That's what Paul wanted.

Man, I could get excited about that. That's good stuff. Philippians 1, 9 and 11.

And this I pray. Here he's praying again. Does your prayer life look like this? That your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and in all discernment that you may approve the things that are excellent.

Why couldn't he have just said good there? Excellent! That you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. I pray that you abound. Your love and your fruit abound more and more.

Man, somebody can push you like that when they've loved you like Paul's loved these people. Amen? Are you guys getting this? Are you getting this? 2 Thessalonians 1, 3. We are bound to thank God always for you. Are you guys recognizing the similarities between these prayers? I really didn't make it up, did I? I mean, they're here over and over and over again.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting. It is fitting. As it is fitting because your faith grows exceedingly and the love of every one of you all abounds towards each other.

Praise God, we're thankful that you're growing. You're doing what you're designed to do. Amen? Praise God.

In 1 Thessalonians 4, 1-5. Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God, for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your

sanctification, that it is to be exclusively reserved and set apart for the glory and pleasure of God.

Amen? Our life is not our own to be spent on our own pleasures, our own desires. We have been created for God's glory. We are separated, sanctified from the world and the things of the world so all of our energies, all of our passions, every breath, every thought, every energy can be dedicated to the service of God.

Amen? That's what sanctification is. Sanctification is not just an abstaining from the, you know, these are bad things for you. These things will kill you.

These things will hurt you. You can't have sanctification, real purity and power in a vacuum. When you separate yourself from the world, you've got to take those energies that you once spent on those things and direct them toward the Lord Jesus Christ through faith by God's grace.

Amen? Amen? Amen? That's what he's talking about. He says this is the will of God. It's the will of God that you guys don't stay the same.

It is God's perfect will for your life that you change, that you grow, that you mature, that you more and more grow into a maturity that allows you to overcome those things that once beset you and held you back and diminished and scarred the image of Christ in your life. Amen? You guys can say amen so I can take a breath after that. That you should abound more and more and you walk in such a way to please God for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus for this is the will of God.

You wonder what the will of God is for your life? This is definitely part of it. Your sanctification. That you should abstain from sexual immorality.

That each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passions of lust like the Gentiles do. Like the Gentiles who do not know God. We need to know how to maintain our vessel and understand that our vessel was created for the glory of God.

Amen? We give our heart, our passions to Jesus. We don't spend them on the things of the world. And this is our pleasure.

This is our joy. You know somebody that you're related to that you go, man, they need to hear that message. I need a way to say that to this person because I see the devastating effects of sin in their life.

You guys do it the way Paul did. Take the time to say, God, give me Your perspective on this person's life so I can affirm and bless it. And then help me to pray and labor for them in a sacrificial way and gain an audience, gain an opportunity to really speak these kind of things to their heart.

Amen? Finally, 1 Thessalonians 3, 12 and 13. And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all just as we do to you so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. I love these terms, aren't they? To abound.

That your love may abound. Isn't that a cool term? I mean, it's not just grow. You know what I mean? You know, you grow by inches.

You don't really abound by inches. That means to really be fruitful, doesn't it? Bust out and change something new, something fresh happening in your life. Amen.

That's the purpose of apostolic instruction for you. A radical change. That's what God wants for your life.

Amen. That's exciting stuff. This is God's will for you, that you be different, that you don't live like the rest of the world lives.

God designed you. God died on the Jesus died on the cross, not just to give you forgiveness, but to give you power over those things that made forgiveness necessary in the first place. Am I saying that we won't always need forgiveness? I'm not saying that at all.

You bet we will. But you guys, we're supposed to mature in such a way where this thing that we call the Christian life actually becomes easier. Amen.

We actually become skilled and mature in knowing how to possess our vessel and live for the glory of God so we can maintain a good reputation for our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. So people can look at your life and go, you know what? They do it a little bit different.

What's going on with them? They don't seem to be caught and pulled aside by all the stuff that my my other classmates do. And you investigate and inquire and then they find out, well, I've got somebody that can rule my life better than I can. Jesus, amen.

He gives me power and authority over things that you once held me a slave. Amen. Well, let me tell you about these five principles, brother.

They'll really change your life. Forget that stuff. Jesus, amen.

He's king and rules over passions I couldn't control. It's Jesus. It's being surrendered to him.

Amen. Absolute relinquishment of our control of our life and our thoughts and our ambitions so he can rule our life. Amen.

OK, we'll stop right there for right now and we'll continue on with the this evening with the other two keys of Paul's greetings and prayers and see what we can milk out of that. OK.

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