PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE PHILIPPIANS – Philippians 1:9-11

February 13, 2024

CAPITOL COMMISSION

Colorado State Ministry

Today we will focus our study on Paul's prayer for the saints he loved dearly. In the previous studies, we have seen the deep, divine love he shared and showed for the Philippians. Here, Paul intercedes on their behalf for spiritual benefit, growth and well being. Paul's prayer is full of love, joy and thankfulness and he desires for them a progressively richer and deeper spiritual knowledge which will mold their lives into God's pattern for living.

I. PAUL'S PRAYER – GROWTH FOR THE PHILIPPIANS

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are 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." Philippians 1:9-11

A. GROWTH IN GODLINESS

As we look at Paul's prayer today, it is first important to note the emphasis placed on growth in godliness. Remember, the Philippian believers were suffering persecution and hardship for their faith in Jesus Christ as Paul was. And yet, Paul doesn't focus on their physical needs (even though that was important), rather his deep concern was for their spiritual needs. Paul's desire was for their growth in godliness.

This is a pattern of Paul's, seen in his prayer for the Colossians, the Ephesians, the Thessalonians, for Timothy and Philemon. *(Colossians 1:9-12, Ephesians 1:15-23, 1 Thessalonians 1:2-4, 2 Timothy 1:3, Philemon 4,6)*

Paul was compelled to pray for the spiritual well being of others. Paul's prayer life reveals his true spirituality. And the same can be said for us. One real indicator of our own spiritual maturity is a true evaluation of our individual prayer life. Do we only pray for ourselves and our needs or do we, as Paul, pray on behalf of others and their true spiritual needs. Do we pray for the faithfulness of our fellow believers? Do we pray for genuine love, wisdom and discernment for Christians we live and work with? Not only are we commanded to pray *(Luke 18:1, Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6, 1 Peter 4:7)*, but even more we must find ourselves compelled to pray for the spiritual needs of others. This compulsion stems from an internal passion we have for God and others. Take time to evaluate yourself.

B. GROWTH IN LOVE

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment…" Philippians 1:9

Paul knew the Philippians had love, but he wanted their love to abound more and more. Why? Paul knew that love is the most basic element of godliness. *1 Corinthians 13:13 "the greatest of these is love…"*

Paul also knew that love is the most essential factor in our spiritual lives. *Ephesians 5:1,2 "be imitators of God… and walk in love…"*

Paul knew that love is our greatest virtue. Jesus Himself expressed this truth. *John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."*

"love" Greek ***"agape"*** meaning unconditional, self sacrificial love.

What kind of love is this? It is not a love of emotion, impulse, feeling or attraction but it is a godly love that we can only have because He first loved us. *(1 John 4:19)* This "agape" love means that we give not just what the loved one wants, but we give what is truly needed. *John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son…"*

In the greatest example of "agape" love, we see God giving not what man wanted, but what he needed. Man needed God's Son to bring forgiveness. This is true, divine love for others. It is love as an act of our will, whereby we sacrificially and unconditionally love others. You see, God didn't love us because we were so attractive and He was stirred up by some great emotion or feeling for us.

God loved us and acted on that love to give us what we really needed; a Savior who humbled Himself to the point of death for our salvation. We don't understand this kind of love today. But this is the kind of love we are to have for one another, and it is to abound more and more. That's a high calling in a tough world. Paul understood that. And Jesus did too when he said in, *"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:35.*

1. ABOUNDING IN LOVE ROOTED IN KNOWLEDGE

In *Philippians 1:9*, Paul stresses an *"agape"* love which is rooted in a full, true knowledge. In other words, Paul desires for these believers to love with a Biblical love that finds itself anchored to the truths found in Scripture. Paul defines the kind of godly love, not as sentimental feelings, but a willful action taken based on God's truth and what He says about true love rather than what the world says. The unconditional love we have for one another is regulated and guided by Scripture. Only in that way will we have true love.

"knowledge" Greek *"epignosis"* goes beyond basic facts. It means a real, full knowing. It refers to knowledge which powerfully influences leading to a changed life.

This shows us the balance between love and truth. They exist together and cannot be separated in how God intends for us to live and love.

1 Peter 1:22 says, "Since you have purified your soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart."

If the believers in this culture would live and demonstrate this kind of love, we could see a great revival in our country and in our world. We would be different, we would live different, we would love different. *Ephesians 5:3* instructs us to *"…walk in love just as Christ also loved us…"* Paul then warns in the next verse to not let our love get out of control. Our love must be anchored to convictions that are firmly based in the truths of God's Word. Truth needs to regulate our love and not our feelings, emotions or impulses.

2. ABOUNDING IN LOVE WITH ALL DISCERNMENT

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"discernment" Greek *"aisthesis"* refers to insight or perception based on knowledge and experience.

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Real discernment makes the right application at the right time in life; giving practical application to all principles in Scripture. Paul is saying that real love is to be lived, acted on and displayed with the control of Biblical truth and in all insight and perception of the doctrines and theology of Scripture. This is where the rubber meets the road as Christians.

We must carefully scrutinize to distinguish not just between right and wrong, but between what is better and best! This is true love lived out in our lives under the empowerment of the Holy Spirit in knowledge and discernment.

C. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR GROWTH IN EXCELLENCE

"that you may approve the things that are excellent…" Philippians 1:10

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"approve" Greek *"dokimazo"* is a word meaning to test metals and coins for their genuineness and purity.

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As love, rooted in Biblical truth and godly discernment is lived out in our lives, it provides the foundation to "*approve*", test, examine, study, investigate and determine the best way possible to obey and please God. We are to test and move forward in life with the things that are "*excellent,*" distinguishing what is truly important and setting the right priorities.

D. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR GROWTH IN INTEGRITY

"…that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." Philippians 1:10

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"sincere," Greek *"ellikrines"* meaning to test with light. Free from spot or blemish to such a degree so as to be tested by the sun and pass examination without flaw or cracks.

In order to see if pottery was without flaws or cracks, you would hold it up to the light of the sun. Only then could you detect its genuineness. Dishonest pottery dealers would fill the cracks with wax and then sell that worthless piece of pottery. As Christians, we are to be sincere and blameless, without cracks hidden by wax, but pure and genuine as if tested by light. We are found real. We do what we say. We have integrity. We are above reproach. This was the kind of growth Paul prayed for in the lives of the Philippian believers. The same is true for us.

E. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR GROWTH IN GOOD WORKS

"being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Philippians 1:11

As our love abounds in knowledge and all discernment, and we move forward in life with the things that are excellent (not better but best) resulting in genuine integrity, our lives are full of good works resulting from God's work in our hearts as we please Him. The ultimate culmination of God's work in our lives is that He is glorified!

As godly Legislators, you must carefully scrutinize to distinguish not just between right and wrong, but between what is better and best!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIBLE STUDIES

- ***Legislators, Governor & Spouses:*** Tuesday, 7:15 AM, Capitol Basement, Room 0109, Breakfast Served
- ***Staff, Lobbyists, Journalists & Sergeants:*** Tuesdays at Noon, SSB, 1525 Sherman, RM #603, Across Colfax from Capitol