

## Philippians 1:3-11

**3** *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. 8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

It has been said that if you want to learn how to pray, find someone who prays well and listen to them and learn from them. It's good advice, and we are blessed to have Paul as a teacher for prayer. In Paul's 13 letters in the New Testament, prayer is normally found after the greeting. In today's reading we find Paul praying for the church in Philippi. He is setting an example for churches and individuals to pray for one another.

***“I thank God upon every remembrance of you,”***(1:3). When Paul thinks of the Philippians, he does so with thanks. What a great way to begin prayer for others. Let's make it a point to give thanks to God, and thanks for those we pray for.

The sentence continues, ***“always in every prayer of mine making requests for you with all joy,”*** (1:4). What is the source of Paul's joy? It is in knowing their ***“fellowship in the gospel”*** (1:5). Fellowship is not conversation after the service at morning tea, it is joining together to fulfil God's mission for the church in the world. It is sharing together to encourage and support one another as we share the gospel and make disciples. Paul experienced this fellowship as they proclaimed the gospel in Philippi and even in the support they gave to Paul in prison.

Paul continues with this encouragement, ***“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ,”*** (1:6) There are 3 words to take note of in this verse; confident, good work, and complete. First, Paul is confident, which means that he trusts and is fully assured of what he is saying, not in himself but in Jesus Christ. Second, God, not Paul, began a good work in you. The moment you believed in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, is when God began a good work transforming you into the image of His Son. Third, once the work is begun, He will continue until it is complete on the very day you stand before Jesus. What a wonderful promise, that God is working in you and will not give up until He is finished. A good question to ask ourselves, “God, what do you want to do in me and through me, in all I do and to everyone I meet today?”

In verse 7, Paul expresses his feelings for the Philippians, with the phrase, ***“I have you in my heart.”*** It says a lot about Paul's approach to prayer, you will pray more often and with greater desire for those you love. Paul wasn't just praying for them because it was on his prayer list, he was praying out of sincere love and concern for them. He knew their participation in sharing the gospel could well end in their being put

in chains, just as he was now writing to them from house arrest in Rome. The gospel message challenges the powers and principalities of this world and the hearts of all men. He ends this verse with hope as he says, **“you are all partakers with me of grace.”** Grace in this case is God’s power enabling them to persevere and endure the challenges they face.

Paul again expresses his affection for them in verse 8, before he moves into the substance of his prayer in verses 9-11. Take note of how Paul begins, **“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,”** (1:9). He is praying for their love to abound, overflow, and be their first response. The knowledge he is praying for is the knowledge of the height and depth of God’s love for you (Romans 8:39). It is also the knowledge that God is love and that you can abide in His love (1 John 4:16). Finally, it is how you demonstrate that love. Do you remember what Jesus said about love? **“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”** (Matthew 22:37). He then added, **“And the second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’.”** (22:39).

The discernment mentioned in verse 9, is necessary for you to **“approve the things that are excellent,”** in verse 10. Discernment enables you to see right from wrong, good from evil, and to align yourself with the truth of God found in Scripture. The result of this **“abound in knowledge and discernment”** (1:9), is **“that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”** (1:10). Some translations use “pure and blameless” instead of sincere and without offense. Either set of words may be used because they point in the same direction. Being sincere or pure can be defined as truthful, faithful, loving, and kind. Both without offense or blameless mean without sin. You are called to live sincere and without offense each day until the day of Christ appearing.

In the final verse for today, Paul finishes the prayer with a picture of what he sees in the life of the believers in Philippi, in answer to his prayer. **“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God”** (1:11). A life “filled with fruits of righteousness” reminds us of Galatians 5:22-23, **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”** Paul sees these fruits growing and thriving, not from their own good works, but as he says, “which are by Jesus Christ.” Remember in verse 6 Paul writes, “that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it.” God is at work transforming you as you come to Him with open hearts and minds. And why does He want to do this? It is for “the glory and praise of God.”

What have you learned about prayer today? What is the purpose of prayer? How does it change you and others?

Blessings,

Don

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