

## Paul's Prayer for the Saints at Philippi

Philippians 1:8-11

We know that Paul labored as a missionary for the Lord. He planted many churches and our Bible records several letters that Paul had written to the churches and believers in various cities. Some of the letters were written to confront sin and unrighteousness among the congregation. This letter to the Philippian believers contains no rebuke or confrontation. Paul was especially fond of those at Philippi. Many times they had cared for him, physically, financially, and spiritually. [Phil.1:3-6 – I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:](#)

Just as with the saints at Ephesus, Paul was also concerned for the Philippians. I want to look at this simple prayer that Paul prayed for those at Philippi as we try to uncover the profound truth that it reveals. We too need to have a concern for Fellowship and the church of the living God. I trust that looking at the prayers Paul prayed will challenge us in our prayer life.

### **I. The Apostle's Compassion** (8) – [For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.](#)

**A. His Affection** – Paul reveals that he [longs](#) for the church at Philippi. That means “*to pursue with love and desire.*” The believers there were not just casual acquaintances or folks Paul cared for in a general sense. They shared a close and loving relationship. He genuinely longed after them and desired the best for them. He wanted them to prosper in their faith.

- We ought to have that same longing. We ought to love the church as no other. We are all part of the family of God and we are all going to the same heaven. If God's people can't desire the church, what can we desire?

**B. His Association** – Paul realized they all shared a common bond. They were all members of the body of Christ. These were those who had been born again, having put their faith and trust in the Lord. There was a special association with the believers that Paul didn't share with the world.

- We need to be reminded of our association in the Lord. We share something special, a relationship with the Lord. Everyone who is saved is part of the bride of Christ. The world doesn't offer what the church does. I am accepted here like nowhere else. It is here that I can identify with those of like faith. It is a wonderful privilege to be associated with the church.

## I. The Apostle's Compassion (8)

**II. The Apostle's Concern (9-11)** – These verses record the actual prayer that Paul prayed for those at Philippi. He desired specific blessings for them and prayed about specific needs. First we find that he prayed for:

**A. Their Love (9)** – *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment*; Clearly Paul desired the church to love as God loved. This too is Agape love. It is love that isn't dictated by outside circumstances or influences. It is love that exceeds all boundaries and knows no limits. Paul had received such love from the saints at Philippi.

- His concern was that their love might *abound yet more and more*. Paul prayed that the love they had shared so wonderfully in the past might continue to grow and abound. The word *abound* means to “*exceed a fixed number or measure; to remain.*” He prayed that their love would never fade or diminish, but that it might expand to even greater reaches.
- We are blessed to have a loving and caring congregation. There is a deep and genuine concern for each other. We must not take that for granted or neglect to nurture that love. We ought to pray that the love of Fellowship would abound yet more and more; that our love for the Lord and each other would continue to grow and prosper.

**B. Their Learning (9)** – With the growth and abundance of their love, Paul prayed that they might grow in *knowledge* and *judgment* as well. He was concerned with their continued maturity and understanding in the Lord.

➤ **Knowledge** – true and infallible knowledge expressed in God's Word. Paul didn't pray for worldly knowledge, but Scriptural knowledge. He knew the benefit of knowing the Word. Such knowledge brings about profitable change. It promotes righteousness through devotion and submission to God's Word.

▪ Paul was confident that studying and knowing the Word would make a profound difference in their lives. Would you not agree that we need knowledge of the Word of God? Our children seem to learn more at an earlier age than ever before. There is a world of knowledge out there, but we need knowledge from above. We need to read and study God's Word. We need to pray that God would grant us understanding and knowledge of His Word.

➤ **Judgment** – Paul was also concerned with their *judgment*. This is directly related to knowledge, but it reveals an entirely different aspect of Christian responsibility. It has the idea of “*discernment and spiritual perception.*” Paul prayed that the believers at Philippi might lay aside their personal desires and wishes to embrace the knowledge of truth. He wanted them to continue to apply the knowledge of Scripture to their lives.

- It is one thing to know and understand what the Bible says. Many people know the fundamental truths of the Bible. Many would agree that society would be much better if the world embraced these truths, but few are willing to apply the truths they know to their own lives.
- Knowledge will do us no good if we never apply it. We must allow the Word of God to transform us into the image of His Son. Pray that we all can discern and embrace the truths of God's Word. We certainly need His guidance and direction in our lives.

**C. Their Living** (10a) – [That ye may approve things that are excellent](#); Paul continues to reveal his prayer and we find that he also prays for their everyday lives. This is an interesting concept in Scripture. The phrase literally means “*to test, examine, or prove in order to make a determination between good and evil.*” It also has the idea of “*carrying something in two different directions; of people who are carried in a ship, tossed to and fro.*”

- Life is filled with choices and it is up to the individual to make the right choice and choose the right direction. Paul prayed that the saints at Philippi would choose wisely in regard to the direction for life. The world offered many choices and presented a strong influence.
- Our lives are filled with choices as well. We need to pray for each other that we would make our choices based on the Word and will of God. Pray that when faced with a crossroads, we would take the right path.

**D. Their Loyalty** (10b) – [that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ](#); Paul also prays for the allegiance and loyalty to the Lord. He wanted them to maintain a right relationship with Christ. This loyalty was actually two-fold. Paul speaks first of:

**1. Sincerity** – I love the word [sincere](#) in our text. It means just what one would expect, “*pure, sincere, genuine, without deceit.*” You would have to agree that we ought to be sincere in our walk with Christ. But there is a more colorful meaning to the word as well. It has the idea of “*being found pure when examined by the sun.*” In ancient Rome, fine pottery was very thin and fragile. Often as the pottery was being heated and cured, it would develop cracks and flaws in the vessel. Less than reputable dealers would fill these cracks with wax that was unnoticeable once painted. Patrons soon caught on to these shady dealings and began to examine the pottery by holding it up to the sun in order to reveal the flaws. It soon became the practice to stamp quality pottery with the Latin words *sine cera*, “without wax.”

- What a challenge to believers to live their lives so that purity is revealed when examined by the Son. Paul desired that for Philippi and we need that in our day as well. We need those who are sincere and consistent.

**2. Steadfastness** – Paul also desired that they be [without offence till the day of Christ](#). This refers to being found *blameless and without accusation*. It also has the idea of a *smooth road*.

They were charged to live their lives holy and upright before others as long as they lived. Their lives were not to give occasion of stumbling to others. We too need steadfastness in faith. Far too many claim Christ, but their lives don't reflect Him.

**E. Their Liberty (11a)** – Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God. Paul prayed that they might overcome the cares and distractions of this life and be filled with the fruits of righteousness. Paul knew the pitfalls and hindrances that many had fallen victim to. He knew that some lived their lives bound by sin and disobedience. He prayed that the saints might overcome the temptations of sin and be fruitful for the Lord.

- You would have to agree that we could all be more fruitful for Jesus. We too face the struggles of life. Often we stumble and fall, being defeated by the adversary. Let us commit to pray for one another that we might be able to rise above the temptations of life and bear fruit for the Lord.

**F. Their Light (11b)** – Paul closes this powerful prayer with a desire for them to bring glory and praise to God. He has summed it up with one thought, that all they do and say might glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

- We are living in dark and difficult days. The world around us is seeking something to provide a little ray of hope in the midst of this darkness. They are watching our lives in hopes of seeing something that is different. I pray that we will be a light for Jesus in all that we say and do. May Fellowship be a place that is recognized for its love and devotion unto the Lord. May we as God's people let our lights shine in the world around us.

Paul prayed because of a love and concern for the church. He wanted to ensure that they continued to prosper in the Lord. How is your concern for our church? Do you desire us to grow and prosper in the Lord?