

Series: Philippines 2024

Title: Growing in Love

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Paul told the Philippian brethren in verse 6 that he was “*confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*” Christ must begin the work. Where Christ has begun, he will finish. Paul was confident of the saints at Philippi. Then he declares why he knew this was so.

Philippians 1: 7: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. 8: For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

It is because “God has laid you on my heart.” The work the Lord does in his people is a heart work. God’s servant labors in the word to get a message from God for his brethren *because God lays them on his heart.* And prays for God’s people because God lays them on his heart.

2 Samuel 7: 25: And now, O LORD God, the word that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant, and concerning his house, establish *it* for ever, and do as thou hast said. 26: And let thy name be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is* the God over Israel: and let the house of thy servant David be established before thee. 27: For thou, O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.

Why does God’s servant labor for those God sends him to minister unto? The Lord puts them in his heart. That is real. That is so. Never disregard that truth. It is important to you as God’s saints. Paul had this confidence because they were one in heart by the Spirit of God, fellowship of heart *in* the gospel of Christ *by* Christ who is the gospel. Christ made them of one mind, one purpose, to glorify the Lord our Redeemer.

Paul said the proof they were one was that *inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.* Paul was in prison for preaching Christ. Like Paul, these brethren had suffered from the magistrates at Philippi. Yet, by the Spirit of God, by the grace of God, they stood with Paul when all others forsook him. They sent and ministered to him in prison. Also, they stood in the defense and confirmation of the gospel of Christ. No man could turn them from Christ. They continued assembling under the gospel and they sent forth the gospel. They did as Paul did and they did what Paul told Timothy to do.

2 Timothy 1: 11:...I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. 12: For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

The Philippian brethren had the same mind as Paul. They did what Paul told Timothy to do, they held fast the gospel Paul had taught them.

2 Timothy 1: 13: Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14: That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

In the face of all opposition, by the Holy Spirit, these Philippian brethren continued in faith and love in Christ. They did not do as many had done. A great many brethren forsook Paul due to him being in prison.

2 Timothy 1: 15: This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Paul named the two men who had turned from him and were leading others to turn from him. But on the contrary, these Philippian brethren did what Onesiphorus did.

2 Timothy 1: 16: The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: 17: But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found *me*. 18: The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

So by these things Paul said, *“It is meet for me to think this of you all for ye all are partakers of my grace.”* The same grace of our Lord Jesus that kept Paul, kept them in faith and in love in Christ in the face of all opposition. Their bonds were more than a carnal chain it was the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Philippians 1: 8: For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ [in the mercies of Jesus Christ] 9: And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and *in* all judgment; 10: That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Subject: Growing in Love

Proposition: The believers growth in love is by Jesus Christ. Therefore, we pray to God our Savior for growth and we give all the glory and praise to God.

BEGINNING AND CONTINUING

We grow in grace the same way we begin, by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is why Paul said in verse 9, *This I pray...* Paul prayed to the Lord because only the Lord could work this in his brethren.

How do we begin? How is a sinner made a saint? Christ declared that we must be born-again of the incorruptible Seed, the holy word whereby the gospel is preached unto you. Christ declared we must be born-again by the holy Spirit of God. Christ the Life enters in and a new holy man is created within us in Christ's image—created in God's image—in the righteousness of Christ and the holiness of Christ.

Ephesians 4:24...the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

By Christ effectually speaking the Word within us, we are sanctified, clean, holy. Christ said to his apostles,

John 15: 3: Now ye are CLEAN through THE WORD which I have SPOKEN unto you.

Then, having been already made holy, as a holy child of God, Christ grows us the same way, by the Word, by the Holy Spirit—*And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.* This growth is by the Spirit renewing us in knowledge of Christ day by day in the inward man.

Colossians 3:10...the new *man*, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:

Paul prays for fruit in them. A grape is fruit. How is a grape produced? The vine gives nourishment to the branches and grapes form. The branches bear fruit but the vine produced the fruit. Christ said to his apostles,

John 15: 3: Now ye are CLEAN through THE WORD which I have SPOKEN unto you. 4: Abide in me, and I in you. As THE BRANCH CANNOT BEAR FRUIT OF ITSELF, EXCEPT IT ABIDE IN THE VINE; no more can ye, EXCEPT YE ABIDE IN ME. 5: I am THE VINE, ye are THE BRANCHES: He that abideth IN ME, and I IN HIM, the same bringeth forth much FRUIT: FOR WITHOUT ME ye can do nothing.

Paul prayed to the Lord because those Christ has made saints, grow only by Christ the Vine. Notice verse 11: *being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.* We pray to Christ for growth and we give all the praise and glory to God.

1 Corinthians 3: 6: I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Next, let's consider the four things Paul prayed for. These are four necessary things. We should pray this for one another.

LOVE ABOUNDING

Philippians 1: 9: And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

Those born again, love God and love others born of his Spirit. These Philippian brethren proved their love by their action: they stood with Christ, they stood with Paul, and they stood with one another in the face of opposition that tried to make them do otherwise.

1 John 4: 12: No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13: Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit...19: We love him, because he first loved us. 20: If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? 21: And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.

1 John 5: 1: Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

But spiritual love grows in knowledge and all judgment by two means and both are of our Lord. We grow through the preaching of the gospel and through providence. God has given us spiritual senses: spiritual eyes, ears, taste, smell, touch. We hear the gospel and the Bread is Life unto us. Then by God's providence he exercises those senses and grow us so that we learn to try things and approve things that are excellent.

Hebrews 5: 14: But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their SENSES exercised to DISERN both good and evil.

Let me give you some examples.

By hearing the gospel, we hear it declared how God loves us.

1 John 4: 8...God is love. 9: In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. 11: Beloved, if God so [after this manner] loved us, we ought also to love one another [after this manner].

By hearing this in the gospel, the Spirit grows us in knowledge that God loved his elect when we did not love him. Christ laid down his life for us while we were enmity against him. By nature God's elect are more worthy to be loathed than loved.

Then by providence, God sends us bitter tribulation. He makes us experience the evil of our own hearts. Yet the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. We discern by experience that God's love is truly unchangeable in Christ toward us. Then Christ says in our hearts, "Now, if I loved you after this manner, you ought to love one another after this manner."

Again, by the gospel, the Spirit teaches us that God gave his only begotten Son to bear justice in place of his people because he loved us. Christ loved us by willingly bearing our sin and taking away our curse. Christ says,

John 15: 12: This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. 13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Then by providence, Christ brings a trial. Some are talking about you. Some shun you like they did Paul. Yet, Christ sends a brother who loves you as Christ loves you. They take away the curse, they turn from judging you. They cover your sin and help turn you from it by reminding you of the sovereign, unchangeable love of God in Christ toward his people. By that, Christ exercises your senses. You see Christ's love more, you feel Christ's love more deeply, your touched by Christ's love. Then Christ gives you opportunity to love a brother or sister the same way. Christ says, "Now, love them as I loved you: love covers a multitude of sins, love thinks no evil, love thinks the best, love does not judge and condemn one who Christ justified, love takes away the curse. Now love them as I have loved you."

Again, by hearing the gospel, the Holy Spirit teaches us that when we sin, we have a great High Priest who everlives to Intercede for us, who is at God's right hand to be our Advocate with the Father, Christ who is our Righteousness in whom God accepts us. We are taught how God receives us for Christ's sake. He does it because his love is unchangeable toward those he redeemed.

Then by providence, God exercises your senses. He puts you in a trial where you brethren intercede for you. They stand with you. Christ shows you a living example of himself, of how he intercedes and Advocates for you with the Father. Then he gives you opportunity to do the same for a brother or sister in need. Christ says, “Now, love one another as I have loved you. Pray for them as I pray for you. Stand for them as I stand as your Advocate in glory.”

By the gospel, the Spirit grows us in knowledge that knowledge that our Master has all power in heaven and earth—he abides with us—he will not forsake us—he makes us stand. *By providence*, he exercises your senses to grow you in judgment—he shows you your utter weakness and Christ provides a brother or sister who speaks this good news to you—and Christ makes you stand by his power and grace. Then he gives you opportunity to do the same for a brother or sister. Christ says, “Now, you love them, as I have loved you. Help them stand as I made you stand. Never forsake them as I never forsake you.

All of this growth in love in knowledge and judgment is through the preaching of the gospel and by providence. He exercises us to love one another by preach Christ to one another as he does us. To pray and wait for Christ to bless the word. To glorify Christ for blessing the word.

APPROVING EXCELLENT THINGS

Philippians 1: 10 That ye may approve things that are excellent;

Paul prayed for this growth in love in knowledge and judgment for this reason—*That ye may approve things that are excellent.*

At Corinth they were arguing over spiritual gifts. Some were boasting they had more gifts. The way they boasted was by judging other brethren as not having any gifts. They judged them as being sinners and held them in doubt. Truth is, they were all guilty sinners in themselves. So here was Paul’s instruction to them. He said indeed covet the best gifts. But then read what he said,

1 Corinthians 12:31: But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.

God is growing us in love to teach us to approve that love is the more excellent way.

1 Corinthians 3: 1: Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become *as* sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. 2: And though I have *the gift of* prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. 3: And though I bestow all my goods to feed *the poor*, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

All those are things we recognize as spiritual fruit, good works. But the most excellent fruit is to love when a brother or sister appears to have no fruit at all. God loved us while we were ungodly. It was not that we loved God but that he loved us. Since he called you how many times has he exercised your senses to teach you he still loves you, for Christ’s sake, even though you have sinned? Here is growing you to approve the more excellent way. Love is the excellent way he teaches us to approve.

1 Corinthians 1: 4: Charity suffereth long, *and* is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 5: Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her

own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; 6: Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; 7: Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [here is what all that means] 8: Charity never faileth:

The love God puts in the heart (agape) is commitment to Christ and to brethren. It is not a feeling. It is commitment. Love continues loving and abiding with the object of its love. By the Spirit of Love in our hearts, the love of God never lets anything stop us from loving Christ and loving our brethren. When preaching is not needed, when faith and hope are not needed, when Christ has brought us into glory, when we are perfect, when all these childish things are put away, love will remain between Christ and his people—*love is the excellent thing he teaches his true saints to approve of.*

The more we experience the evils of our own heart, yet behold God continue to love us and keep us, the more we grow in knowledge that God's love is everlasting, unchangeable love. Then the more we have true judgment, incite, to love our brethren the same way, when they do not love us.

CONTINUING IN THE FAITH

Philippians 1: 10...that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

This was the third thing Paul prayed for them. Some believer might think, "Well, I have already blown it. I have offended already." Love says, "No, you haven't blown it. Not if you still believe on Christ." This means is prayer that we continue in the faith believing on Christ until the day of his return. It is only in Christ that we shall be without offense.

Colossians 1: 21: And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in *your* mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled 22: In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: 23: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and *be* not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard,...27....which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:

FILLED WITH GOOD WORKS

Philippians 1: 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

This was the fourth thing Paul prayed for, that they would be filled with good works. That is what he means by fruits of righteousness. Let me give you five things that make a work a good work.

One, good works must be according to the command of our Lord Jesus. We follow Christ, not man-made commands.

Two, it must be done in faith. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Abel offered God a sacrifice of faith. That is why God received Abel and rejected Cain. Works of faith are works whereby we believe Christ is our only Righteousness and Holiness. Works of faith are works whereby we believe God is able. Trusting God to correct an erring brother so that we only remind them of Christ, pray for them and wait on God is a work of faith trusting Christ is able to raise them up and make them stand.

Three, a good work must be done for the glory of God. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." The Pharisees do all to be seen of men and to get glory from men. Good works are "by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." We do good works when do it for God's glory and care not if men see it or not.

Four, a good work must be motivated by love for Christ (John 14:15; II Cor. 5:14; I Tim. 1:5). If our motive is the fear of men or to please men then it is not a good work. Many separate themselves thinking they are doing a good work when they do so only out of the fear of man.

Five, it must be from a willing heart (II Cor. 8:12). Some give. But they give grudgingly. That is not a good work. A good work is done willingly, cheerfully because we see what great salvation Christ has wrought for us and continues to work for us.

Paul said I have all confidence in Christ that he will produce this fruit, these good works. This is Christ's promise.

Psalm 92: 12: The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. 13: Those that be planted in the house of the LORD shall flourish in the courts of our God. 14: They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing;

Amen!