

**Subject: *Praying for the Church***

**Scripture: *Philippians 1:1-11***

We are going to read the first 11 verses of the chapter which tell us how Paul prayed for the church at Philippi. This is a model of how we can pray for our church.

Paul always prayed for the churches he knew and loved and served. His prayers are recorded in the letters he wrote to them. He wanted them to know that he was praying for them and how he was praying for them, so they would be encouraged. He also asked for their prayers.

Paul understood that the church consisted of people who were important to Christ. These people were part of the family of God, members of the bride of Christ, living stones in the temple of God, and sheep in Christ's flock. We see Paul's view of the church in his parting words to the elders of the church at Ephesus:

***Acts 20:28** Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

Paul prayed for the well being of God's people. I'm sure he prayed for their health and physical needs, but most of his prayers that are recorded in his letters have to do with spiritual concerns. He prays for their growth and maturity and bearing spiritual fruit and bringing glory to God. I want us to notice four things Paul prayed for this church. We should use this as a guide to pray the same things for our church.

### **1. GIVE THANKS FOR UNITY IN THE CHURCH (vs. 3-5)**

Paul was grateful for this church every time he thought of them (vs. 3). This was not a perfect church, because there is no perfect church. Paul prayed for them with joy (vs. 4) for their fellowship in the gospel (vs. 5). They didn't agree on everything, but they agreed on the main thing. It was by the gospel that God began His "good work" of salvation in them (vs. 6).

People often think that fellowship is based on a certain style of music, a certain denomination, a particular version of the Bible, or even a certain type of church building. But real Christian fellowship is found only in the gospel.

***Romans 1:1** Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God...*

***Romans 1:9** 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 always in my prayers...*

**Romans 1:15-16** <sup>15</sup> So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. <sup>16</sup> For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

**Ephesians 4:1-6** <sup>1</sup> I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, <sup>2</sup> With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; <sup>3</sup> Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> One Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

I am thankful for our church because of our fellowship in the gospel.

## **2. PRAY FOR MATURITY IN THE CHURCH (vs. 9-10a)**

Paul prays that their love may abound more and more, but this is more than a kind of sentimental love or emotional love. It is a mature Christian love. Paul is praying that the church might have love with discernment (vs. 9-10)

He asked God to give them a love abounding in knowledge (full or advanced knowledge) and all judgment (discernment). He wanted them to love in a thoughtful, scriptural, and mature way. Love is not blind, but perceptive and careful to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, important and trivial. The result of discerning love is the ability to approve (test) things that are excellent. The word “approve” means to test metal or money to see if it is genuine and real. Paul wanted them to be able to know what was truly important and establish the right priorities in life.

## **3. PRAY FOR PURITY IN THE CHURCH (vs. 10b)**

The further result would be a sincere life without offense. This describes a genuine Christian life with integrity. The word “sincere” goes back to the ancient custom of pottery dealers who marked fine pottery with the words *sine cera* (Lat., “without wax”). These items could withstand testing in the sunlight since they had no cracks that had been covered with wax. The term “sincere” describes a life that could be held up to inspection. Hudson Taylor’s life was described as “a life that stood looking into.” He gave his life to take the gospel to China. This was Hudson Taylor’s ambition: “My great business in life is to please God.” Someone said this about Taylor’s life:

*Oh, his was a life that stood looking into. I never knew any other so consistent; and I watched him year in and year out. He walked with God.*

A life “without offence” (*aproskopos*) means blameless, not causing someone to stumble. The motive for integrity is to be prepared for the day when the character of every person’s life will be revealed (1 Cor. 3:10-15) and everyone will be judged (1 Cor. 4:5).

#### **4. PRAY FOR VITALITY IN THE CHURCH (vs. 11)**

The fruits of righteousness are the fruits that are produced from a person who is right with God and is living a righteous life. The world is blessed when the church is filled with spiritual fruits and not religious nuts.

No man can produce spiritual fruit on his own. It is fruit produced by Christ through His Spirit in us.

***John 15:4-5**<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup>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.*

The ultimate aim of all Paul's prayers was that God be glorified. The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.