

## *Christian Growth*

Philippians 1:9-11

Series: Joy and Gratitude in Christ

### 1. Introduction

- a. Paul's passion for the spiritual development of the believers under his care was manifested not only in his preaching, teaching, and writing but also supremely in his prayer life.
  - b. Examples of this can be found in his prayers for the:
    - i. Colossians – “walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.” 1:10
    - ii. Thessalonians – “We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers,” 1:2
    - iii. **Ephesians 3:14-19** For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, (15) from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, (16) that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, (17) so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith--that you, being rooted and grounded in love, (18) may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, (19) and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
  - c. Paul does not pray for the physical needs or church growth but rather instead he prays for the spiritual issues of supreme importance. His focus was on spiritual warfare.
  - d. How mature you are as a Christian is directly representative of your prayer life.
- ### 2. Christian prayer as our duty –
- a. **Luke 18:1** And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart.
  - b. **Romans 12:12** Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
  - c. **Philippians 4:6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- ### 3. Prayer is not merely our duty but if we love Christ and His body, we are compelled to pray

4. Paul's prayer reveals 5 specifics that Christians should be praying for the Body of Christ – these are sequential
  
5. Verse 9 – Spiritual Progress in Love
  - a. Love is from God
  - b. The apostle's desire is that Christian love abound and grow continuously in the life of the believer.
  - c. The importance of love cannot be understated:
    - i. Love is the virtue that surpasses all others; indeed, it is the prerequisite for all the other virtues.
  - d. **And it is my prayer** – the love that Paul is referencing is not a humanistic love but something completely different – it is spiritual
  - e. **...that your love may abound more and more** –
    - i. For the Christian, this love already exists –
      1. **Romans 5:5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.
      2. Paul wishes that this love would grow.
    - ii. This love is decisive – not conditioned
      1. The Good Samaritan – **Luke 10:30-35** Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. (31) Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. (32) So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. (33) But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. (34) He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. (35) And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'
    - iii. This love is dynamic – it can grow – abound - overflowing
  - f. **...with knowledge** – the true and infallible knowledge expressed in God's Word. Any love that is not grounded and growing in Scripture is not genuine biblical love. Real knowledge produces holiness.

- i. No impulse that leads one to disobey Scripture can be approved and blessed by God – an affair
  - g. **...and all discernment** – is the understanding and appreciation of real knowledge of God’s revelation that produces holy living.
- 6. Verse 10a – Spiritual Progress in Excellence
  - a. Progression from discernment to excellence. Thinking biblically.
  - b. When a believer is dominated and controlled by the love of God, there will be a corresponding desire to live according to His will fully and faithfully.
  - c. Approve – study, investigate, and determine the best possible ways to obey and please the Lord.
    - i. Involves the mind and the heart.
    - ii. John MacArthur states, “The discerning Christian cannot be a victim of his/her emotions and personal impulses if he/she is to successfully pursue and achieve spiritual excellence.”
- 7. Verse 10b – Spiritual Progress in Integrity
  - a. Excellent behavior leads to personal integrity – such integrity leads to being blameless until the day of Christ.
  - b. Our morality is fashioned by the Word of God – the whole person
- 8. Verse 11a – Spiritual Progress in Good Works – the fruit of righteousness
  - a. When believers stand before the judgment seat they will already be filled with the fruit of righteousness.
    - i. Witnessing, acts of mercy, acts of grace, love, etc.
    - ii. **Ephesians 2:10** For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- 9. Verse 11b – Spiritual Progress in Glorifying God
  - a. Godly fruit leads to the glory and praise of God.
  - b. **John 15:8** By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.
  - c. The supreme aim of every Christian is to bring praise and glory to our Lord as we are fashioned into the image of His Son.
- 10. Benediction:
  - a. **1 Timothy 1:17** To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.