

## PRAYING FOR GODLY GROWTH

### Philippians 1:9-11

Having *greeted* the **Philippians** and having mentioned his *continual prayers* on their behalf (**vs. 4**)...**Paul** now revealed the *specific content* of those prayers. As in all of his recorded prayers...his *primary focus* was on the *spiritual welfare* of others. *Spiritual issues* were of *supreme importance* to **Paul** ...more than praying for *physical needs* or for *church growth*.

There is *no truer indicator* of a Christian's *level of spiritual maturity* than his *prayer life*. **Paul's prayer life** reveals more of his *true spiritual maturity* than all of his *preaching, teaching, and miracles*. He was *compelled to pray* by the *continual and powerful working* of God's Spirit *in his heart*.

The same is true for believers today. Prayer is a *spiritual responsibility*...a *spiritual calling*. Scripture states...

*"...That at all times (we) ought to pray and not to lose heart."*

~Luke 18:1

*"...Be devoted to prayer."*

~Romans 12:12

*"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."*

~Philippians 4:6

*"...Be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer."*

~I Peter 4:7

Prayer is *more than an obligation*...prayer is a *compulsion* for the *spiritually mature*. *Fervent prayer* doesn't arise from a mere *sense of duty*...but from a *deep inner desire*. It doesn't flow from *external requirement*...but from *internal passion*.

The measurer of a person's *spiritual maturity* isn't how he *conforms externally* to the *command to pray*...that's *spiritual performance* (like the **Pharisees**). The issue is how *internally compelled* that person is to pray *by a strong love for God and others*. The *truest longings of the heart* will be *revealed in prayer*.

The *deepest longings* of a *Spirit-filled heart*...finds their *natural expression in prayer*. A heart *longing for...yearning for*...the *glory of God* and the *blessing of men*.

The things **Paul** mentions here in **Philippians 1:9-11** are *sequential*...each *builds on the foundation of the previous one*. **Godly love produces Godly wisdom**, which *develops Godly integrity*, which *leads to Godly living*.

#### I. **GODLY LOVE:** (**vs. 9**)

**And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment** (**vs. 9**)...

**Love**...Gk. *agape*, expressing a *Godly, sacrificial love*.

The God of Scripture *not only* loves...but *is* love.

*"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us...we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is*

*love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him...We love, because He first loved us."*

~I John 4:7-12, 16, 19

In both Testaments, **love** is the *virtue* that *surpasses all others*...indeed, it's the *prerequisite for all others*.

When a **Pharisee** asked Jesus in **Matthew 22**...*"Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"* Jesus replied by quoting **Deuteronomy 6:5** and **Leviticus 19:18** *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets."*

~Matthew 22:37-40

**Abound**...Gk. *perisseuo*, has the basic idea of *overflowing in great abundance...to run over as a cup or river overflows*. Here it's in the **present tense** which indicates a *continual progress*. An *overflowing love* of fellow Christians is a sure mark of *saving faith*...and *continued spiritual growth*.

**Real knowledge**...Gk. *epignosis*, emphasizes *the true and infallible knowledge expressed in God's Word*. Any love that isn't *grounded* and *growing* in the *truth* and *standard* of *Scripture* falls short of *genuine* Biblical love.

**Real knowledge** is *much more than mere factual information about* God's Word, or even the *acknowledgment that it's true and infallible*. **Real knowledge** produces *holiness* through *sincere devotion* and *obedience* to the *infallible Scripture*.

**All discernment**...Gk. *aesthesis*, refers to a *high level of Biblical, theological, moral, and spiritual perception*. It also implies the *right application of that knowledge*.

*Biblical love* involves *obedience to the Word*.

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments...He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him...If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him."*

~John 14:15, 21, 23

## II. **GODLY WISDOM:** (vs. 10a)

**So that you may approve the things that are excellent** (vs. 10a)...

**Approve**...Gk. *dokimazo*, means to *examine, assess, or discern*. It describes *analyzing metals to determine their purity*...and of *testing coins for the purity of their metals and for their genuineness*.

Here, it means much more than *simple acknowledgment or agreement* that something is *right* or *true*. It means to *study, investigate, and determine* the best possible ways to *obey* and *please* the Lord...and then to *live accordingly*.

**The things that are excellent**...these are all the *truths, attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds* that express *God's will* for the believer. They are the elements of *sanctified* and *holy thinking* and *living*...the things that allows a believer to live at the highest level of *spiritual maturity, devotion, and obedience*.

### III. **GODLY INTEGRITY:** (vs. 10b)

**In order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ** (vs. 10b)...

**Sincere**...Gk. *eilikrineis*, literally means *sun* or *to judge*. It indicates a *purity* that is *tested by the light of the sun*.

In ancient **Rome**, *fine pottery* was *relatively thin* and *fragile* and often *developed cracks* while being *fired*. *Deceitful* and *dishonest shops* would *fill the cracks* with a *hard, dark wax* which would be concealed when the object was *painted* or *glazed*...but would *melt* when the pottery was *filled with something hot*. In *ordinary light*, the *deception* was usually *undetected*, but when *held up to the sunlight* it was *clearly exposed*, because the *wax* appeared *darker*. *Reputable dealers* would often *stamp* their products *sine cera*...meaning *without wax*...as a *guarantee of high quality*.

**Blameless**...Gk. *aproskopos*, expresses *the extent and goal of integrity*...being *above reproach*. It means *without stumbling* or *causing an offense*...and has both the idea of *not falling into sinful conduct* and of *not causing others to fall into sin or iniquity*.

To be **blameless** is to move forward in one's life *without moral failure*. This isn't a call to *perfection*, but *to do all one can to give glory to God* and *live holy and honorable* before Him and others. *Tempted...yes. Failure...no*.

**Paul's** desire for the believers at **Philippi** is the same desire that ought to be the concern of all believers...*to be morally pure* and *not causing others to stumble*.

Believers are to live lives of **integrity**...as **Paul** did (**Acts 23:1; Acts 24:16; II Timothy 1:3**).

*“For our proud confidence is this: the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”*

~II Corinthians 1:12

**Until the day of Christ**...*when Christ returns to take His people to Himself*. It's that future time when *we will all stand before God* (**II Corinthians 5:10; I Corinthians 4:5**).

### IV. **GODLY LIVING:** (vs. 11)

**Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God** (vs. 11)...

**Having been filled**...a **perfect passive participle** referring to *something that happened in the past* and *has continuing results*. In other words...when a believer stands before the Lord at the **Judgment seat of Christ**...he has *already been filled with the fruit of righteousness*. That refers to a *divinely completed condition* of *imputed righteousness*.

**With the fruit of righteousness...Righteousness** for the believer results from being *clothed in Christ's righteousness*...what it means to be *in Christ...Christ in you*. That's why the *fruit of the Spirit* comes only **through Jesus Christ**...it's really *His life lived out through believers*.

Such **fruit** *magnifies God...not self*. So a life that exhibits such traits is always **to the glory and praise of God**.

*“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.”*

~John 15:8

## **LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:**

- **The measurer of a person's spiritual growth and maturity isn't how he conforms EXTERNALLY to the command to pray. It's how INTERNALLY compelled that person is to pray by a strong love for God and others.**
- **Godly love...agape love...is produced only by the working of the HOLY SPIRIT in the HEARTS of those who belong to Him. Only a believer...only a child of God is capable of agape love.**
- **The supreme objective and result of a life filled with Godly love, Godly wisdom, Godly integrity, and Godly living...is to manifest the GLORY and PRAISE of God.**

**We should all live in a way that God is most glorified!!!**