

INTRODUCTION.

IN OUR STUDY OF PAUL'S POSTCARD TO PHILEMON, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ we are currently looking at ~ ¶¶

▷▷ verses 4-7.

AS WE NOTED LAST TIME, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ this ¶ ~ is Paul's ~ statement of appreciation ~ ¶¶

▷▷ for his friend Philemon.

RECALL, ~ IN VERSE 5, ~ PAUL TELLS HIM ~ WHY ~ HE GIVES GOD THANKS ~ FOR HIM.

▶▶ 2 reasons.

▶▶ 1st last week.

▶▶ Today, ~ we'll look at ~ the second reason.

WE'LL ALSO LOOK AT ~ VERSES 6 & 7, ~ TO FINISH UP ~ PAUL'S STATEMENT OF appreciation for Philemon.

▶▶ Verse 6, ~ part of the content of Paul's prayer.

▶▶ Verse 7, ~ impact Philemon's ministry to believers ~ on Paul. ¶¶ 1/12

AS NOTED, IN VERSE 5b, ~ PAUL GIVES THE SECOND REASON ~ he gave thanks to God ~ for his friend Philemon.

I give thanks to God ~ because I keep hearing ~ about your love ~ for all of God's people.

THE GREEK WORD HERE ~ FOR LOVE ~ IS ~ ἀγάπη, ~ ἀγαπάω.

▶▶Perhaps ~ it will be to our benefit ~ to spend some time on this.

▷▷In order ~ to get a proper understanding ~ of what ~ ἀγάπη means.

▶▶This word ~ was rarely used ~ in Greek literature ~ prior to the New Testament.

▷▷When agapaō was used, ~ it denoted ~ ¶¶

↳↳showing kindness to strangers, ~ giving hospitality, ~ and being charitable.

▶▶In the New Testament, ~ the word ἀγάπη ~ took on a special meaning.

▷▷It was used by the NT writers ~ to designate ~ ¶¶

↳↳one, ~ a self-sacrificial love, ~¶¶ ¶¶

↳↳two, ~ a voluntary love, ~ as opposed ~ to a purely ~ emotional love, ~¶¶ ¶¶

↳↳and three, ~ a love ~ naturally expressed ~ by God.

▷▷It is a word ~ that speaks of ~ ¶¶

↳↳compassion, ~ regard, ~ kindness, ~ and true love. ¶¶ 2/12

▷▷ It is an unselfish love ~ that transcends ~ natural affinities.

▷▷ In short, ~ if I understand this correctly, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ in relation ~ to God ~ and ~ in relation ~ to the love ~ we are to have for other believers, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ in these contexts in the NT, ~ ἀγάπη and ἀγαπάω, ~ in their various forms, ~ refer ~ to God's love.

→→ Or, ~ Christ-like ~ love.

IN HIS EPISTLES, ~ PAUL DESCRIBES ~ WHAT CHRIST-LIKE LOVE, ~ looks like ~ in action.

▶▶ Acts of kindness, ~ mercy, ~ and hospitality.

▶▶ Avoidance of revenge; ~~ restraining criticism; ~~ and sympathy that weeps.

▶▶ Rejoicing with others; ~~ and sharing of ~ weakness, ~ shame, ~ or need.

▶▶ Restoring, ~ supporting, ~ and upbuilding others, ~~ ¶¶

▷▷ and ~ of giving them ~ all honor, ~ kindness, ~ forgiveness, ~ and encouragement;

▶▶ No doubt ~ you can pick out more ~ as you read Paul's epistles.

▶▶ More generally, ~ this love ~ is revealed ~ as a quality ~ of activity, ~ of thinking, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and ~ of suffering. ⇔⇔ 1 Cor 13:4-8a ¶¶ 3/12

▶▶ In brief, ~ Christ-like love ~ does ~ no harm ~ and ~ excludes ~ no good.

NOW LET'S TAKE SOME TIME ~ TO LOOK AT HOW GOD MANIFESTS HIS LOVE FOR US.

▶▶ Let's briefly look ~ at six aspects ~ of God's love for us.

▶▶ 1st, ~ unconditional.

▷▷ Not limited by conditions

▶▶ 2nd aspect, ~ comprehensive

▶▶ 3rd aspect ~ of God's love for us, ~ sacrificial.

▷▷ {John} ⇔⇔ This is real love ~ not ~ that we loved God, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but ~ that he loved us ~ and sent his Son ~ as a sacrifice ~ to take away our sins.

▷▷ {Paul} ⇔⇔ God proves his own love for us ~ ¶¶

↳↳ in that ~ while we were still sinners, ~ Christ died for us.

▶▶ 4th aspect, ~ selfless.

▷▷ Jesus said ~ he did not come to be served ~ ¶¶

↳↳ but to serve ~ and to give his life ~ as a ransom for many.

▶▶ The 5th aspect ~ of God's love for us, ~ beneficial. ⇔⇔ Gal. 4:4-7 ¶¶ 4/12

▶▶ And the 6th aspect ~ of God's love for us, ~ eternal.

▷▷ Jer. 31:3b (CSB): ~ I have loved you ~ with an everlasting love; ~ therefore, ~ I have continued ~ to extend faithful love to you.

↪↪ This verse ~ is a moving statement ~ of God's unchangeable love ~ for Israel. [All]

▷▷ Is. 54:10. ⇔⇔ "For the mountains may depart ~ and the hills be removed, ~ ~ ¶¶

↪↪ but my steadfast love ~ shall not ~ depart from you, ~ ~ ¶¶

→→ and my covenant of peace ~ shall not ~ be removed," ~ says the Lord, ~ who has ~ compassion ~ on you.

LET'S GET BACK NOW ~ TO PAUL'S FRIEND PHILEMON.

▶▶ Paul gave God thanks ~ because Philemon ~ reflected Christ's love ~ toward all believers.

▶▶ Most likely would act this way toward Onesimus.

AND BY EXTENSION, ~ ALL BELIEVERS, ~ US INCLUDED, ~ ¶¶

▶▶ are to reflect God's love ~ in our relationships with our fellow believers.

▶▶ In fact, ~ we are commanded to.

▷▷ I give you a new command: ~ Love one another. ~ Just as I have loved you, ~ ¶¶

↪↪ you are also to love one another. (Jn. 13:34; CSB) ¶¶ 5/12

▷▷ This is my commandment: ~ Love each other ~ in the same way ~ I have loved you.
(Jn. 15:12; NLT)

▷▷ ἀγαπάω

▷▷ Live a life ~ filled ~ with Christ-like love toward one another, ~ following the example ~ of Christ.

↪↪ He ~ loved us ~ and offered himself ~ as a sacrifice for us, ~ ¶¶

→→ a pleasing aroma to God. (Eph. 5:2; NLT)

MY . . . , ~ WE ARE TO REFLECT GOD'S LOVE ~ in our relationships with our fellow believers.

▶▶ Therefore, ~ we are to study carefully ~ all ~ the aspects of God's love for us.

▶▶ In addition, ~ we are to carefully look into ~ how the Bible describes ~ Christ-like love ~ in action.

▶▶ And then apply ~ what we learn ~ to our relationships with each other.

COMING BACK ~ TO PAUL'S STATEMENT ~ OF APPRECIATION FOR HIS FRIEND, ~ Philemon, ~ consider this.

▶▶ We find here ~ another piece of evidence ~ that Philemon ~ was a genuine believer.

▷▷ And i.e., ~ his Christ-like love ~ for believers.

▶▶ The NT ~ seems to make it very clear, ~ that Christ-like love for fellow believers ~ ¶¶

▷▷ is a sign ~ of true conversion. ¶¶ 6/12

▶▶ Start with the words of Jesus.

▷▷ Jn. 13:35. ~~ By this ~ all people will know that you are my disciples, ~ if you have love for one another.

↳↳ {Trans.} ⇨⇨ Your love for one another ~ will prove ~ to the world ~ that ~ you are my disciples.

↳↳ ἀγάπη

▷▷ Christ-like love for other Christians ~ is a sign ~ that our claim to be a Christian ~ is genuine.

▶▶ The apostle John ~ also deals with this issue ~ of loving one another ~ being proof ~ ¶¶

▷▷ that we are genuine children of God.

▷▷ 1 Jn. 3:14, ~~ We know ~ that we have passed ~ out of death into life [spiritual], ~ ¶¶

↳↳ [and here's the evidence] ~~ because we love the brothers [ἀγαπάω].

→→ Present tense, ~ "we love," ~ depicts ~ ¶¶

↳↳ the characteristic practice, ~ not merely ~ an occasional ~ act of love.

↳↳ John continues, ~ Whoever does not love ~ [i.e., ~ whoever does not ~ love believers] ~~ [ἀγαπάω] ~ ¶¶

→→ abides ~ [or remains] ~ in death. ¶¶ 7/12

▷▷ John echoes ~ Jesus' words ~ in Jn. 5:24.

↳↳ Truly, ~ truly, ~ I say to you, ~ whoever ~ hears my word ~ and believes him who sent me ~ has eternal life. ~ He does not ~ come into judgment, ~ but has passed ~ from death to life ~ [spiritual].

▷▷ Christ-like love for fellow believers, ~ John says, ~ proves ~ that a believer ~ ↴↴

↳↳ has passed from ~ the realm of death ~ to the sphere of eternal life.

▷▷ The perfect tense ~ of the Greek verb ~ "have passed" ~ denotes ~ ↴↴

↳↳ a permanent ~ transfer ~ from ~ one realm ~ into another.

▷▷ Having Christ-like love for believers ~ does not ~ cause us ~ to earn eternal life.

↳↳ Instead, ~ our ~ constant and consistent ~ Christ-like love for believers ~ is evidence ~ ↴↴

→→ that we already have ~ eternal life.

▷▷ Notice, ~ this assurance ~ is grounded ~ in Christian experience.

↳↳ What we do ~ reveals ~ what we are.

▷▷ On the other hand, ~ a person who doesn't have ~ Christ-like love for believers ~ is still spiritually dead.

↳↳ This absence of this type of love ~ reveals ~ this person's ~ inner state, ~ ↴↴

→→ that they continue to abide ~ in the realm ~ of spiritual death. ↴↴ 8/12

↳↳ Whatever their claims ~ to being a Christian, ~ ¶¶

→→ the absence ~ of Christ-like love, ~ John says, ~ proves ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that they still remain ~ in the realm ~ of spiritual death ~ ¶¶

↻↻ with ~ its alienation ~ from God.

↳↳ I.e., ~ they still remain ~ in their original state ~ spiritually dead. ⇔⇔ Eph. 2:1f

MOVING ON TO VERSE 6, ~ WE FIND ~ PART OF THE CONTENT OF PAUL'S PRAYER.

AND I PRAY ~ THAT THE SHARING OF YOUR FAITH ~ MAY BECOME EFFECTIVE ~ FOR
the full knowledge ~ of every good thing ~ that is in us ~ for the sake of Christ.

▶▶ Some brief explanations are in order here

▶▶ "sharing of your faith" ~~ ambiguous and difficult to translate.

▷▷ 4 Interpretations

▷▷ Translations

▷▷ Evangelism?

▷▷ No dogmatism

▷▷ 1 Interpretation: ~~ "sharing" = generosity, ~ altruism ¶¶ 9/12

▶▶Next, ~ "of your faith"

▷▷your generosity ~ which arises ~ from your faith. ⇔⇔ By-product

↳↳By his divine power, ~ God has given us ~ everything we need ~ for living a godly life. ~ We have received all of this ~ by coming to know him.

▶▶"may become effective for the full knowledge."

▷▷Deepening understanding & experience.

▶▶Of every good thing ~ that is in us ~ for the sake of Christ.

▷▷All the spiritual blessings we enjoy ~ because of our relationship ~ with Jesus.

OK, ~ LET ME PUT THIS TOGETHER ~ IN A PARAPHRASE FOR YOU.

▶▶It is my prayer ~ that your Christian generosity, ~ prompted as it is by your faith, ~ may prove effective ~ in increasing ~ your appreciation and experience ~ of all ~ ¶¶

▷▷the spiritual blessings ~ that are ours to enjoy ~ because ~ of our relationship with Christ.

NOTICE CAREFULLY, ~ WHAT WE GLEAN FROM THIS.

▶▶It's not just ~ through studying God's word ~ that we grow in Christ.

▷▷We don't ~ deepen our understanding and experience ~ of our spiritual blessings ~ ¶¶

↳↳simply ~ through gaining biblical knowledge. ¶¶ 10/12

▶▶Ours ~ is very much ~ an action faith.

▶▶As we practice generosity ~ as the Bible defines it, ~ ¶¶

▷▷our understanding and experience ~ of our spiritual blessings will deepen.

▶▶And it goes way beyond ~ practicing generosity.

▶▶We can put it into ~ a general principle.

▷▷When we live out our faith, ~ we will grow spiritually, ~~ and we will deepen ~ ¶¶

↳↳our understanding and experience ~ of all the spiritual blessings we enjoy ~ ¶¶

→→because of our relationship with Jesus.

IN VERSE 7, ~ PAUL STATES THE IMPACT ~ PHILEMON'S MINISTRY TO BELIEVERS ~ has had on him personally.

FOR I ~ HAVE DERIVED MUCH JOY AND COMFORT ~ ¶¶

▶▶from your love, ~ my brother, ~ because ~ the hearts of the saints ~ have been refreshed through you.

▶▶Philemon had the ability ~ to give refreshment ~ to people.

▷▷He was ~ a refreshing influence ~ on fellow believers.

▶▶He was able ~ to revive and restore ~ his brothers and sisters in Christ. ¶¶ 11/12

▶▶ His love and generosity ~ had replenished and stimulated them.

▶▶ In brief, ~ people felt revitalized ~ after spending time with him.

WE CAN LEARN FROM PHILEMON.

▶▶ We too ~ can and should be ~ a refreshing influence ~ on our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▶▶ We should avoid ~ having an attitude and temperament ~ that adds ~ to the burden ~ others carry.

▶▶ Instead of draining others' energy and motivation ~ with complaints and problems, ~ 77

▷▷ we should replenish their spirits ~ by things like ~ 77

↳↳ generosity, ~ expressing Christ-like love, ~ encouragement, ~ gracious hospitality, ~ and a helpful attitude.

▶▶ In brief, ~ our brothers and sisters in Christ ~ should feel revitalized ~ 77

▷▷ after spending time with us.

LET'S PRAY 12/12