

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER, PT. 4; PHIL. 1:9-11 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

TODAY, ~ WE FINISH OUR LOOK AT THE FIRST MAJOR SECTION OF PHIL., ~ 1:3-11.

▶▶ Mainly, ~ as we know, ~ in this ¶, ~ Paul expresses thanksgiving and prayer.

TODAY WE WILL EXPLORE VERSES 9-11. ~~ PRAYS FOR THE BELIEVERS IN PHILIPPI.

▶▶ Now, ~ even though this was a prayer for a specific church, ~ this is what God desires for all believers. ~~ So we need to be praying this prayer for ourselves and for our fellow believers. ~~ Should incorporate this prayer into our prayer lives.

▶▶ It looks like there are three prayer requests here.

▷▷ 1st, ~ that believers' "love may abound more and more," ~~ 2nd, ~ that believers' would grow in "knowledge and all discernment;" ~~ and 3rd, ~ that believers would be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ."

THE 1st REQUEST IS IN VS. 9a.

PAUL PRAYS THAT THESE BELIEVERS' "LOVE MAY ABOUND MORE AND MORE."

▶▶ Since one of the reasons Paul wrote was to exhort the church to live in unity, ~ most likely he is talking about their love for each other. ~~ So prays this because love promotes unity.

THE PHRASE "MORE AND MORE" INDICATES THAT PAUL WAS NOT GETTING ON THEIR case for something they lacked.

▶▶ These believers already loved each other. ~~ Paul was praying that their present love for one another would increase.

▶▶ This implies that no matter how much we, ~ believers, ~ love one another, ~ there is always room for growth. ~~ Paul confirms this in 1 Thess. 4:9-10 . . .

▶▶ But Paul doesn't just want us to increase our love for one another a little bit. ~~ He wants it to abound more and more.

▷▷ There is to be so much love for one another that there won't be any room to store it.

↪↪ Or, ~ picture if you will, ~ a river overflowing its banks during a flood. ~~ These are the pictures Paul is painting here. ↵ 1/7

▶▶ In my opinion, ~ based on the level of love in our fellowship, ~ I believe Paul would look at our church and say something very similar to us what he said to the believers in Thessalonica.

▷▷ "Indeed, ~ it is quite evident that you already show your love for all the believers in your fellowship. Even so, ~ dear brothers and sisters, ~ we urge you to love each other even more."

↪↪ Let's pray that the Lord would keep increasing our present love for one another to the point that there's no place big enough to store it!

→→ And this in turn, ~ since love promotes unity, ~ will reinforce our already strong unity.

BEFORE WE LEAVE THIS FIRST PRAYER REQUEST, ~ WE NEED TO MENTION THE KIND of love for one another that Paul wants abounding in believers' lives.

▶▶ It's not some mushy, ~ sentimental love. ~ It is not selfish love; ~ i.e., ~ it's not a love which is used to get something for oneself.

▶▶ Rather, ~ it's a love that is selfless, ~ others centered, ~ and sacrificial, ~ that places high value on a person and actively seeks that person's benefit.

▷▷ In short, ~ Christ-like love. ~ Jn. 15:12-13, ~ "12 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

▷▷ Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to and did die for us. ~ He loved us all the way to the cross on Calvary.

↪↪ The cross reveals the depth of Jesus' love for us. ~ And we are to reflect that love to each other in this fallen, ~ sinful world.

▶▶ So our prayer should be that Christ-like love for our fellow believers overflows its banks within us ~ and within our brothers and sisters in Christ.

PAUL'S SECOND PRAYER REQUEST IS IN VERSE 9b. ~ "WITH KNOWLEDGE AND ALL discernment." [A quick technical note here.](#)

▶▶ The phrase "with knowledge and all discernment" looks like it is attached to the first request. ~ And it does modify it in the Greek text, ~ but it goes in a slightly diff. direction.

▶▶ It can, ~ and I think it should, ~ be looked at as Paul praying for a second thing. ~ The idea: ~ Along w/ increasing in love, ~ believers would increase in ↯↯ 2/7

BUT WE SHOULD MENTION HERE THAT VERSES 10a AND 10b GO WITH THIS REQUEST.

▶▶ Let me give you a brief overview so we know where we're going.

▷▷ In **verse 9b**, ~ Paul prays that believers would keep on growing in "knowledge and all discernment." ~ & this is for the purpose of approving what is excellent, ~ **vs. 10a**.

↪↪ And then in **verse 10b**, ~ Paul lists the practical result of approving what is excellent: ~ so that believers may be "pure and blameless for the day of Christ."

→→ Ok, ~ let's unpack this.

PAUL PRAYS IN VERSE 9b THAT BELIEVERS WOULD KEEP ON GROWING IN "KNOWLEDGE AND ALL discernment."

▶▶ Simply put, ~ the word for "knowledge" refers to knowledge of the truth. = **God's Word** . .

▷▷ I.e., ~ Paul wants believers to keep on growing in our knowledge of God's word.

▷▷ Now, ~ we are not passive in this. ~ This is a joint effort.

↪↪ Our part is to study God's word; ~ and as we do so, ~ the Holy Spirit gives us understanding.

→→ Illuminating ~ The Holy Spirit guides believers to an understanding of divine truth. ~ **Paul spells out in 1 Cor. 2:11-13. ~ Read for homework.**

▶▶ The last part of Paul's second prayer request is for "all discernment." ~ "all" means "in every situation."

▷▷ Here Paul prays that God will give believers the ability to understand the real nature of every situation.

↪↪ He wants us to be able to see and understand every state of affairs clearly and intelligently, ~ and to see and comprehend the truth about every situation.

IN VERSE 10a, ~ AS WE NOTED, ~ PAUL GIVES US THE PURPOSE OF HIS REQUEST.

I.E., ~ PAUL TELLS US WHY HE WANTS believers to grow in the knowledge & understanding of God's word and also to have God-given discernment for every situation.

▶▶ "so that you may approve what is excellent." ↵ 3/7

▶▶ We need this knowledge & understanding of God's word and God-given discernment so that we will be enabled to clearly see the difference between right and wrong, ~ good and evil, ~ ↴

▷▷ and to always choose what is right and good.

▶▶ Simply stated, ~ we need divine enablement to consistently determine and make the God-honoring-and-glorifying choices in this life.

BUT, ~ WE COULD ASK OURSELVES A QUESTION HERE.

▶▶ Why do we need divine enablement to be able to clearly see the difference between right and wrong, ~ good and evil, ~ and to always choose what is right and good?

▷▷ Well, ~ bluntly put, ~ we can't trust our own judgment when it comes to consistently determining and choosing right from wrong, ~ good from evil.

↪↪ New nature ~ Old nature ~ Rom. 7:15-20

▷▷ So we can't trust ourselves to consistently determine and make the God-honoring-and-glorifying choices in this life.

▶▶ Scripture makes this abundantly clear.

▶▶ Prov. 3:5, ~ "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean ~ [or, ~ depend on] ~ on your own understanding.

▷▷ Why? ~ Well, ~ for one thing, ~ we are imperfect, ~ so our understanding is faulty.

▷▷ Job's friends. ~ Their thinking: ~ "All suffering is punishment for sin; ~ Job is suffering; ~ therefore, Job is a sinner."

↪↪ But 3x in first two chapters Job described as blameless and upright, ~ one who reveres God and turns away from evil. ~ And twice God is speaking.

▷▷ Faulty. ~ John's gospel

↪↪ "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him."

▶▶ Prov. 14:12 and 16:25 also make it abundantly clear that we can't trust our own judgment.

▷▷ "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. ↴ ↴ 4/7

▷▷ That doesn't instill a whole lot of confidence in our ability to judge right from wrong, ~ good from evil, ~ does it?

▷▷ Rather, ~ it points out a large capacity within us for self-deception, ~ doesn't it?

▶▶ And the verse that clinches it for needing the Lord to enable us to clearly see the difference between right and wrong, ~ **good and evil**, ~ **and to always choose and practice the right and the good?**

▷▷ Jer. 17:9, ~ NIV, ~ "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"

▷▷ There is nothing more deceitful than the human mind (heart). ~~ It is too sick to be healed.

▷▷ That's part of why God had to give us a new nature. ~~ Unfortunately, ~ we are still susceptible to our fallen human minds.

↪↪ And therefore the need for help to consistently determine and make the God-honoring-and-glorifying choices in this life.

▶▶ Our Heavenly Father wants us to consistently determine and make the choices in this life that honor and glorify Him.

▷▷ But He knows we are incapable of doing that consistently.

↪↪ Ps. 103:14, ~ "For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust."

↪↪ He knows that they are weak and prone to failure. ~~ And so He gives us what we need to ~~ We just need to ask.

→→ James 1:5, ~ "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach ~ [i.e., ~ He will not rebuke us for asking], ~ and it will be given him.

▶▶ How gracious, ~ loving, ~ and compassionate God is to give us His word and discernment so we can clearly see the difference between right and wrong, ~ **good and evil**, ~ **and consistently choose that which honors and glorifies Him.**

↪↪ And how thankful we should be.

IN VERSE 10b, ~ PAUL NOTES THE PRACTICAL RESULT OF consistently determining and choosing what is honoring and glorifying to God. ↯↯ 5/7

CONTEXT, ~ VS. 10a. ~ ~ "10a SO THAT YOU MAY APPROVE WHAT IS EXCELLENT, ~ ~ 10b AND so ~ [i.e., ~ and as a result] ~ be pure and blameless for the day of Christ."

▶▶ I.e., ~ the practical result of consistently choosing what is pleasing to our heavenly Father will be that we lead pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.

▷▷ This reflects the truth that Jesus could return at any time. ~ ~ Don't know.

▷▷ Now, ~ Jesus may not return in our lifetime. ~ ~ So, ~ Paul's message to us in a more general sense in [verse 10b](#) is this.

↪↪ As a result of consistently determining and making godly choices, ~ we will lead holy lives for the duration of our time on earth.

▷▷ And holy living is what God calls His children to, ~ isn't it?

↪↪ 1 Pet. 1:15-16, ~ "15 but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"

▶▶ A general observation here. ~ ~ We see that one of Paul's concerns for believers is that we start our life of faith well, ~ continue it well, ~ and finish it well. ~ ~ That we

▷▷ He wants all believers to be able to say at the end their lives what he said at the end of his in 2 Tim. 4:7. ~ ~ "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

PAUL'S THIRD PRAYER REQUEST FOR THESE BELIEVERS IS IN VERSE 11a.

PAUL PRAYED THAT BELIEVERS WOULD BE "FILLED WITH THE FRUIT OF righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ."

▶▶ "of righteousness" here is describing "fruit." ~ ~ I.e., ~ Paul prays that believers be "filled with and live out the righteous fruit that comes through Jesus Christ."

▶▶ And, ~ as I understand it, ~ "righteous fruit" refers to the godly qualities that Jesus produces within His people.

▷▷ Paul shows this to be the case in Gal. 5:22-23a. ~ ~ "22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23a gentleness, self-control."

▶▶ Back to [11a](#). ~ ~ Paul wants believers to be filled with and live out these godly qualities that Jesus produces within believers. ↵ ↵ 6/7

▶▶ Notice, ~ this is not something that we can acquire or produce for ourselves. ~~ Only Jesus can produce these godly qualities within us.

▷▷ What an awesome Savior. ~~ He wants us to be filled with and openly display these godly qualities. ~~ but we can't do it on our own. ~~ **So He graciously produces them within us so we can live the way He wants us to.**

CONCLUSION.

IN CLOSING, ~ I WOULD LIKE TO CALL OUR ATTENTION TO VS. 11b, ~ IN WHICH PAUL notes the result of being filled with and openly displaying these godly qualities.

▶▶ "to the glory and praise of God."

▷▷ I.e., ~ simply put, ~ when we are filled with and openly display the godly qualities that Jesus produces within us, ~ our lives will bring glory and praise to Him.

▶▶ And bringing glory and praise to Jesus should be the desire of our hearts, ~ shouldn't it?

LET'S PRAY 7/7