



PHILIPPIANS

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...just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. Philippians 1:7

Paul's long thought continues on in this verse. The words are connected to the preceding verse—

“...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”

His confidence in those at Philippi was that “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it.” Now he supports this note of confidence by saying, “just as it is right for me to think this of you all.” In other words, his confidence is not an arbitrary or unfounded confidence. He has a sound reason for it. The word he uses which is translated as “think” is one which deals with a constant state, not just a one-time thought. He habitually thought this about them, and the reason is that “I have you in my heart.”

Paul carried them affectionately with him at all times. They were dear and close to him, even on his heart. He then explains this with the next clause, “inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel...”

What he is saying is that the Philippians never wavered in their convictions concerning him. In his chains, they held fast to him and his teachings, and in his “defense and confirmation of the

gospel” they continued to hold fast to him and his teachings. The implication is that others abandoned him when they should have stayed with him. When the going got tough, they got going... away from him. Such was not the case with the Philippians.

Because of this, he notes that, “you are all partakers of grace with me.” The proof of his confidence in them was their confidence in him and in the message he proclaimed. Their steadfast attitude towards his message was the proof that “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it.” They had received the grace, and were partakers of it even “until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Life application: How strong is your faith? Will it hold fast and true when the day of testing and trial comes? Will you be willing to give up property, friends, or family in the testing of your faith? Will you be willing to give up life itself? Paul shows that such tests prove to those around us that our faith is unshakeable.

For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.
Philippians 1:8

Paul now makes a solemn adjuration concerning his love for those in Philippi by stating, “For God is my witness.” He says this, or the same general idea at least four more times in his other epistles using the same word, *martus*. It is apparent that he is following in the admonition of the Lord not to swear by anything in heaven or on earth.

Rather, if one is to vow, swear, or make an oath, they are to do it in the name of the Lord alone, or with the general use of the word “God.” In other words, it is not true that we are not to make such oaths as some Christians have incorrectly concluded. Rather, when we make oaths, they are to be made on nothing less than God. To do so would be idolatry because it would elevate that thing to His level.

His oath before God says, “...how greatly I long for you.” It seems like this is something that would not require an oath at all. However, the content of the surrounding verses explains the oath. He has told them of his knowledge of their faith, and the great promises which pertain to that faith. He will next speak of his desire for them to mature in the faith. So they are fully aware that his words concerning these promises are true, and thus the importance of their continued growth in the Lord is necessary, he makes this vow concerning how he longs for them “with the affection of Jesus Christ.”

This phrase is a remarkable one indeed. First, the word translated as “affection” is *splagchnon*. It refers to the upper visceral organs – the heart, liver, and lungs. Thus it is a metaphor for the one’s capability to feel and express deep emotions. Paul claims this affection not of himself,

but of Jesus Christ. In other words, it is well expressed by his words of Galatians 2:20, "...it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me." His connection to Christ was so close and personal that his feelings were those of Christ, and thus they were expressions of Christ who dwelt in him.

Life application: How close are you to the One who redeemed you? Is He the first thought of your moment to moment existence? Or does He only come to mind when you need something? We are admonished to pursue Christ, to be filled with His Spirit, and to fix our eyes and thoughts on Him. If we don't have the emotional and spiritual connection to Christ that Paul writes about, we have more maturity of ahead of us. Let us pursue it!

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, Philippians 1:9

This verse ties back to verses 3 & 4. There, he said –

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy..."

Since then, he has stated some things which were included in his prayers for them, and then he has built upon what he said. Now he returns to more specific items which concerned them in his prayers. It is well worthy of consideration that he has not mentioned earthly, physical things here. Despite the poverty of the Macedonian churches, which includes Philippi, he doesn't ask for the windows of heaven to open up and drop money on their heads. Instead, his prayers are for spiritual things. How different that is from the "name it and claim it" false teachers of the world!

Specifically here, he prays "that your love may abound still more and more." Paul is certainly thinking of all aspects of love from a Christian perspective. This would include love of God, love of His word, love of fellow Christians, and love of those not yet in the faith, but who were created in God's image and in need of Christ's saving grace. These things are certain because he continues on. This love should grow "in knowledge and all discernment."

The word for "knowledge" here is more than just the knowledge of something, but a fully complete knowledge of it. In other words, I may know about the newest phone on the market, but I may not know the details of it. Likewise, I may know about God, and I may even have a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus, but I may still be weak and uninformed in sound theology. Paul would ask for us to grow into a complete knowledge of how He has revealed Himself to us. This can only be done through His general and specific revelations of Himself.

The general revelation is what we can deduce about Him from His creation. The special revelation is how he has specifically revealed Himself apart from creation – such as in the words of the prophets and apostles. These things are now recorded in His word. We are to love this word and to desire to learn it more and more. In so doing, we will gain that knowledge and discernment Paul has mentioned.

We will know about the true God, and know about false presentations of Him. We will learn about true and faithful believers, and we will be able to discern those who are false. We will know how to properly explain to the unsaved about the message of Christ as well.

As you can see, the knowledge and discernment are tied up in the abounding of our love. If we fail to grow in these things, our love will be misdirected. Paul will continue with his specific prayer list, and how it is related to this love he speaks of in the verses ahead.

Life application: Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Which commandments are being referred to? Are we to keep the commandments which He fulfilled on our behalf in the Law of Moses? If so, then why did He fulfill them for us? How can we be loving of what God has done for us if we continue to try to merit His favor above and beyond what Christ has done? In order to love God, we are to trust Him and His provision, not attempt to outdo Him. How do we grow in the love that the Bible speaks of? By knowing and discerning His word, in context, and as He has revealed it to us.

...that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, Philippians 1:10

For a clearer picture of what is being conveyed, this should be taken together with the preceding verse –

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ...”

The abounding of love “in knowledge and all discernment” is so that the believer “may approve the things that are excellent.” It is with a view to testing and trying through the knowledge and discernment we possess, that we will then approve and hold fast to that which is excellent. The word for “approve” is one which gives the idea of testing metals for their purity. This is how we are to look for that which is excellent - testing that which is good, and then testing that which is even better. We are to compare all things in order to hold fast to the very highest purity of doctrine and conduct. Jamieson-Faucett-Brown says, “Ask as to things, not merely, ‘Is there no harm, but is there any good, and which is the best?’”

In so doing, we will “be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” The word translated as “sincere” here is a rare one, found only here and in 2 Peter 3:1. It is eilikrinés, and it is evident from the two words that it comes from what it means. The first part comes from heilé, the sun's ray, and the second half comes from krinó, to judge. And so, it means “that which is judged in sunshine,” and thus, “that which is clear and fully viewable.” There are no clouds to obscure the sun's rays, there are no trees in the way to darken the view. Rather, there is only brightness which allows us first to rightly discern, and then to fully shine forth without hiding anything. Translating this word as “sincere” is appropriate because “sincere” comes from the root meaning of “without wax.” It is reflective of honey which is pure and perfectly clear.

This is what we are to be. There should be no hint of unsound doctrine in our lives, and there should be only the most noble of conduct in how we act. In this, we will then also be “without offense.” When something is hidden and later exposed, offense will result. When doctrine is tainted and impure, offense will result. These things should not be at any time in our lives, even “till the day of Christ.” From the moment we come to Christ, until the day He comes for us, we are to continuously search out and test all things, approving only that which is excellent, and then applying it to our life and doctrine.

Life application: One cannot fulfill the exhortation in this verse if they do not seek out the directions for it to come about from the pages of Scripture. Do we think that we can walk perfectly apart from what God expects of us? Read your Bible!