

Philippians 1:7–11

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.

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

9 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,

11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

### **Approving the Excellent Things**

#### **Philippians 1:7-11**

Paul was the church planter of the church of Philippi. There is a bond formed with the people and the church planter. In Philippi, the people of the church never forgot the Apostle Paul. Because of this, we are going to read some of the most precious words ever uttered by a Pastor for his former flock found anywhere in Scripture. These folks had a very special place in Paul's heart.

Paul's affection for them was more than simple emotion. His affection was God given love and so he made specific requests for them as the Philippians faced the ministry God had called them to do in Philippi. Paul's requests are concrete, specific, and revealing to us. Two realities dominate the next paragraph in Paul's letter, his love for them and his desires for them.

#### **I. Paul's Love for Them (v. 7-8)**

#### **II. Paul's Request for Them (v. 9-11)**

## I. Paul's Love for Them (v. 7-8)

A. ***“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. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:7–8)***

Paul expressed his love for the Philippian believers in three ways. First, he says that he has them in his heart.

1. While Paul was apart from these brethren, he loved them so much and interceded for them so often he felt they were connected to him in his heart.

2. He used this very word picture other places to describe his relationship with those whom God had saved through his ministry. For example, he spoke to the Corinthians, ***“Open your hearts to us. We have wronged no one, we have corrupted no one, we have cheated no one. I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.” (2 Corinthians 7.3)*** He wrote to the Thessalonians in ***1 Thessalonians 2:17, “But we, brethren, having been taken away from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavored more eagerly to see your face with great desire.”***

3. Do we who are a part of the family of God in this place feel this way about each other? The Apostle Paul would tell us we should.

B. Second, Paul loved them not only because God had saved them, but also because they had a part in his ministry through gifts and prayer. ***“Inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”***

C. Finally, the Apostle told them how much he longed to see them again. ***“For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.”*** Paul recognized that his love for the Philippians believers was supernatural. God gave him the ability to

love like this. Our challenge is how much do we love one another in the Lord? Does it approach to the level of Paul's love for these Philippian believers?

## II. Paul's Request for Them (v. 9-11)

A. Because Paul had such a strong, God-given, love for the Philippian believers, he prayed for them. He asked God for specific things. In **verse 9** he prayed, ***“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.”***

1. First Paul asked God that the Philippians might increase in love. He did not include who or what is the object of this love; whether it was Paul, each other, or the Lord Jesus Himself. Love without an object is not love at all, any more than faith without an object is faith at all. Most likely, the love here is love for Christ.

2. The first realm in which this love is to abound is knowledge. Paul wrote undoubtedly about both knowledge of the Word of God and the God of the Word. We cannot know God apart from knowing Him in His revelation of Himself, the Word of God. Although we sometimes say, “love is blind,” God given love is never ignorant. God given love is a love anchored in who God is and what He has done for us.

3. God-given love is also discerning. The word discernment means, “the employment of the faculty which makes a person able to make a moral decision.” Paul wanted them to have a discerning love. Many bad decisions are made in the name of being loving. Paul reminded us in **1 Corinthians 13.6** that love ***“does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth.”***

B. Second, Paul prayed for them, ***“that you may approve the things that are excellent, so that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” (Philippians 1:10)***

1. The word translated “approved” means to put to the test and to approve as tested. Paul understood that all Christians make decisions every moment of everyday. The choices we make are

important. Frequently, they are not choices between good and bad, but rather choices between the good and the better.

2. Paul prayed that when the Philippians made choices, they would focus on and choose the things that really matter. He would have wanted the same for us. Do we major on what God wants us to major on? Paul prayed they would have the motivation and wisdom to choose the right way.

C. The proved and tested choices the Philippians made would result in their being ***“sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.”*** Is this talking positionally or practically? Positionally, we will be blameless because God has saved us, but practically we strive to be pure as He is pure by making the choices he wants us to make. ***“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3)***

D. Ultimately, Paul wanted the Philippians to enjoy their salvation in Christ and their relationship with Him. He wanted them to ***“be filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”***

We can have lives filled with blessings. The way to possess these blessings is to do what Paul prayed for the Philippians. We need to grow in love for our Lord and God. We need to grow in knowledge of God and of His Word. We need to grow in the ability to discern His will and His presence in our lives. We need to bring our choices to Him that we might approve that which is excellent spiritually in our lives.

The Apostle Paul prayed these requests for the Philippians. Let us pray these requests for one another.

I Would Be True (insert)