

# Philippians VI – “Paul’s Prayer” (Phil 1:9-11)

**Introduction** – On the heels of proclaiming God’s promise that the work He has begun in us He will complete, human logic is tempted towards laziness and indifference in our own efforts. That is exactly the opposite of Paul’s prayer for the Philippians, and for His later exhortations to them (i.e. 2:12-14). We cannot afford to ignore Paul’s application of his confidence for the church and her members in his prayer life.

**The Text** – “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

**Abounding Love** – Love is the character of God, His actions towards His people, and the fruit of His Spirit in us. This is not primarily the ‘affections’ spoken of in verse 8, but a more sober kind of high value placed upon a person. It is the summary of the two great commandments, and Paul seems to have both in mind throughout the epistle. It is to ‘abound’, in the sense of overflowing from within, towards those persons we are told to love. Christ’s love is manifested in His death for us (Rom 5:6-8). God’s love is imitated by believers and described for believers in 1Cor 13:4-7.

**More and More** – This is not a prayer simply for more quantity, but for a richer and richer love to be manifest, lives less and less undermined by “*selfish ambition and vain conceit*” (2:3).

**Knowledge and All Discernment** – Paul is not praying for knowledge which puffs up, nor a knowledge that is ‘knowledge about’ God, but rather a full and innate knowing that comes from our covenantal relationship and experience with God. He also prays that our love would grow richer in wisdom or all discernment, an ability to apply the love of God ethically in all kinds of situations. Our love is to be very rich and very practical – just like the love of God.

**Proving the Things That Surpass All** – The phrase might be translated, “*in order that you might choose what is vital.*” In other words, it will take an abounding, supernatural, Spirit-given love in order for a congregation to know what is important and what is not in every circumstance. Women have issues with one another (4:2-3), some are tempted by ‘the circumcision’ (3:2), some are drifting after earthly things having left off striving for the heavenly prize (3:18-19), just for some examples. Life is messy, and it takes heaven-sent, practical love, to ‘love God and one another’.

**Sincere and Blameless** – To be sincere is to be ‘sun-tested’ so that it is proven that we are pure and unmixed. To be blameless is to not have been stumbled along the way. And the Way that Paul has in mind is the *eschatos*, as he had mentioned in verse 6, the day of Christ.

**Keeping the End in Mind** – Christians are people who have faith in the future grace of God, a future that has present reality as well. Paul is confident of their future, prays that their promised future would come to pass, and exhorts them by his own example to passionately pursue that future (3:13f).

**Having Been Filled With Fruit** – This fruit is something we are filled with, something in fact we have been filled with. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22f) and a means by which God wins souls (Prov 11:30). God gives what He commands and so in our prayers and striving for holiness, we first rest on what we have been given. We have been filled. We will be filled. And it is Jesus Christ who fills us.

**To the Glory and Praise of God** – The result of this prayer being answered will bring glory to God alone in two ways. First of all our holiness and obedience will redound to His glory. But more importantly, it will glorify Him because it will all be because of His work in us.

**Pray This Way** – This is a prayer. It is a prayer of a godly man. It is an inspired, divinely recorded and preserved prayer. It is a prayer for us. It is a prayer for you. Not unlike the Lord’s Prayer, we should learn to say, mimic, and order our prayers according to what God gives us to pray. It is not to be an exhaustive prayer, but it is to pattern our prayers. Elders should pray this for their church. Parents should pray this for their home. Friends should pray this for one another. You should pray this for yourself.

**Believe This Way** – This prayer ‘cuts with the grain’ of God’s promises and purposes for His church. Look carefully, we are praying what God is promising. But this begs the question – do you believe in the absolute sovereignty of God and in God’s victory through Christ on the cross, His death burial and resurrection, unto the salvation of the world (John 3:16-17)?

**Live This Way** – There is a striving after our salvation, a striving after holiness, that is the work of grace and is not at odds with grace. Paul is confident that God will complete what He began, and this confidence drives him to pray all the more, and to press on all the more.