

Philippians, Chapter One, Lesson Two

LONGING FOR THE BRETHREN Philippians 1:8-11

STIMULATE

** As we began our study together last week in Paul's letter to the Philippians, the apostle showed us how our joy in the Lord is supernaturally manifested when we are "**Thankful for the Brethren**". Do you recall the four areas in which Paul was thankful for his beloved Philippians?

1. Their koinonia (fellowship) in the gospel.
2. Their enduring faithfulness from the first day!
3. The work of Christ in their hearts.
4. Their partaking in Paul's suffering with him.

** Have you been focusing on any of those as you give thanks to God for your brothers and sisters in Christ at your local church? Or - have you been challenged by any of those, to apply them more aggressively in your own life?

Whenever I am privileged to be around committed, faithful Christians, I find myself being very thankful for God's gracious provision. Of the four in our list, number two challenged me the most in that I desire to be all the more faithful with each passing day the Lord gives me.

MOTIVATE

** As we continue to observe Paul's relationship with the Philippians, we are going to see his joy made manifest when he is "**Longing for the Brethren**". In addition to his joy, Paul is going to share with us the importance of integrity in the life of every believer. How would you define the word "integrity"?

"an unimpaired condition, the quality or state of being complete" syn: honesty (Webster)

** If we are to experience true Biblical joy, we must relate to one another with a sense of "**Longing for the Brethren**" - but that must be accompanied with a heart of integrity. Let's look at what Paul has for us today in Philippians 1:8-11.

Read passage (V.8-11)

Opening Prayer

Longing for the Brethren

INVESTIGATE

V. 8 ** As Paul opens our passage for today, what does he say which lends tremendous weight to that which follows?

"For God is my witness..." There is no one else on whom we could call to verify that what we are saying is true. Our gracious God knows all, and in this case He knows that what Paul is about to say is absolutely reliable. cf. Romans 1:9 and 9:1, 2Corinthians 1:23 and Galatians 1:20

** Do you suppose a person ought to have integrity before making such powerful statement?

Absolutely - but, why?

Proverbs 6:16-17 "The Lord hates...a lying tongue..."

Proverbs 12:22 "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord..."

Revelation 22:15 "...outside are [those] who love and practice lying."

Exodus 20:16 "You shall not bear false witness..."

(The 9th commandment)

** By the way, just a footnote on this subject, is God our witness?

Yes! Always! He hears every word! Matthew 12:35-36

He knows our thoughts! 1Samuel 16:7 and Hebrews 4:12

** Now that we understand that this is no light statement by the apostle Paul, to what is he calling almighty God as a witness?

His "**Longing for the Brethren**" - Paul's heart ached for the Philippians, they were a cause of joy! cf. Philippians 4:1

1. Beloved brethren
2. whom I long to see
3. my joy
- 4, my crown
5. my beloved

** What is the driving force behind Paul's longing?

"...how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus..." splagchnon lit. "inward parts"

His love for the Philippians runs deep into his very being with the intensity and purity of Christ's love for us!

** Given that understanding, do you find yourself "**Longing for the Brethren**"? Are you moved from deep inside with a love and joy for your brothers and sisters in Christ - to the extent that you desire their company over that of the world's?

It is fair for me to ask myself, "Where would I rather spend my time? Around the saints or around the people of this world?"

V. 9 ** As his joy overflows through the love of Christ for the Philippians, what does it cause Paul to do?

To pray for those he loves! There can be no separation between a Biblical love for someone and our prayer life on their behalf. cf. 1Samuel 12:23

** Ok, let's look at Paul's prayer, one piece at a time.
What is the first thing on his prayer list?

1. "...that your love may abound still more and more..." agape - sacrificial, serving love.

**** Was Paul asking God to help the Philippians to start loving in this sacrificial manner?**

No - he was asking for their existing display of love to continue to increase.
cf. 1Thessalonians 4:1, 9-10

**** What is the second element of Paul's prayer, where is it that this love is to abound?**

2. "...in real knowledge and all discernment..."

**** Is there such a thing as false knowledge?**

Spiritually speaking, absolutely - cf. Romans 10:1-4 and Romans 1:21-22 with 2Timothy 3:6-7 and 1Corinthians 2:14

Any "knowledge" that draws man away from the love and joy of God, is man centered and should be classified as "false".

**** What part does "knowledge" play in our ability to be discerning?**

The more "real knowledge" we gain from God's word, the more discernment we will have at our disposal. All see - Hebrews 5:12-14

William Hendriksen said,

"This is a keen perception, born of experience, that is the ability of mind and heart to separate not only the good from the bad, but also the important from the unimportant, in each case choosing the former and rejecting the latter."

Back in Philippians, chapter one . . .

V.10 ** We are beginning to grasp what is on Paul's heart as he prays. But to what end? What will we do with our increased knowledge and discernment? What is the third element of his prayer?

3. "...so that you may approve the things that are excellent..."

**** How confident do you think Paul was about the chances of the Philippians being able to do this?**

He was very "confident" - because Jesus Christ had begun the work in the heart of the Philippians and He was going to perfect them through this process. cf. Philippians 1:6 from last week.

The word translated here as "approve" is dokimazo, lit. - "to test", for the purpose of approving. Paul knew they could do this which is why he will tell them later to let their minds dwell on such excellent things (Philippians 4:8).

**** If Christians were to love each other, love God's word and grow in their knowledge and discernment, what impact would that have on their integrity? What is the fourth element in Paul's prayer?**

4. They will become "sincere and blameless until the day of Christ".

**** How do those two terms describe the two dimensions of spiritual integrity?**

Sincere - lit. judged by sunlight, unalloyed, pure

This is speaking of the genuine internal dimension of our integrity. We are who we are, by the grace of God, from the inside out! cf. 1Corinthians 15:10

Blameless - lit. not causing to stumble

This is the above reproach, external manifestation of who we are internally. How others see us! cf. Philippians 2:14-15

** How long is this spiritual integrity to last?

"...until the day of Christ". Whether 'til the Bema seat of Christ, or the Great White Throne - we are to live a life of integrity our whole life long.

V.11 ** The Philippians (and us as well) might become somewhat overwhelmed by such a prayerful challenge. How is this kind of life possible? How do we even get started? Is it through our own religious effort?

NO! Jesus has already started us!

"...having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ..."

** Did you notice how much of our lives have the fruit of righteousness?

We are "filled", by God's grace, with the righteousness of Jesus Christ.
cf. Philippians 3:9, 2Corinthians 5:21

** What is the two-fold result of a Christian's life that has been lived out with an abounding love, an increase in real knowledge and all discernment, the ability to test things that are excellent and with sincerity and blamelessness?

Our lives are for the glory and praise of God! cf. Luke 15:7 and 10

EXTRICATE

** If we are truly "**Longing for the Brethren**", we will want to be with them as much as possible. That is where we will find our greatest joy! But beyond that, what will be our desire, even when we are away from them?

To be praying for them, that they may live out their life to the praise and glory of God.

DELINEATE

** What were the four elements of Paul's prayer on behalf of his beloved Philippians?

1. He prayed for their love to abound.
2. He prayed for them to gain more "real knowledge and all discernment".
3. He prayed for ability to test what is excellent.
4. He prayed for their spiritual integrity.

EVALUATE

** Paul's heartfelt joy was made manifest by how much he was "**Longing for the Brethren**". When his love drove him to pray for such needful and wonderful things on behalf of the Philippians, we should pay attention and learn from his example.

Are you willing to adjust what you "long" for? Will you so change your value system, that your prayer life will resemble Paul's as you pray for your brothers and sisters in the body of Christ?

ACTIVATE

** Each week we enjoy the riches of God's precious word together and try to apply what we are learning. This has been a very encouraging day. It has also been a very challenging one. If I am to seriously consider my spiritual integrity before a Holy God and a watching world, I too must let my love "abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that I may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ".

This is measurable, if I have in my heart a "**Longing for the Brethren**".

Closing prayer