

How to Pray for one Another

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Date: 02 February 2023

Preacher: Brady Owens

[0 : 00] We are in Philippians chapter 1. We're going to look at verse 9 and 9 through 11. And I want to start off again by just going back over something that we had talked about last time.

And those of you on the front tables, I'm almost sure that I got those a lot closer than they were last time. So if you have trouble seeing the screen, just don't feel afraid to move or something if you need to.

One of the things that we're doing when we study God's Word is we are not asking the question, what does this mean to me?

And the reason we're not asking that question is because that question assumes that we've already done a ton of work before.

Because the inspiration of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God happened for the person who wrote it, not for the person who reads it.

[1 : 05] Inspiration happened there. What happens for us is that the Holy Spirit illuminates our minds to understand the text. But here's the thing.

The Holy Spirit, what we don't do, this is a big caricature, so I'm sure nobody has done this. But what we don't do to study the Bible is sit there with the Bible open and we pray, pray, pray, pray, pray.

And we hope that He'll tell us what that verse means without us ever reading the verse. In other words, what I'm saying is that the Holy Spirit inspired the grammar and the very words that are used.

So our working hard to observe what He's put there in the grammar, in the words that are used, the connections that are made with all the other verses and with everything else that's written, that's the hard work we're expected to do while He illuminates our minds to understand and believe what it is we're seeing.

Too often, we want to be able to open up the Bible, read something, and the Holy Spirit tells us exactly what it says without doing the hard work of the study.

[2 : 21] But we need to do the hard work of the study because He's already spoken. Okay? So, with that, that's why I'm constantly trying to ask a question and my questions can always be answered pretty much with telling me something right out of the verse.

Right? It's not a trick question. I'm just looking at what the verse says and I say, okay, what does this say? So, last time we talked just a short time about praying for one another and that we needed to pray not just for physical things but spiritual things and it just so happens that Paul gives us a great example of what that looks like.

So, we're going to look at verses 9, 10, and 11. It'll help us to figure out things we could be praying for one another. Okay? So, Philippians chapter 1, 9 through 11.

Let me read all three verses together and then we'll dive into this. Paul says, He makes a request in verse 9, 10, and 11.

So, we just want to look at the three things that he prays. Okay? So, verse 9, I've titled this that he's praying for love. So, you want to pray for people's love. He prayed for the Philippians' love.

[4 : 07] So, taking a look at this then, what is it that he wants to happen for the Philippians' love? That it may abound still more?

That it may abound still more and more. Now, just take that for a second and let's do a little logic here. If he wants their love to abound still more and more, what's at least one thing you can say about their love?

It's already there. Right. It's not something that's missing. It's something that is already there. He just wants it to grow. Another thing you could say is that their love does need improvement because

he wants it to abound more and more.

Okay? Now, one of the commentators that I read on this, the way he said this, and I just loved it, and I just thought that you might enjoy this as well.

He said that Paul is not praying that the Philippians may begin to exercise this love, but that the ocean of their love may rise to its full height, overflowing its entire perimeter.

[5 : 24] I love that, right? Because it gives us that picture of what he's after for them. It's like they do love, but it needs to grow. It needs to grow.

Now, what are the two things that he says that he wants their love to grow in? Real knowledge and all discernment.

Okay. Real knowledge and all discernment. So let's talk about those two things just to sort of see what we've got here. Knowledge here, this is a word that deals with the content of knowledge, what you know.

So there's several places where Paul will say something like, we have the knowledge of his will, or we have the knowledge of God, or we have the knowledge of the truth, or knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The content of what you know is his will. The content of what you know is God himself. That's important, and you'll see that in a second, because one of the things that happens is that when we start talking about love, we in the West have a tendency to immediately equate that with emotion.

[6 : 38] While love is an emotion, and there is an emotional aspect, what's usually missing is a love built upon truth.

And that's what Paul's after, is a love built upon truth. As a matter of fact, you can see these two opposing things that happen in Paul. There's in 1 Corinthians 8.1 and 1 Corinthians 13.2, Paul basically is giving us this concept that knowledge without love is a bad thing, right?

That's if I have all knowledge, and I have no love, I'm a noisy gong kind of a thing. But he also says that love without knowledge is dangerous, as he talks about people in Romans 10 who have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge.

We should have both love and knowledge. Our love for one another needs to be built on truth content. Our love for God needs to be built on truth content.

Now that doesn't sound very romantic, but it's okay. It's what needs to be. Can you tell me, do you see anything about what Paul says is the content of the knowledge that we're supposed to have?

[7 : 59] Does he say anything in the text at all about what content our knowledge is to have? You can look at verse 10, 11.

You can look back up at verse 7 and 8. I find that it doesn't look like he specifies anything.

You know? But knowing Paul, as we do, he's probably not talking about knowledge of sports figures or knowledge of the IRS tax laws.

He's probably focused somewhere in the area of knowledge of God, knowledge of what God wants, knowledge of who we are in Christ, knowledge of the church and what the church is supposed to be, knowledge of what it is that God wants from us.

Those are probably the kinds of things that he's speaking about because that's what he's writing about. Let's look at discernment then for a second.

[9 : 04] Discernment is a word. It doesn't occur very often in the Bible. It's in Luke 9, verses 44 through 45, where the disciples, he's telling them that he's going to be delivered over, but it says that they could not perceive what he was talking about.

Or in Hebrews 5, verses 13 through 14, where it talks about people who are immature in the faith, they don't have their senses trained to discern good from evil because they're not into the Word of God.

So the basic concept of discernment is a perception or an ability of the heart and mind to be able to separate good from bad, important from unimportant.

Without discernment, a person might show lots of enthusiasm without a plan. In other words, every tear-jerking commercial that comes along of somebody who has a need, they might write a check and send it off.

But they don't know who they're supporting, how they're using the money, or anything else. Most of us would not just willy-nilly just give our money to anything and everything without checking it out, what we're giving our money to.

[10:28] But yet, in so many other areas of our lives, we have a tendency to just say, well, we just need love without any discernment or knowledge. Listen, I'm going to tell you, this is free, I think the culture that we currently live in, with all the things that get pressed upon us from the culture at large, it is more tempting as Christians to just say, well, we need to love and just sort of ignore the part about truth.

Because you're going to have people who look at you and say, well, you know what, you say you're a Christian, and doesn't the Bible say that you should love your neighbor as yourself? Well, yes it does, but it doesn't say that I should approve of my neighbor's sin as a way of loving them.

And so, we have to love built upon truth content. And so, this is what Paul's praying for them. He's praying that they would grow in love, but it would be a love that's abounding with knowledge and with this judicial sense of being able to understand what's good, what's bad, what's important, what's unimportant.

That's an important skill. That's an important thing that Christians need to be able to have. Yes, ma'am. Well, I kind of see that when he says, in 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 until the day of Christ.

That the knowledge, of course, here it's in the same verse, but it has to go hand in hand because to have discernment, you have to have the knowledge. And then where you get the knowledge is from God's word.

[12:23] So, when he said that there wasn't really a lot, he said about knowledge, I tend to almost feel that it has to go with the discernment. Are you kidding? Yes, no.

And that's it. I would mean the same thing. Right? Because he wants their love to grow in knowledge, truth content, and whatever that content is, I mean, I think we can extrapolate some things, but he's not explicit.

But that discernment then goes along with it. So, the discernment has to do with knowledge. So, I mean, I'll just use an illustration like this. you know, here's, and this may offend you, if it does, you'll have to just, we'll have to talk about it.

But, you know, in our culture today, you know, we're told that it's not loving. Okay, let me do it this way. First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Florida, has been in the news for the last couple of weeks because they put forward a statement about sexual sin.

They included every kind of sexual sin that you can imagine, from pornography to adultery to homosexuality to all this stuff. And they are basically telling the members of their church, you need to sign this to continue to be a member of this church.

[13:34] We need to hold together and believe these things that are true because the Bible teaches them. So, the world around us then would begin to have arguments and say, well, that's not very loving or this or this or this.

Part of our love for others is it's built on truth content but it's also then as we have others challenge that content, we've got to have that discernment to be able to tell the difference.

So, I totally agree. They go together. Right? And it even goes with verse 10 because verse 10 says, so that you may improve what's excellent. But I feel like that's more of something he wants for them and that's why I take it as a separate petition.

Does that make sense? Have I totally muddied the waters? Okay. We're all good? All right.

Excellent. Thank you. So, that's the first then petition if you will.

Okay. Let's talk about the second petition and that is in verse 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ Jesus.

[14:42] I'm missing a page. Hang on. There it is. All right.

So, I call this a prayer for their reputation and that's because of the sincere and blameless part. But here's my question.

What is the thing that Paul wants the Philippians to be able to do according to verse 10? That you may be sincere and without offense still the day of Christ.

Okay. Now, I'm going to challenge you and say that's really what he wants them to be. But what does he want them to be able to do? That you may approve the things. Exactly. Exactly.

So, you've got to do that first. You've got to be able to approve the things that are excellent. Now, let me ask you something. Does anybody know of a verse that Paul uses a word excellence for in the book of Philippians that might help us sort of grasp what he's talking about here?

[15 : 52] And it's okay if you want to flip pages in Philipians and see if you can find it. Excellent. Your translation may use a different word than excellent.

Find it? Hmm? I know the verse. You know the verse?

But not where it is? Can you tell me a part of the verse? Is it the one we have on the wall? It is.

Yeah. I don't know why that.

Whatever is excellent. Whatever is pure. Whatever is pure. Whatever is noble. Whatever is true. It's 4 Philipians 8.

4, 8, and 9. Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there's any excellence, and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

[17 : 04] the Christian life, I'm just telling you, is a life not so much about the avoidance of evil, though it is. It's usually about trying to pursue that which is best.

You know? If we pursue that which is best, we will avoid the evil. Say that again. If we pursue the best, we will avoid the evil.

It's a positive thing. It's like our friend used to talk about this all the time. For people to be trained to know how to spot counterfeit bills, they give them the real thing to study.

And they become so familiar with the real thing that when a fake comes through, they can tell it. So, it's just, it's the positive aspect that our minds and our hearts need to be so filled with Christ that all this other just can't be a part of us because we're fixed upon him.

So, thank you. There are some things where God has commanded us clearly what we should do and what we should not do. Right? There are some things that we know that God does not approve of.

[18 : 15] I cannot go down and get a job as a bank robber. It's completely and entirely not something I should do. But what about being a hedge fund manager?

Well, now, all of a sudden, we're in the land of wisdom because now we need to figure out, well, what's the reputation of the people that you're going to be working for? What are the principles by which you're going to be doing this?

Because there are some who have extremely unethical principles in the way they do things. Right?

So, when we think about the things that are excellent, we are looking for that which is best, that which is highest, that which is praiseworthy, that which is matching God and His own glory.

So, we want to be able to approve the things that are excellent. So, you should be praying for one another that we have that knowledge and discernment to be able to approve the things that are excellent.

you've got decisions that come to you all the time that are not decisions about do not murder.

Right? Like, that doesn't come to you as just a bald-faced decision.

[19 : 27] Hey, today, would you like to murder someone or not? You know? But you get asked all the time, you know, hey, you want to go get a cup of coffee? But you look at your schedule and you might have to say no to a good thing because you've got something else going.

And it's not because it's bad to go get a cup of coffee, but it's wisdom about your life and about how God is working in you. You need to have this love abounding in knowledge and discernment so that you can approve what is excellent.

Why? Why do we want to approve the excellent? What's the end result? In order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. That's right.

In order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. Do y'all know what the word sincere means? What do you think? Just take a shot.

Honest. Honest. Okay. I like it. What? Truthful. Truthful. I like it. What else would you say sincere is? Pure.

[20 : 29] Pure. Pure. Yeah. Yeah, that's great. Being truthful, honest, pure. The word is a word used to talk about like the alloy.

When you have an alloy, you've got two different metals you put together. So this is to be un-alloy. Right? Not mixed with anything. Purity. If you look at the Bible's word for purity, it's the idea of single-mindedness.

Right? Not double-minded. What about blameless? What's blameless? Blameless. Blameless. Blameless. Blameless. Blameless. Blameless. Blameless.

Without fault. Without fault. Yeah. I mean, it's, it's, this one, this one is very, it's very close to that, without fault.

It's in the sense of without offense. Right? So my fault may give offense, but it's without offense to someone. It's, it's the idea that, the word picture is that you've arrived at a destination without stumbling or being injured.

[21 : 37] Yesterday, I walked up the steps to the office over there and I just almost lost it because it was a little bit icy and my foot slipped, I caught myself. I did not arrive blameless.

I, I stumbled. Right? So, so he wants us, Paul is saying, he prays that for the Philippians, for the, for their sincerity and their blamelessness by, they're being able to approve what's excellent.

So it's not just God magically making you sincere. It's not God just magically making us blameless. It's that those things are produced because we have our senses trained, the content of, the knowledge of, of who God is and his word to discern what is excellent so we live the way he's told us to live and that is then what produces that sincerity and that blamelessness.

It doesn't just magically occur. So you see, as we pray for one another, as we pray for one another, we're, we're being specific and yes, I do want to pray that you're all sincere and honest and, and, and all that, but I want you to get there not, not like opening up a cocoon of a butterfly before it's time where, where you just make it easy for you to get it where it's just, you know, microwave McDonald's sincerity that just gets baked in you because God presses the button but it gets there because, because you've learned to approve what is excellent.

You've learned to use what your understanding of the word, understanding of what he has to say and you can discern life around you. That's what we want to pray for one another.

[23 : 24] Um, the final thing is in verse 11 and it's praying for our holiness. Um, exactly.

So this final request is that we would be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Now, righteousness, just real quickly, a real quick definition of righteousness is a right standing with God and his ways or his laws.

It's a right standing with God and his ways or his laws. The fruit of righteousness then are things produced in our life because of the righteousness.

So I think one of the best ways to think about that would be like the fruit of the spirit. Can anybody list for me any of the fruit of the spirit? Long suffering.

Long suffering. Peace. Peace. Joy. Joy. Kindness. I've done them so out of order that I'm confused but it's good.

[24 : 39] So it's, uh, let's see if you can do it with me. Love. Joy. Peace. Patience. Kindness. Goodness.

Faithfulness. Gentleness. Self-control. I'll always get gentleness and faithfulness switched around. Those kinds of things are the fruit of righteousness.

This is what God works in our life. This is, this is how he works in us. So how does Paul say that this fruit of righteousness comes? How do we, how do we get this righteousness and the fruit?

It says it comes through Jesus Christ. Yeah. What has Jesus Christ done that helps to bring us this righteousness?

That's right. That's right. He was born, he lived, he died, he rose. His entire work. That's how our righteousness comes.

[25 : 45] It comes through him and it's his righteousness. We get it, but it's the fruit of righteousness. So the, the, the illustration of this is what Jesus gave us in John 15, five, that speaks about that we're the vine, he's the branches.

If we abide in him, then we bear fruit. He's the vine. We're, we're grafted in. So we are in Christ. Okay. Think about that language, right? If you're a branch and you've been grafted into the vine, you are in Christ. And because of being in Christ, then you have his righteousness and the fruit of that righteousness shows up in your life.

It's one of the quickest ways to kind of discern even whether or not if you struggle to say, you know, I'm not sure if I'm a believer or not. Well, you look for the fruit. Is that fruit of righteousness there in your life?

If it's not, then you, you might have a point. You might not be a believer because we are in Christ. And what's the end goal for all of this? What does he want to be the final result of praying for these people?

[26 : 53] Now look at that. Look at that. That is astounding to me because we, we rightly feel for each other.

We rightly love each other. We can feel what it's like sometimes when somebody goes through a hard thing like what we've been through. So praying for one another is a very empathetic kind of thing that we do for one another.

But that, that is not the end goal. The end goal is not just for us to empathize. The end goal is so that God is glorified. So I will pray for you that your love grows, that your discernment grows, that your ability to approve what is right grows, that the fruit of righteousness fills your life, not so that we get along better, not so that you will treat me better, not so that you will like me, but so that God gets the glory.

That has to be our aim in everything we do, is for God to get the glory. So there we come to the end of how he's praying, and my encouragement is to think about how you could be using this in your prayer time as you pray for different people.

There we go. That was the electricity, right? It wasn't in my eyes. Just making sure all of a sudden I thought, maybe that's just not. It's a sign. That's true.

[28 : 33] Does anybody have any questions on this before we move to the profession? I had a comment on what you said about no shortcuts.

Basically, it's kind of how I phrased it. Yeah. As you're praying for someone, it made me think of how the people we love are under trials. So many times, it's hard to not, to only pray, all you want to pray is just, Lord, get them out of this.

Help them get out of this trial. And looking at this, your challenge to pray for their results of holiness as well. And so that just, it's challenging to me.

And if we, if we take that, we think about the context of Philippians. The church is in struggle.

They're scared because of the persecution that's starting to happen.

Paul is in prison as he's writing this letter to them. They, they're representative fell ill so much that he almost died while he did a pole.

[29 : 41] So they're, they're suffering and they're experiencing the emotional turmoil of suffering and he doesn't say anything about, I pray that you would stop feeling these bad feelings.

I pray that you would stop having these bad things happen to you. Instead, he's praying for that growth and grace in the middle of it. So, that's just, just affirming what you're saying.

Absolutely. It's good. Neil? You're talking about trials and stress and these sorts of things. How do we gain knowledge?

And we just said, and as you've heard it said, put the Bible under the pillow and assimilate it that way. Or do we learn knowledge by the experiences we go through and how to apply that knowledge so that others, you can show your love for the others when they go through similar circumstances. It's hard to not say, well, I know how you feel. I've been there. but I've gone through a few things.

[31 : 00] And sometimes it's pretty hard to ask God to give you knowledge. What can I learn from this particular experience that I can show love to others, support them in whatever way.

Prayer, of course, is one that we can always use. But sometimes there are other things we need to look around and find out and look at what God's given us to be able to support other people.

Sure. So I would want to nuance what you're saying just a little bit just to help us have sort of the right way of talking about that because it is true that our experiences give us a bit of an insight into what somebody else is going through.

But here's the thing, the experience by itself can't teach us anything. It's only as we come to the Word of God and we understand how God has made this world and why these experiences happen and who God is in the middle of this and what the gospel has to do to it, what his glory has to do with all of these things.

Only as we understand the Word applied to our suffering then do we have anything to offer to anybody because there's a numerous number of atheists and Muslims and all kinds of people who go through suffering who could identify but they don't have the truth.

[32 : 38] So I would just say, because I know you just skipped this because we all believe this, but I think that's a thing we need to say out loud. Like it's the quiet part that we all believe but we need to say it out loud.

The knowledge comes from the Word of God and that knowledge helps me to interpret the thing that I'm going through because I can't, I mean, how many of you, how many of you have been

through any kind of loss and one of the thoughts that plagued you was something about God being unfair or maybe God not loving you or maybe God not listening to you.

Those are unbiblical thoughts. Those are thoughts of unbelief. We need to come to the Word to be equipped, to be changed, to be transformed so that when those times come, we don't pivot to unbelief, but we pivot to what we believe.

And so, but it is, it is one of those things that as you go through the suffering and you apply God's Word to it, now you become somebody who not only knows what you're going through, but now I also can tell you where in the Word you need to go.

But great, great comment. Anybody else? Any other thing? Well, let's have some discussion then. I've given you some questions and let you just turn around well, let's see, let's do it this way, let's put the four of you together because Ernie and Carol have to leave and then let's put the three of you together and the three of you together.

[34 : 23] Larry, you want to come up here? I'll bring you a chair. and I'll leave you left and front. We can just turn around. Just to, yeah, for us to turn around.

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