

Philippians 1:7-11
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Last week we spent our time looking at the first six verses of **Philippians 1**. Specifically, we talked about the freedom that is found in being a slave to Jesus, the joy of friendship in the midst of life's struggles, and the hope we have in the truth that God will complete our salvation at the day of Jesus Christ.

This week we continue on and look at **v. 7-11**. After encouraging the Philippians with the truth that God will complete their salvation, he begins to explain the reason why he thinks these things in **v. 7**:

7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

At first, it seems as though Paul is simply stating that his feelings are appropriate ("**it is right for me to feel this way**"). But he means so much more. In fact, the words "**to feel**" can actually be translated to mean "to think" (*phroneo*). The word refers to a "mindset" and is used throughout the letter.¹ The word is used only 26 times in the New Testament but occurs in **Philippians** 10 times. The word means to live in step with something. In Paul's use of the word, he is referring to the Philippians state of living in step with the gospel.

In other words, Paul is saying "**It is right for me to think this way...**" (**v. 3-6**), "**because I hold you in my heart.**" Why does Paul hold them in his heart? "**...for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.**"

Once again, this idea of friendship and partnership pops up. Paul has seen these Philippian Christians partner with him in both good times ("**defense and confirmation of the gospel**") and bad times ("**in my imprisonment**"). Paul holds these Christians in his heart because of their partnership with him in the gospel through all seasons of life. But notice that Paul doesn't just say these words. So, he writes:

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

Paul essentially says, "I stand before God and tell you that what I just wrote is true." And then he ups the ante even more by telling them how he "**...yearn(s) for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.**" What does this mean? To find out, turn with me to a couple of places in your Bible:

- **Matthew 9:35-36** ³⁵ And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. ³⁶ When he saw the crowds, he had compassion (moved to the bowels) for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

¹ *Expository Commentary: Ephesians-Philemon* (pg. 136). Crossway.

- **Matthew 14:13-14** ¹³ Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. ¹⁴ When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and *he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*"
- **Matthew 15:32** ³² Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."

What does this mean? Paul is saying that he feels so much love for the Philippians that he feels the same things Jesus did.

Here's what I'm convinced of: the people that feel the same affection for others that Paul did, the people that are most gracious are simultaneously aware of their utter need for grace. Paul was the same man that wrote to young pastor Timothy claiming that he was the chief of sinners. And it is this understanding of his need for grace that led him to lavish grace on other people. Or, as one man puts it, "You will never give grace until you understand that you need it."

This means that spiritual maturity means feeling more needy of God and His grace. If you have been a Christian for a long time and feel more confident of your obedience, you're not mature, just self-righteous. And it is this understanding of grace that led Paul to tell the Philippians, "I hold you in my heart." This then leads to a long prayer for the Philippians:

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

v. 9-11 is actually one big complicated sentence in the Greek. He begins by praying that the Philippians love would "abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment." It shouldn't surprise us that Paul's greatest admonition is his prayer is that of "love." After all, Paul tells the church at Corinth when he writes in **1 Corinthians 13:13** that love is greater than even faith and hope.

But notice that Paul is praying that the Philippians have a different kind of love. A love that is couple "with knowledge and discernment." The point is clear: Paul does not have a category for a Christian full of love, but void of knowledge. Consequently, he does not have a category for a Christian full of knowledge without love. To know God is to love God and to love God is to know God. On a practical stand point, if we are "all-truth" with no love or "all-love" with no truth, we will hurt people and cause divisions within the church. Here is a helpful equation I try to remember:

Truth – Love = Brutality

Love – Truth = Hypocrisy

So, Paul prays that these Christians would be people of both love and knowledge. Why?

¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

Paul wants these Christians to be filled with knowledge and love so that they “may approve what is excellent.” He wants them to choose the right things (attitudes, actions, mindsets) so that they might be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”

What is interesting to me is that Paul prays for these Christians to have discernment. Let me just say there is a huge need for Christians discernment in our day. So many Christians live their lives haphazardly, not thinking about how what they read, listen to, who they hang around with, and what they watch affects them. So much so that the world tends to disciple Christians more than Jesus. We are in desperate need of Christians who exercise distinctly-Christian discernment.

And here’s the thing: it’s not enough to know what is right vs. wrong. Christian discernment goes another layer deeper. Spurgeon put it this way: “Discernment is not knowing the difference between right and wrong. It is knowing the difference between right and almost right.” So, let me ask you: What are you letting into your mind? Is your mind dominated by the Bible or by something else? Do you think intentionally about what you watch, listen to, and read? Paul’s prayer is that the Philippians—and we by extension—would be a people that discern wisely so that we might be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ.” He continues...

¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Paul prays that these Philippian Christians would bring “glory and praise to God.” This is the *summum bonum*—the highest good in life—of the Christian life. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Puritan Thomas Brooks put it this way:

“The aim of the obedient soul, in prayer and praises, in talking and walking, in giving and receiving, in living and doing, is divine glory.”

The Christian life is not a show on Sunday. The Christian life is living every moment for the glory of God.

So, how do we apply these truths? Here are some suggestions:

1. **Live every moment cognizant of your need of God’s grace.**
2. **Remember: In major things, conviction. In minor things, charity. In all things, love.**
3. **Think about what is shaping your heart.**