

Women's Bible Study
Philippians 1:7-11

Philippians 1:7-11

For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

These verses are continuing with the theme of affection that Paul has been using since he began this letter. In most of Paul's letters he is admonishing the church for something. In Galatians he is warning against reverting to dependance on following the law instead of grace through faith. In Corinthians he is warning of multiple problems such as morality issues or following a person rather than following Christ. The letter to the Philippians is like a breath of fresh air. It is somewhat like reading a newspaper with all its bad news and finding a happy story mixed in.

For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all

This is referring to verse 6 where Paul stated his confidence that God would perfect these saints until the Day of Christ. The word for feel here is *phroneo* which means to exercise the mind or have a sentiment or opinion about something. It is not just a feeling. The promise in verse 6 and the rest of today's verses are due to the actions of the Philippians and the relationship that Paul and they have developed. The word *phroneo* is found here and in several other places where it is translated mind or think.

Romans 15:5

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.

Because I have you in my heart

The way the words of this phrase are arranged in the original Greek could just as easily mean “because you have me in your heart”. Paul did not do the “tough guy” act here. He says right out that he loves these people. He wears his heart on his sleeve in this letter. There is a passage in the book of Acts about the love Paul has for his churches and they for him. It is about when he visited the Ephesians for the last time.

Acts 20:25, 36-37

And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will see my face no more.

And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him.

- Is showing affection hard in today's culture?

Since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers of grace with me.

Here we come to the reason for the closeness between Paul and the Philippians. These people were partakers of grace with Paul. He knew that they were true believers and followers of Jesus because of their actions. We know that the Philippians contributed to his ministry financially. We don't know all the other details about their participation. Paul experienced difficulties in his travels. At the writing of the letter, he was in prison in Rome. The Philippians displayed care for the trials he went through.

The William Burkitt New Testament commentary says:

“In these words our apostle assigns a ground and a reason of that confidence which he expressed himself to have of the Philippians' perseverance in grace and

holiness, in the foregoing verse, namely, because they were partakers of the same grace with himself, and were ready to suffer for Christ, as he was; we may warrantably be persuaded of their perseverance in grace unto the end, in whom we see both readiness of obedience to the gospel, and also zealous and cheerful suffering for and in defense of the gospel.

A second ground of his confidence was, their respect to him: I have you in my heart, and I find you have me in your hearts; you partake of the misery of my bonds, you suffer with me in my sufferings, and sympathize with me in my sorrows. They relieved and refreshed him in his imprisonment, which he underwent for the sake of Christ and his gospel; and from hence he had a good confidence that they would persevere unto the end. An operative love to the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, especially when they are under persecution, is a good evidence of the sincerity of their love to Christ, and of their steadfastness and perseverance in grace unto the end."

These believers lived in a city that was considered a "little bit of Rome away from Rome". Christians were not the most popular people. It seems like they were considered a threat by many. The Judaizers wanted them to follow the Jewish law, the Romans wanted them to worship the emperor and people who had left the idol worship religions took away income from some people. There was significant persecution, but the Philippians stayed true to Christ and Paul and ministered to Paul in his trials.

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

The phrase "how I long for you" is the Greek word *epipotheo* which means to intensely crave possession, to yearn or earnestly desire.

The King James Version says: **For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.**

The Albert Barnes NT Commentary says concerning the word bowels: "*The word "bowels," in the Scriptures, denotes the upper viscera--the region of the heart and lungs. That region was regarded as the seat of affection, sympathy, and*

compassion, as the heart is with us. The allusion here is to the sympathy, tenderness, and love of the Redeemer; and probably the meaning is, that Paul regarded them with something of the affection which the Lord Jesus had for them. This was the tenderest and strongest expression which he could find to denote the ardour of his attachment.”

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent

“May abound” is the Greek word *perisseuo* which means superabound (in quantity or quality), be in excess or exceed. Paul is revealing to the Philippians what he prays for them. What a gift to be given a glimpse of the apostle Paul’s prayer life for them. This also gives them an idea of what they should be praying for their loved ones and for themselves and by extension what we should be praying for. Notice that Paul does not focus on their financial success or even the health of their bodies but instead that their love may abound.

No matter how much we excel in the grace of love we can always increase because our best efforts are imperfect. This love should be grounded upon knowledge and discernment. The knowledge that we have is found in scripture. We love God because He has revealed himself to us. He is more excellent and beautiful than anything we can imagine. We love other humans because they are created in the image of the creator. God is love and since we are his children love should be what exudes from us. We are not being called to a blind love or unwise passions here. Our love is based on the teaching that comes from our understanding of scripture and because of the indwelling Holy Spirit and our overwhelming gratefulness toward God.

Love for our fellow believers is evidence of true salvation.

1 John 4:19-20

We love because He first loved us. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Psalm 31:23

O love the LORD, all you his godly ones! The LORD preserves the faithful, and fully recompenses the proud doer.

John 13:34-35

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

Romans 13:8

Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law.

1 Corinthians 13:13

But now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Ephesians 5:2

And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave himself up for us, an offering, and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Colossians 2:2

That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself.

Forgiving our fellow believers is evidence of love.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Corinthians 13:5b

(Love) does not take into account a wrong suffered.

To approve the things which are excellent can also be translated “distinguish between the things which are different”. The commands of God are certainly different than the ways of the world. Matthew Henry’s Commentary says: *“The truths and laws of Christ are excellent things; and it is necessary that we every one approve them, and esteem them such. We only need to try them, to approve of them; and they will easily recommend themselves to any searching and discerning mind.”*

In order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Our love should be sincere. All our acts of righteousness should be done sincerely and not out of compulsion or in any desire for personal gain. Sometimes loving people takes up time or resources that we are reluctant to give. When we find ourselves hesitating before we show love to a brother or sister we should question why we are hesitating.

What are some reasons we hesitate before performing acts of love?

2 Corinthians 9:7

Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.

1 Corinthians 13:3

And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

When we love people for no obvious reason except to glorify God and because of the love we have experienced from him we are blameless. No one can say that what we are doing is because of what we will gain in return. This type of loving and serving people should continue until the day of Christ. This is the day that Jesus will return for his church.

Verse 11 says “having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ”. The word filled is the Greek word *pleroo*. It means to make replete, to cram, satisfy, finish, perfect, satisfy. Jesus has filled us to the brim, and we should overflow with the goodness that he has given us. We have been saved from the penalty of our sin only because of the grace of God. We had no part except to be the object of God’s favor. How blessed we are!! We are also indwelt by God himself. The Holy Spirit helps us as we live in this world and struggle with our flesh. He makes clear God’s word and teaches us to be obedient.

Psalm 23:5-6 (NIV)

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Ephesians 3:19

And to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

All the fruit of righteousness that is produced by God’s children is done to the glory and praise of God. Our goal and our reason for existence is to praise and glorify God. The purpose of Christ paying the price for our sins and making us his children is so that we have the privilege of praising God for all of eternity.

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

1 Peter 4:11

Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God; whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Revelation 5:13

And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, "To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever