

## Keep Praying For Each Other

1/19/25

Can you go back to when you were a kid? Did you ever play tug-of-war with your friends or classmates? I remember playing tug-of-war when I was in school. We played tug-of-war with the other classes at the school where I took Criminal Justice. A group of us were picked to do the pulling. It was the biggest people in the class. Usually, we picked the biggest person to be the end person or the anchor of the group. The rope was tied into a loop at the end and the big person put it around them. Now, it was hard to find a person to be the front person. If you were pulling and there was a creek in the middle of the two groups, no one wanted to be the first person into the creek. Usually when the front person went into the creek, it was hard to keep the rest of the group from falling in. You could pull with all the strength you had and it wasn't enough. One by one, the losing group would find all of the group in the creek. Anyway, our group lost and I haven't played tug-of-war since and I don't see me playing it in the near future. However, sometimes life can seem like a tug-of-war. You can pull and pull and it seems the troubles of life keep pulling you closer and closer to where you don't want to be. This is one of the reasons we pray for each other. We need support from each other. I remember when we played tug-of-war, the rest of the class was cheering us on and it did give us confidence until the front kid went into the creek. Praying for each other is like cheering each other on to the finish line. We've been looking into Apostle Paul and how he wanted the Church to pray and pray for each other. So, today we will continue with this theme and look at how prayer from other people can help us through tough times.

Let's turn to Philippians 1: 1 – 20 where we read this, “**1** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons<sup>2a</sup>:

<sup>2</sup> Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Thanksgiving and Prayer**

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you. <sup>4</sup> In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>6</sup> being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

<sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. <sup>8</sup> God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

<sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

### **Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel**

<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters,<sup>b</sup> that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard<sup>c</sup> and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

<sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.<sup>d</sup> <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (NIV – Biblegateway)

Paul had a special relationship with the Church in Philippi. They had supported him while he was in prison at Rome. Paul had helped to get this church started and he had a special bond with them. So, we read in verse four that he prayed for them and he prayed with joy. The Greek term for joy used here means joy,

happiness, and gladness (Strong's Concordance). Even while Paul was in chains in Rome, Paul experienced joy as he prayed for the Church in Philippi. In verse 7, Paul tells them how they share in God's grace with him. Paul felt strengthened when he thought and prayed for them. I find it interesting how when you pray for someone else how you can become strengthened as well. Plus, as Paul tells us in verse 8 how he had affection for them through Jesus. All of them were in partnership through the Gospel. The same goes with us as a church as well. All of us have this same connection - we all have been touched by the gospel message in some way or form. There should be a special bond within the church family. There used to be something called a bond between law enforcement officers. The problem is after each generation comes and goes, that bond is becoming less and less. I'm afraid the same is happening within the churches. In America, we're becoming more and more individualistic. This is why it's important to spend time on prayer for each one of us. It produces Godly joy because this is what Jesus wants us to do as a church family.

Then, Paul states in verse 9, "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. (NIV)" Paul uses the Greek term "agape" love here in this Scripture. This is the same love that Jesus has for His Church. This is special love because it comes from God Himself. Paul's prayer is that this Holy love will abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. Paul wanted this so that they would be able to discern what is best, pure, and blameless for the day of Christ. God's love shows us what is important and what's not important. God's love shows what is real and what is not real. In other words, God's love puts light on what is real love and fake love. Fake love is love that people force themselves to produce to please other people. This is earthly / human nature love, not God's love. God's love is filled with humility and peppered with true compassion through the Holy Spirit. This is what draws people to the Church is when they see this different element that the world cannot produce. God's love shows what is best for us and for each other. Paul wanted the Church to be filled with the love of God.

Not only that, but Paul wanted them to be filled with Jesus' righteousness in verse 11. I really believe God's righteousness and love go together like the Trinity

goes together. We are made justified before God by the blood of Jesus. This allows God's righteousness or His standards to flow through us. We want this righteousness because God's love helps us to see the importance of God's love in our life. Paul states this again in 1 Thessalonians 3: 12 where he states, "and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (ESV)" As we look at all what Paul is saying here, being justified, having God's Righteousness flow through us, having God's love flow through us, all of this mixed together comes out as holiness before the Lord. I remember one time making brownies and I remember mixing all these separate ingredients so that it would form one product while in the oven. It worked, except for the fact I came up with the idea to use a bigger pan to get more brownies. The brownies were about as thin as a sheet of paper, but they still tasted like a brownie. We need to pray that these ingredients mix well for each of us. Paul wanted the Church to be blameless before the Lord and we should want each other to be blameless before the Lord as well. We should want each other to be blameless in holiness. We should want this because then, as Paul says in verse 11, it is for the glory and praise of the Lord. Paul was seeing the bigger picture here. We should want everyone here to be a holy people so that Jesus receives all the glory and all the praise. Paul saw the bigger picture through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Paul continues in verses 12 to 17 talking about his current problem with being in prison. Paul makes it a point to talk about how this current problem is helping to spread the Gospel Message around the world because of his suffering for Jesus. Again, Paul is seeing the bigger picture here. All Paul wants is for Jesus to get all the praise and glory because He deserves it. Paul knew what Jesus did for his life. So, we pray for each other so that we may all grow in our faith and holiness so that Jesus receives the glory and praise.

Then Paul continues about prayer in verse 19 where he states, "for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (ESV)" Paul knows that the church is praying for his deliverance from his situation that he is in and

this gives him great hope. However, the hope he finds in deliverance is different from what we usually view deliverance from. We pray for deliverance in which the person is healed or the situation is resolved in the way we want it. We don't think of death as deliverance; however Paul does. Paul, through the Holy Spirit, was able to see the bigger picture on deliverance and Paul was ok with that – again through the Spirit of Jesus. Paul received great comfort through the prayers of the Church and he was comfortable with any deliverance including death itself. This is hard for us to grasp at times. Paul states in verse 30, “since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. NIV)” This lets us know both Paul and the Church were going through struggles and praying for each other brought them closer together or we can say the Spirit of God bonded them together as one during this struggle. I remember a few years ago I had asked the church to pray for a co-worker that was fighting cancer. I told him I would have my church family pray for him. We had his name on the prayer list for a while. I remember when he was finally healed and he went through some real tough times, he told me how he could feel our prayers and how much they meant to him. Those prayers helped him to hang on. To the early Church, prayer was their key element through the Spirit in helping to bond them together and to help them deal with all kinds of suffering. It helped them to finish the race on this earth. Let's continue to pray for each other. This is what the Lord wants from us. Prayer gives us support and strength to fight all the suffering we have to face.

Isaiah 41: 10 “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

*The Strongest Strong's Concordance.* Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2001