



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Christ's Deepest Desire for His Disciple—Philippians 1.8-11

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PHILIPPIANS: CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AT THE CAPITOL

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INTRODUCTION

Many a parent can tell you of their deep longing to see their child succeed—to make the basketball team, to find their name on the Dean's List, to land that first big promotion. Parents share a longing to see their children, in whom they have sacrificially and lovingly invested, go on to make good in the world. At times, this longing may overshadow all other desires in a parent's life.

Be assured that our Heavenly Father deeply longs for His children to grow to spiritual maturity and live fruitful lives for His kingdom's sake. In this week's study, Paul shares with the believers at Philippi his deepest desires for them. His yearning on their behalf finds its source in Christ's affections, its expression in his prayers, and is centered upon God's eternal purposes for their lives.

Philippians 1.8-11—For God is my witness how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And 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 till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

I. CHRIST'S PASSION FOR HIS DISCIPLE (8)

Paul calls upon God as witness to the sincerity of his deepest yearning on behalf of the believers at Philippi.

THE ORIGIN OF PAUL'S AFFECTION

Paul's warmth of emotion and depth of concern for the believers at Philippi springs forth from the life of Christ within him. Far beyond his limited capacity to care for the welfare of these disciples, the Lord Jesus Christ expresses through Paul

His heartfelt burden that these believers go on to maturity. Therefore, the desires expressed here can be understood to reflect, not only Paul's, but the Lord's loving desires for them.

THE OBJECT OF PAUL'S AFFECTION

The object of these deep longings is all believers. This passionate yearning of our Lord is on behalf of all the believers at Philippi, and ultimately, to all believers. There is no partiality with God. Our Lord's loving expectation and yearning does not rest upon a few favorites or any elite class of Christian. Every believer who heard this letter read aloud for the first time in the church at Philippi could sense Christ's warm embrace in Paul's expression. And so should you and I today.

II. CHRIST'S PRAYER FOR HIS DISCIPLE (9-10)

The content of this prayer sheds light upon God's priorities in bringing a believer to spiritual maturity. Three emphases arise from Paul's petition on behalf of the believers at Philippi and, in fact, all believers. "And this I pray..."

GENUINE LOVE

Is your love abounding still more and more? As you mature in your Christian faith, God yearns to see you overflow with the love that He gives for others. His love is unconditional and is willing to sacrifice to meet the genuine needs of others. It is more than mere sentiment, it is concerned in action.

This love is not a gushy affection that strives to meet the whims of another—sloppy agape as some have called it. Rather it is active in providing what another truly needs. This love is guided by knowledge and insight into the basic needs of others.

SOUND JUDGEMENT

"That you may approve the things that are excellent..." A spiritually mature believer is one who has learned to discern good and evil. That is often a more subtle distinction than one

BIBLE STUDIES (MEALS PROVIDED)

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY @ LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30A.M. OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER) OR THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY (ALL ARE WELCOME): FRIDAYS @ 8:00A.M. IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

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might think. More than that, he has learned to differentiate between good, better, and best according to God's economy. The writer to the Hebrews chided his readers for their spiritual immaturity and defines mature Christians as those "who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Hebrews 5.14)." Without doubt, a Christian statesman will possess sound judgment, seeking to reward good and restrain evil.

GODLY CHARACTER

The two terms taken up by Paul describe godly character. To be sincere is to be consistently ethical, transparent and honorable in your dealings with others. The Latin term from which this word is taken literally means without wax. The word was stamped upon pottery to guarantee no wax was used to fill cracks and hide imperfections in the earthenware. Once exposed to heat, the cracks would become glaringly apparent. Are you what you appear to be on the surface or are you hiding the cracks? How will you fare once the heat is on?

The second term, rendered for us, "without offense," calls us to behavior, speech, and attitudes that will not cause another to stumble. The maturing believer will pursue a life that is above reproach. Often this requires deference to others in gray areas of life. There will be times when we may be called upon to refrain from exercising our Christian liberty, so as not to offend the conscience of a weaker believer. Often those called to public service must go by the old adage, "others may, but I may not." Growing in such deference requires a mature outlook.

III. CHRIST'S PURPOSE FOR HIS DISCIPLE (11)

Christ has called every believer, not only to salvation and eternal life, but also to bear spiritual fruit. As fruit abounds in a maturing believer's life, God is glorified.

FRUITFULNESS

Paul uses the passive voice to speak of a believer "being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ." A

branch does not produce fruit by strenuous effort, but rather by simply abiding in the vine. Likewise, the Christian bears fruit by abiding in Christ.

Paul prays for a bumper crop in regards to righteousness. The righteousness he speaks of is not to be confused with religious rigor. In chapter three, he makes it clear that he counts his own righteousness as rubbish and desires the righteousness which is "through faith in Christ," that which is "from God by faith." One teacher has suggested that this phrase is best translated as the fruit that is produced by the righteousness of Christ.

GLORY

That which we can achieve on our own builds our reputation. But that which the life of Christ produces in us will put God in the spotlight and build His reputation. There is an unmistakable difference between the self-righteous posturing of a Pharisee and the fruit of the Spirit in a believer's life. A fruitful Christian makes God famous. This is the highest purpose of God in calling us to salvation in Christ.

CONCLUSION

Are you currently yielding to and embracing the means He has ordered for your continued spiritual growth? Are you more concerned with building your own reputation or making God famous?

It brings joy to a parent's heart when their child honors the investment and sacrifice they have made as parents by proving themselves to be mature, caring, discerning, responsible and productive adults. Wherever you may be in the process of growing towards maturity in Christ, may it be your desire to honor Christ's desires for you as His disciple. May His desires that you grow in genuine love, sound judgment, and godly character become your deepest held desires.