

Fact Sheet for “A Lesson in Prayer” Philippians 1:3-11

Pastor Bob Singer
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Prayer is a major part of this passage. The second major part is Paul's affection for the Philippians.

Do you remember having to diagram sentences in English class? In the same way you can diagram every sentence in the NT in Greek. When you do you can see that Paul wrote this passage in three sentences. Let's take a closer look at each of these three sentences.

Paul's Thankfulness in Prayer (3-7)

³ ¶ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ^{4a} always in every prayer of mine for you all

For two reasons...

#1

^{4b} making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

and #2

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

God's work in us has two components, his and ours (compare 2:12-13).

The reason Paul is sure that God who began a good work in them will bring it to completion is that they were active partners in ministry.

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.

Paul's Affirmation of Affection (8)

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

Paul's Request for Them (9-11)

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

The whole context of Philippians would argue that Paul is praying for a loving relationship between the Philippian believers. The context is *not* emphasizing their love for God. Their love for one another will abound if they pursue what Paul says next.

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.

What does Paul have in mind as he prays for these things? These things are relational (9). These things for careful thought and personal commitment (10-11a).

NET BIBLE **Philippians 1:9-11** And I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight ¹⁰ so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere 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.

If the Philippians will do these things the result will be glory and praise coming to God (11b).

Now, what does all this mean for us today? What can we gain from Paul's words to the Philippians in this passage? I want to point out two things, one from what Paul is praying for the Philippians to do, and one from what Paul is praying for in general.

What Is Paul Praying for the Philippians to Do?

As they carefully consider what is best, sincere, blameless, and righteous in all their personal attitudes, words, and actions before God... and out of that perspective relate to other Christians... then their love for each other will grow.

People come in all stripes... strengths and weaknesses, habits, histories, and goals. We tend to think that people should think and relate like us. They should be sensitive to what we are sensitive to. They should respect others the way we do. And if they don't they're just plain wrong. In fact, if people really paid attention to what God really wants from them they wouldn't be that way. They're just not paying attention to God. If we walk down this path we will tend to get irritated by people. We may feel hurt by what they do or don't do, say or don't say. And, we may act on that irritation, either directly or indirectly. We may initially feel justified in doing this. But as we lay our words, actions, and attitudes before God we know deep down inside that there is a problem. This may be the Holy Spirit bugging you. (*Read again 1:9-11.*)

What Is Paul Praying for in General?

What kinds of things do we typically pray for? Look at Paul's prayer here.

Thanksgiving for the Philippians (3-4a)

Prayer for their spiritual maturity in a specific area (9-11)

Look at other things Paul prays for, for example Romans 10:1.

Look at things Paul requests prayer for, for example Corinthians 1:11; Philippians 1:19.

How often should we pray for something (see Luke 18:1ff.)?

As you read through the Bible, to think about what people of the Bible to pray for. Imitate them. Expand your prayer patterns.