

Remnant Life Church
January 23, 2022
The Church of the Philippians
Part 3
Paul's Prayer
Phil 1:9-11

Review:

- The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi
- It is a letter filled with joy and affection for a church that is standing firm in spite of being in the midst of a pagan Roman colony
- Last week we read from the first chapter, verses 3 through 8
 - Paul wrote that the source of his joy in them was that they were partners with him in the gospel
 - That word, *koinonia*, is one of a positive venture in more than one person working toward a common goal
- We then looked at 3 words that describe what the partnership might entail for us today
 - It is a Privilege
 - It is based on a Promise
 - We become Partakers

READ – Phil 1:9-11

Many, many sermons could be preached from just these three verses, but I want us to step back and see these verses from a thousand feet and realize what Paul is saying

The verses we read this morning is Paul's formula for what it means to grow as a Christian

- Growth is the proof of health
- You want your plants to grow in your house or in your garden
- You want your investments to grow
- You want your kids to grow!
- Paul's hope, through the words he writes to the Christians in Philippi, is for them to grow in the things of God and that it be seen in their daily lives

Paul is providing a program for growth – and with all things that grow, it begins with some type of seed, a starting point

- What is Paul's starting point?
- The same one that God started with for each of us – love
- His formula is comprised of three components

Paul's prayer is a prayer for love

That you love may abound more... (v 9a)

- As we talked about previously, the Philippians are participants in the Gospel with Paul so his intercession for them is exactly what is needed first and foremost
 - Love is the core word of the Gospel

- It is what was most needed then and it is what is needed most today – yet it is quickly losing its impact
- In the English language, the word “love” has been fully diminished in the power of its meaning by its gross overuse
 - It is the word used by a man and woman to unite themselves in the sacred, holy bonds of marriage
 - But it is also the word used to convey satisfaction in our job – “I love what I do for a living”
 - It is the same word used when we our appetite has been satisfied by a particular food – “I love chicken cooked on a charcoal grill”
 - And we use that same word to describe our allegiance to a particular professional sports team – “I love how the Dallas Cowboys keep winning all their playoff games” (Said no one ever)
 - As a matter of fact, we translate the original Greek words for friendship, sexual activity, and our closest family relations with the exact same word – love
- But it was an obscure Greek word for love that the New Testament writers selected in an effort to try and describe what God did for us, His rebellious, sin-filled creation. The word *agape*.
 - Paul and John chose this word to describe the expression of God’s act to save us from our sins through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.
 - Yet words still cannot properly convey the depth and meaning of what was done for us
 - Jesus knew that our minds could not grasp the full definition
 - And so, word pictures have been used to convey the richness of His gift – consider Luke’s account
 - It is the visual picture of a father welcoming home his wayward child in the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15)
 - It is the woman, forgiven of her life sin, pouring perfume on the feet of Jesus (Luke 7)
 - It is the shepherd leaving the flock to search for one lost lamb (Luke 15)
 - It is the picture of our Lord and Savior, hanging on a cross sacrificing His perfect life for you, for me, for all of mankind (Luke 23)
 - John 15:13 captures those pictures in one verse, *Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*
 - Everything that is so important about Paul’s letter begins with love

Paul’s prayer is a prayer for light

...and more in the knowledge and all discernment – (v 9b)

- The light of knowledge and discernment works in concert with love
- Whoever coined the phrase “love is blind” got that completely wrong
 - True love does not overlook faults and weaknesses, it sees them clearly and then looks beyond them and still loves
 - This is the foundation of the definition for unconditional love
 - Conditional love only goes so far
 - Unconditional love knows no limits, it is never exhausted, and it always sees clearly

- Paul writes in his visual definition of love found in **I Cor 13:7** - *Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*
 - Without the light of knowledge and discernment, love becomes stagnant, and we are forced to revert to the world's tired, overused, and often meaningless definition
 - But agape love, according to Paul in **Eph 5:14**, operates in the truth.
 - That love, one of knowledge and discernment, not only operates but also lives in the truth
 - That truth is filled with the power and provision of our Father
 - *Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.* - **Eph 3:20** (NLT)
 - How are these possibilities realized? Through His mighty power at work within us!
 - God's will leads us to great possibilities. But we must first be willing to do God's will if we are going to discern God's will.
 - William L. Pettingill – an early 20th century theology teacher
 - *“Most people don't want to know the will of God in order to do it; they want to know it in order to consider it.”*
 - Part of Paul's prayer for the readers to discern what God says is best, is that they are willing do what God says is best.
- And God's will is always surrounded by His love
 - But if love is blind it means that it is incapable of being honest and truthful
 - And that honesty and truthfulness is sometimes pointed and direct but there is no sting because it is done in love
 - A husband was sitting with his wife one night watching their nightly programs and he said, “I want you to promise me something.” “Alright,” she replied. He said, “If you truly love me, promise me that you will never let me live in a vegetative state dependent on a machine. If you ever see me like that, I want you to just pull the plug.” “Okay,” she replied with a smile. She stood up, walked to the other side of the room, and unplugged the television.
 - Regardless of the action, love like that is always in the way that Paul describes it to the church in Corinth – patient, kind, not envious or boastful.
- Paul's prayerful petition was that the Christians in Philippi would grow in the gift of discernment and spiritual knowledge
 - *...so that you may be able to discern what is best (v 10a)*
 - Now there are two elements here to consider when talking about discernment and what that means
 - The first is an increased quality of judgment – IOW a sharpness of perception
 - Think of it as being an art critic
 - The role of an art critic is twofold
 - The first is to judge the quality of the work – how good the piece is

- But the second is to spot forgeries
- What is real and what is phony
 - We have spoken often here at RLC that one of Satan's most effective tools against Christians is the use of the counterfeit
 - The judgment or discernment of true love can spot the counterfeit and avoid the traps of the enemy
- The second element of that word is, for lack of a better term, a "sixth sense"
 - That is what the Bible calls spiritual discernment
 - It is a penetrating intuition that has been honed, sharpened, and cultivated through prayer, waiting on God, and submission to His presence in our lives
 - These are spiritual gifts that God gives to His people
 - They are available to everyone, but God gives them at His determination
 - But they are ALL rooted in love

Finally, Paul's prayer is a prayer for life

- The Christian author and theologian Maxie Dunnam writes, *Everything that Christ does IN us must reflect itself THROUGH us.*
 - In other words, if Christ is present in us, it must be seen in our lives
 - That is what Paul tells the church in Philippi - that they would be... *pure and blameless until the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God (vv 10b-11)*
 - I want to finish this morning by looking at one word in those two verses
- The word "pure" is not an easy one to translate from the original Greek – but what we do know of it presents a strong word picture for us regarding the power of love and what it does in us because of God's love
 - The word most often used for pure is the word sincere (*Ella-kree-NACE*)
 - That word is rooted in the combination of two other Greek words
 - The first is the word *heh-LEE* meaning the sunshine
 - The second is *KREE-no* which means to judge
 - When you combine the meaning of those two roots you come to recognize that the word sincere literally means judged by the sun
 - That word came about because in the earliest days of sculpture there were less than honest artisans who would use blemished and defective stones and they would fill in the cracks with wax and colored materials. In time, the sun would melt away the wax, peel the paint, and expose the imperfections. Thus, the term *sun-tested* came to mean that something that was free of pretense or falsehoods
 - In the same way, the shops and bazaars were often under cover and in the shadows. It became easy for the merchant to mingle in cloth, pottery or other items that were of much lower quality, hidden by the shadows. A buyer could only judge the quality of the item by taking it out of the shadows and examining it in the light.

- Both of these present the meaning of the word sincere and pure and clearly shows the power of God's light and His truth.
 - And that is Paul's meaning when he writes in **Eph 5:8** to those in that church and for us today - *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light*

Paul's prayer is one of love
His prayer is one of light
And his prayer is one of life

A life that reveals Christ's love present in us.