

Love That Grows and Overflows (Philippians 1:1-11)

Imagine sitting down to write a letter to a group of friends you haven't seen for a long time. These are people that stood by your side, people you love dearly. That is the type of letter the apostle Paul writes to a group of Jesus followers in the ancient city of Philippi. Joy fills his heart as he remembers what they share together. Affection fills his prayers as he asks for their love to grow and overflow. What did they share that brought so much joy? What did they need that only love could answer?

1. Who we are | Identity in Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:1-2)

The church of Philippi's beginnings are found Acts 16:11-40

"Saints"?! "Holy, set apart, called out, sent in"

Your identity as *saints* is rooted in who Jesus is and what Jesus accomplished.

V2 Grace is God's unmerited favor. Peace is the wholeness, renewal and reconciliation we experience in Jesus because of this grace.

2. What we share | Partnership in the gospel (Philippians 1:3-8)

V5 The Greek word is *koinonia* often translated 'fellowship' – The idea here is participation, ownership, communion, taking up responsibility, sharing, mutual support - friendship!

Called to be disciples instead of consumers, participants instead of spectators and family instead of fans.

V6 God will finish what he started.

"the day of Jesus Christ" is the day of Jesus' return. 1 Thessalonians 5:2-11; 2 Peter 3:10-13

V8 *"I yearn for you with all the affection (intestines; bowels; innards = I love you with all my heart/guts)...of Christ Jesus."*

3. What we need | Love that grows and overflows (Philippians 1:9-11)

A love that will flourish and influence everything - spill over into decisions and lifestyle choices.

"This love points to the character of God..." AND reflect it!

1 Thessalonians 3:11-14; Ephesians 5:1-14

V10 The love Paul is praying for comes with "knowledge and discernment..."

"...and so be pure (transparent; not causing anyone to stumble) and blameless (sincere; without mixed motives) on the day of Christ." This is about living each day in light of the Day of Jesus' return.

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Philippians 1:1-11. What stands out to you in this first part of the letter to the Philippians? What convictions does Paul express? Why did the Philippians bring Paul so much joy?
2. How did the Philippians work in "partnership" with Paul?
3. Would you say we (Local Church St. Pete) are in partnership for the gospel? How is that being expressed? How might we grow in it more?
4. What is Paul's confidence in V6? Is it hard or easy for you to trust God to complete the work he's started in you or in others? Why?
5. Paul prays that the Philippian's love will grow and overflow in knowledge and all discernment (wisdom) (V9). How does this idea contrast with the more popular ideas of love?
6. This isn't about sinless perfection. This is about lives that honor Jesus here and now. Living each day, making decisions in light of the Day of Jesus' return. In other words, living as if our decisions matter to him. What would happen if you made every decision in your life with this in mind? What would that cost? What would it require?
7. We have so many choices coming at us every day. The love Paul prays for will result in "moral discernment" – the ability to "approve what is excellent." How has God's love in Christ Jesus shaped your decisions?
8. Paul prays the Philippians will be "filled with the fruit of righteousness." In other words that they overflow with the fruit of "right living." What will happen if we begin to pray this way?

Take a few minutes to pray we would have love which overflows in knowledge and wisdom, the ability to discern right from wrong, and the fruit of right living to the glory of God.