

**Philippians 1: 7-11; “To Have You in My Heart”, Sermon # 2 in the series –
“To Rejoice in Christ”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on December 16th, 2018,
in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

The apostle Paul was a man who was most able to minister to other Christians and build them up in their faith. He had this ability because he had those whom he ministered to, in his heart. In verse 7 he says – “Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.” Let me ask you, as we begin this time together this afternoon, whether you have other believers on your heart? Paul was in prison at the time of his writing this letter, but the way that he occupied his time was not to sit and feel sorry for himself, but rather, he spent a good deal of time praying and make request of God for the Christians at the church at Philippi. He was always thanking God for the fellowship that he had had with them in the gospel, he says, from the first day even until that very time when he was still imprisoned for the sake of the gospel. He made his requests with joy, knowing that since God had begun a good work in them, and He would complete it.

Did you know that one of the ways that you can have fellowship with other Christians is to pray for them? Praying for other Christians is a form of having heart fellowship. It was because Paul had them in his heart that he could pray for them most effectively. What did this fellowship in prayer look like then, in its particulars? Well, it began 1st of all with a longing for them with the affection of Jesus Christ. (verse 8) 2nd – It continued with the request that their love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. (verse 9) 3rd – He built upon that with a request for them to be established in their true faith. (verse 10) And 4th – He concluded with a request that they be filled with the fruits of righteousness. (verse 11) Let us pray at this hour that our own prayer life would grow and that we would evidence the fact that we have other believers in our heart as well.

1st of all – Having heart fellowship with other believers in prayer begins with a longing for them with the affection of Jesus Christ. (verse 8)

“For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” I find this to be a very important phrase in understanding the religious affections of the Christian. Paul is in prison, but he longs for them; the Philippian believers. He longs to see them. They were partakers of grace together with him. He longed to be with them, to encourage and to strengthen their faith, and to complete what was lacking in their faith, by the apostolic knowledge that he had concerning the doctrines of the God’s grace and the working of the Holy Spirit. He knew that God knew the longing of his heart, and he knew that it was out of love for God and love for the brethren, that he would express his longing, and God would see these longings as a part of his prayer.

He knew that this longing expressed in his letter, would lead to his having heart fellowship with these dear believers. He knew that it would lead him to prayer. He knew that his longings expressed in prayer would lead to the practical outworking of their mutual faith in a very wonderful way. He knew how important fellowship in the faith, fellowship around the truth of the word was. He knew that the faith which they had in their hearts, and the truth of the word which they shared together in relation to the Lord Jesus would glorify God and lead to their bearing fruit together to His glory and the furtherance of His kingdom. He longed greatly for them with the affection of Jesus Christ.

This should show to us all that knowing the reality of the affections of Jesus Christ is something that each of us should long for, so that we might be satisfied by His presence and power in our lives; that presence and power and wisdom and love of Christ’s love toward us

which brings contentment. But that Christian contentment does not lead to idleness or monkishness; the desire to be left alone, or merely to be satisfied or happy to be alone. It should lead to our thinking of how much we love Christ and the brethren, and how much we long to share spiritual truth and fellowship together with them in the living of our daily lives, as well as in our times together with each other at church. Paul knew that God was sovereign in all this. He knew that God had providentially so ordered things that his witness for the truth would be most effective in accordance with His purposes and plans for Paul's life. He knew that his being in prison would turn out for the furtherance of the gospel. But he also knew that God pays attention to the details of all of the desires of the people of God. He knows their hearts.

These longings that the apostle had for them were holy longings; to see Christ working in the lives of these dear brethren to establish them in their faith so that they would glorify God in the best possible way. The best possible way is having Christian love at work in your heart and life. It is to be able to show other Christians the love of Christ and to have the affection of Jesus Christ at work leading you on to greater service to Him in the context of helping others in their living their lives to Him. Let us remember that the risen, living, ascended Lord does have affections which He communicates to His dear brethren. Philippians 2, verse 1 – “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

You can see from this, that as we draw comfort and encouragement from Christ Himself in fellowship with Him in prayer, when we remember on a regular basis what He has done for us through His perfect obedience to God's law, from what He has done for us in His laying down His life for our sins, in what He continues to do for us through the powerful working of His Holy Spirit in our lives, filling us with His love, His tender mercies that that He gives to us; we then, are able to minister to others in the way of showing them mercy, and rejoicing to serve them, because we have come to know experientially how powerful the grace of Christ is. We can be like-minded with them, knowing that we do not have to have our own way in things always. We can show love and Christian affection to them, knowing Christ's love and affection for us. We can show the same love to others that Christ has shown to us. We can be of one accord with them, and one mind with them in the practical outworking of our faith.

I hope that you can now see now, that there is this holy, and pure, and perfect affection in Christ for you, my dear brother, and you, my dear sister. Christ is always for you when you have been justified by His grace. Christ's life is always with you in His affection towards you, in the ministry of His Holy Spirit to your soul. This ministry of the Holy Spirit, giving you the graces of love and joy, kindness and patience, gentleness and goodness, it all flows out of Christ's redeeming love for you. When You fall into sin and do not see the error of your ways, He disciplines you and He leads you to interact with the very Christians who will be able to help you to learn to walk in His ways, because you see His love in them. It is because Christ has accomplished redemption that He is able to convey His affection for you in a perfect way, in accordance with the will of God concerning you, and in accordance with the truth of the Scriptures.

You will say to me – Well I surely wish that I had the kind of longing for the brethren that the apostle Paul had. How do I see it come about in me? Well, you must learn it from Christ Himself. It says in Isaiah chapter 30, verse 18 in the New American Standard – “Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.” “For the Lord is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him.” “O people in Zion, inhabitant in Jerusalem, you will weep no longer.” “He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you.” “Although the Lord has given you bread of privation and water of oppression, He you Teacher will no longer hide Himself, but

your eyes will behold your Teacher.” “Your ears will hear a word behind you, ‘This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right or to the left.’” Now, even though these words are prophetic of the time of conversion of the Jews and the Millennium, still the principles of the Lord’s faithful love apply to every dear believer in Christ. The Lord does long to be gracious to you in accordance with His word. Even so, knowing His love, you ought to be able to long for other believers with the affection of Christ. God was Paul’s witness that he had this great longing in his heart. And that longing translated into the action of prayer. Paul’s heart fellowship with the believers in Philippi continued with his prayer for them

2nd – With the request that their love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. (verses 9 and 10a)

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent...” (NASB) Joseph Benson the commentator says – “that ye may approve – Greek, εἰς τὸ δοκιμαζειν, that ye may try, or prove by experience; things that are excellent – Not only those that are good, but the very best; the superior excellence of which is hardly discerned but by the adult Christian. The original expression, τὰ διαφερόντα, is, literally, “the things that differ”: that you may discern the real difference which there is in things, namely, in matters of doctrine, experience, and practice; how truth differs from, and how much it excels error; how much fervency of spirit, a life of entire devotedness to God, and continual, persevering diligence in the work of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love, differs from and excels lukewarmness of heart, negligence of life, sloth, indolence, and the being weary of well-doing.” (end of quote)

You can see from the way that Paul worded verse 9 this love of the brethren needs to be directed by real knowledge and all wise and correct spiritual discernment, if it is to be glorifying to God and Christ, and of service in furthering His purposes in the lives of others. As Christians, we cannot simply live by our own thoughts and observations concerning other people. God knows these people much better than we do, and so, we need His help in loving them. And so I believe that the words “real knowledge and all discernment” relate not only to the Christian love which lives according to Biblical principles of truth, but it means our crying to God for the wisdom in how to rightly respond to them. We pray for the wisdom and knowledge from God’s Spirit to act and react rightly and lovingly in the midst of the many situations of interaction that we find ourselves in, with other believers around us.

This is something that we must be often praying about, because we may have love for the brethren, but it may over the course of time, be dampened by their not living up to the expectations that we have of them; our knowing how much good doctrine that they have received, and the fact that they are supposed to be living it out. We may become disappointed and discouraged with them because we do not see them living up to all the truth that we know that they have. Our love may actually become cold toward them. Here Paul prays that their love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. Our focus must be in praying for the believers that we are around, often; people in the church that we rub shoulders with quite often, so that their love would abound more and more so that they will approve the things that are excellent.

But we pray for ourselves too. We ask for that wisdom that will enable us to discern the right course of action in the way that we think and the things that we do. We ask for grace not to follow after the false wisdom and philosophies of the world. We ask that we would pursue the excellent things which are in accordance with the word of God; the truths and principles of holiness and righteousness which are found by keeping the commandments of God. But, you see, there is a way that the commands of God can be kept to the glory of God, and that is by faith working by means of love. But that love must be guided by real knowledge and all discernment. This is found by coming to know the reality of having fellowship with the Lord Jesus; in your

coming to know the power and presence of the Holy Spirit helping you on to wise discernment in relation to how you keep God's commandments to His glory.

This is what Paul was praying for, for these believers. We should pray in this same way for ourselves and for those believers we would help. Lord, give me wisdom in how I might keep this commandment to the glory of Your name. Let me know how I can love this believer in front of me, more and more with the discernment which You alone can give me, so that they will be helped and You will be glorified. Help me, O Lord, to approve the things that are excellent, and not compromise with the carnal wisdom of the world; that which might be the easy and convenient thing to do, but which will not honor You by my taking that easy by-path. Lord, let me add to my faith, moral excellence, and to my moral excellence knowledge, and to my knowledge self-control, and to my self-control perseverance, and to my perseverance godliness, and to my godliness, brotherly kindness, and to my brotherly kindness, Christian love. For I know that this is the way that you will be glorified through me.

3rd – Fellowship in prayer is a request to God that other believers would be established in a sincere faith. (verse 10b)

“...That you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” The word “sincere” in the original Greek is ειλικρινεις, (eilikrineis); from ελη, the shining, or splendour, of the sun, and κρινω, to judge. I am told that it properly signifies objects or things that are “being examined in a bright light.” These things are by this means “found pure, and without fault.” We must all realize that God is the one who examines our hearts. It is He and only He, that can cause us by the grace of Christ to be pure in heart; to be sincere in our faith. 1st Timothy 1: 5 says – “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.” Again, I would say to you that since this is our goal, we must learn to pray these things for ourselves as well as others; that we might sincere and without offense till the day of Christ. The day of Christ comes for all those who die before the Second Coming of Christ, at the time of their own personal death. At that time, their spirit will be made perfect in holiness and they will be brought into heaven directly. There, they will await the time of the resurrection of the dead which will take place when Christ returns to judge the world and glorify His saints. We must ask ourselves – Is my faith sincere? Do I have humble, sincere, and straightforward dealings with God in prayer over all the issues of my life? Do I pray for other believers that they would be sincere in their faith, and straightforward in this same way?

And then finally – Paul concludes with a request that the Philippian believers would be filled with the fruits of righteousness. (verse 11)

“Having been filled (or being filled) with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ (or comes through Jesus Christ), to the glory and praise of God.” The wording of this sentence is indicating to us that a Christian who is sincere in their faith will be filled with the fruits of righteousness. We read in Galatians 5 of the fruit of the Spirit which is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. And we should understand that in being filled with the Spirit we will produce, we will bring forth, good fruit unto our God, and we will prove ourselves to be good trees bearing good fruit. But let us do all that we do so that Christ Himself will receive the glory. These fruits come not from our own unaided efforts, but by and through Jesus Christ. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2: 10)

And in Hosea chapter 14 and verse 8, the Lord says to Israel – “I have heard and observed him.” “I am like a green cypress tree; Your fruit is found in Me.” “Who is wise?” “Let him understand these things.” “Who is prudent?” “Let them know them.” “For the ways of the Lord are right; the righteous will walk in them.” Brethren, let us see all the fruit that we bear for God and for Christ coming from Him. For this will tend to the glory and praise of God.

