

To Die is Gain

THE PATH TO JOY, A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

LESSON 2 (1:1-11)

Even in his suffering he thought of them—they were in his heart; they occupied his mind and prayers. Time and distance had not caused Paul to forget their acts of love toward him, nor did his chains cause them to forget his labor and sacrifice for them.

Their love for one another was simply an extension of the love they had been shown—the self-sacrificial love of Christ. Paul willingly gave himself for the Philippians, and in turn they gave of themselves to him and to the cause of Christ for which he labored.

Paul prayed from his confines that the *agape* love they had shown him would abound to all peoples. Its continuation was essential to a vibrant relationship with Christ and a vital and effective community. Without it, the Philippians would become as a “*sounding brass or clanging symbol*” (1 Corinthians 13:1), but with it they would not fail (13:8).

READ PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8.

1. What is a saint? Compare this designation to the title Paul gave himself and Timothy in verse 1. How do they differ?
2. How does Paul feel about the Philippian believers? *Why* does he feel this way? (v.5, 7)
3. In verse 5, the Greek word for *fellowship* is *koinonia*. *Koinonia* is intimate fellowship, first with God through Jesus Christ. Second, it is the unification of believers in like-mindedness and common purpose, involving ready sharing and willing contribution.ⁱ What contributes to the lack of *koinonia* among believers today?

4. The Philippian believers were a part of what God was doing through Paul. What does this reveal about their thoughts toward church communities outside their own? How ought we to emulate their behavior?

5. Reread Philippians 1:6. *Began* means “to take the first step(s) in carrying out an action”. *Complete* means “to bring to a whole with all the necessary parts or elements”. How does this verse apply to the work Christ does *for us, in us* and *through us*?

6. How could the Philippians be assured of Paul’s love for them?

Are words enough? Why or why not?

KEEP READING: PHILIPPIANS 1, VERSES 9-11.

7. Does one’s love for others grow as his love for Christ increases? Is love for others an accurate measure of one’s growth and maturity? Explain.

8. Explain the difference between sentimental love and love that exercises knowledge and discernment.ⁱⁱ According to verse 10a, for what purpose did Paul pray for them to love in this way?

9. According to 1 Corinthians 8:1 and 13:2, what is knowledge and/or discernment without love?
10. Love has been described as “the desire to give of one’s self to serve the needs of others.” Why is it imperative that an individual be able to distinguish between what is good and what is excellent? Can one act in love to another’s detriment? Explain.
11. Return to Philippians. *Eilikrines* (*sincere*, v.10) comes from the words “sun” and “to judge”, thus indicating purity that is tested by the light of the sun. Additionally, the Latin rendering *sincerus* means “without wax”.

Changes in world powers caused the destruction of many archeological works and artifacts. When these works of art became popular again, dishonest dealers would piece together broken statues and vases using wax to conceal their true condition. Selling it as a genuine and perfect piece, the dealer would prey upon and profit from unsuspecting victims. Upon display, the sun would shine through the piece, revealing its cracks. As the wax heated and melted the work was left in ruins, devastating the buyer. This prompted reputable art dealers to label their materials, *sincerus*—without wax, unmixed, unadulterated, perfect and genuine.

Paul desired that the Philippians, and all believers, be sincere in their love toward others. In contrast, describe insincere love. What causes an individual to be insincere, acting with affectation and pretense? What effect can insincere love have on others?

What does sincere love require?

12. In verse 10, Paul also prayed that the Philippians' love would be "*without offense*" (*blameless*). This means that they were not to promote sin in the lives of others by their actions or lifestyle. Read Acts 24:16, 1 Corinthians 10:23-24, 31-33, 11:1, and 1 John 1:10. Based on these verses, what does it mean to love without offense?

According to Philippians 2:2-4, where does offense find its root?

Take a moment and consider whether you are engaged in, or condoning of, any activity that draws others away from Christ, rather than drawing them to Him. Are you willing to forsake your rights for the benefit of others?

13. Return to Philippians 1, verse 11. What is the difference between spiritual fruit and religious activity?

14. Fruit can be described as the external evidence of Christ's inner workings; it is the life of Jesus manifested in our flesh. Read Matthew 5:1-10, 13:23, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Galatians 5:22-24, Ephesians 5:9-11, and James 3:16-18. List the evidences of Christ's indwelling.

15. What prevents this?

Consider Matthew 12:33 and John 15:2-8. Are those who fail to produce fruit living and reigning under the Holy Spirit's control? Explain.

16. It was Paul's hope that our choices and actions—and the Philippians'—not be based upon the law, but on whether they would bring glory and praise to God. What is the difference?

17. Why are all the elements of Paul's prayer vital to the health of the individual and the church?

¹ Paul expounds upon his definition by referencing *koinonia* six times in his letter to the Philippians—1:5, 7, 2:1, 3:10, 4:14, 15.

² Love has been described as the “desire to give of one’s self to serve the needs of others. But love needs to know how to serve others... Only a doctor who knows how to make a diagnosis and perform the operation can serve the patient in need of life-saving surgery. As G. K. Chesterton understood, “Love is not blind.” Love needs to see clearly and speak truthfully. Love knows how to see and speak... Paul adds the word *all* to *insight* to stress the need for wisdom to do the right thing and to speak the right word in every circumstance. Without *insight*, love does not know how to express itself with actions and words that are appropriate to each situation of life... Only by insight does love have the direction to act wisely in ways that give healing, joy and life to those who are loved.” (Hansen, G. W. (2009). *The Letter to the Philippians* (pp. 58, 59). Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.)