

PRAYING & GROWING - PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

1-2 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- They were both in Philippi during the first visit, though Timothy is not expressly mentioned.
- They were servants of Christ. Before we're anywhere, we should be "in Christ."
- Overseers and deacons. Elders were appointed in churches. Deacons serving in a more official capacity. We're all servants. It's encouraging to know they had elders and deacons considering it was more than likely predominantly gentile. Let's encourage growth among one another.

3-5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

- A prayer pattern of Paul's:
 - **Romans 1:7-8** "To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world."
 - **1 Corinthians 1:2-4** "To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,"
 - **2 Corinthians 13:9** "For we are glad when we are weak and you are strong. Your restoration is what we pray for."
 - **Ephesians 1:15-16** "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,"
 - **Colossians 1:2-4** "To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,"
 - **1 Thessalonians 1:1-3** "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ."
 - **2 Thessalonians 1:1-3** "Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God our

Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, as is right, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing."

- **2 Timothy 1:2-4** "To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God whom I serve, as did my ancestors, with a clear conscience, as I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. As I remember your tears, I long to see you, that I may be filled with joy."
- **Philemon 3-6** "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ."
- How encouraging to know that someone is continually praying for you? Always praying for you. AND that prayer brings them joy. Is it just me or does this make you feel guilty? I really need to think like Paul and enlarge my heart.
- **Participation.** Fellowship. Sharing. Something you have in common. Joint participation, etc. This is what gave him great joy in his prayer. Because there was a spiritual family. This is so important, because there's so much that Paul left behind. Not that he was complaining - Christ was worth it all. But still - you wonder if Paul lost ties with his own family. Yet, through all his trials and tribulations, Paul would think of them, pray for them and have great joy. We'll get there later, but when Paul instructs them to rejoice and take their anxieties to God through prayer while focusing on what is good and receiving peace from God . . . makes you wonder if they were part of Paul's own process in finding peace through persecution. **The fact that you don't give up helps others not to give up.**

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.

- I know that Barnabas was called the son of encouragement. I'm sure he was, but that doesn't mean Paul wasn't.
- It's encouraging to know others are praying to God for you, but it's also a blessing to hear others encourage one another to their face. I continue to be encouraged at how Paul speaks to brethren. Even when they have big problems (unlike Philippi) he encourages them. I think that's because Christians are trained to think the best in each other. Unless we prove otherwise - we need to think good things of one another. We need to help the body. Of course, more than anything, is Paul's unmoving belief in Jesus. Jesus would have His day when all would appear before Him to receive what is done for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.
 - Understanding that it's not everyone's personality to give feedback to others and some do it better than others. Still, it seems right to encourage one another in the fruit we see produced and speak confidently concerning God's promises. Listen, we all have horror stories in the church or stories of disappointment. If we can acknowledge the troubles, we should certainly acknowledge the good. Our young people need to see

and hear that. But again, our primary focus is not on secular talents and accomplishments, but our spreading the word of God. We need to be participate in living and sharing the gospel.

- When's the last time you've encouraged someone or thanked them for sharing this with you? When's the last time we've prayed for each other in this way? Would we have these kind of things in common with Paul or would he seem "too religious" for us?

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.

- Titus 2:9-14. Grace teaches us. Teaches us to change. But we also find that grace is our motivation in suffering. Jesus gave Himself - that's the grace of God.
- We'll get into his persecution later, but let's talk about his use of grace. Grace isn't separated from suffering. In fact, it was grace that put Paul and kept Paul in prison. No soldier feels he should abandon his country when he's at war. It's because of his country that he went to fight in the first place. But of course, our battle isn't with flesh and blood, is it? Paul battle, ultimately, wasn't with Rome or the guards.

⁸⁻¹¹ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- Are we growing? In what way? Not talking about finances. Not talking about expanding your families. Not necessarily talking about having more friends around you (though this could be part of it).
 - We're taking about increasing our love for God and one another. This is not separated from increasing in knowledge and discernment. So, has your love increased over the past year? What are some indicators? If the indicators are missing, what's the root cause? So many times we focus on symptoms instead of the root cause . . . which is why we cease to increase.

So our challenge for this week: praying for one another in the areas that matter the most. Look at our personal growth of love - how are we doing? Is there anything that needs to be addressed? Perhaps reach out to someone and let them know you're praying for them and appreciate their fellowship in Christ Jesus and His gospel.