

**Our Love for One Another**  
**Philippians 1:9-11**  
**Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024**  
**By Ryan Perry**

**Scripture**

**Philippians 1:9-11**

***[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.***

**Let's Pray**

**Introduction**

A man decides that he is going to take his daughter Helen (nine years old) and son Brandon (seven years old) to the hardware store to do a little shopping. As they drove up, they spotted a eighteen-wheeler in the parking lot with a big sign on it that said, "Petting Zoo." The kids jumped up in a rush and asked, "Dad, Dad. Can we go? Please. Please. Can we go?"

He said "Sure," and gave them each \$1 and sent them on their way. The dad, believing his kids would be busy for a while, went into the hardware store to look for some new tools. However, a few minutes later, he turned around only to realize that Helen was walking along behind him.

Shocked that she was with him and realizing that she looked a little sad he bent down to ask her what was wrong. Helen looked up at him, and with tears in her eyes said, "Well dad, the petting zoo actually cost \$2, so I gave my dollar to Brandon so he could go.

You see Helen, was a little girl who loved cuddly and furry creatures almost more than anybody her father had known, and yet, she loved her brother so much that she was willing to sacrifice her opportunity to pet these animals so that her brother could have that experience instead.

And even though this may seem like a cute story of one sibling being nice to another, it actually gives us an example **self-giving or sacrificial love! A love that gives even when it costs something.**

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This morning, as we unpack Paul's prayer for the Philippians, we are going to be called to live out this same kind of love.

If you were here this past week you will remember that in Philippians 1:3-8, Paul was thanking God and praying for them with joy because of their “**partnership with him in the gospel.**”

This word “partnership” is the Greek word *koinonia* (fellowship) and it points to the idea of a deep family relationship and locking arms in doing the work of the gospel.

So Paul saw the Philippians as his family who were actively loving and supporting him by laboring with him in the work of Christ.

And it is this deep family relationship that helps us to understand the content of his prayer in verse 9-11.

Because a prayer that is centered around growing in their love for one another only makes sense within the confines of a deeply connected community or family.

Therefore, everything we talk about this morning won’t just focus on a general call to love people, but will be about growing in our love for one another within the body of Christ.

So as we unpack this prayer we will see that Paul focuses on four main areas of our love for one another:

- The Quality of Our Love for One Another
- The Outcome of Our Love for One Another
- The Foundation of Our Love for One Another
- The Goal of Our Love for One Another

I will say that there is a lot in this prayer. However, we will just touch briefly on each of these points and even a few sub-points because each one will be worked out in more detail later in the letter.

So in one sense, this ends up being a prayer of preparation as Paul gets ready to work out the details of what this love should look like practically within the Philippian church.

And as a prayer of preparation, my hope is that we will all begin to examine our love for one another as a deep family in Christ. Is it growing? Is it self-giving? Is it leading people into a deeper relationship with Jesus? And is it focused on Christ as its foundation and goal?

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So let’s begin this morning by looking at Paul’s first focus area in this prayer, which is:

### **The Quality of Our Love for One Another**

Now, when we talk about the quality of our love for one another we are really talking about what our love should contain or what it should be like. And the first thing that Paul says is that:

Our love for one another should be selfless and growing

## Philippians 1:9

**[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,**

The word Greek word for “love” that Paul uses here is actually *agape*, a word that he also uses in Romans 5:7-8 when talking about God’s love for us. As he writes:

**[7] For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—[8] but God shows his love (agape) for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.**

These verses are important because they help us to understand both the quality and the origin of the love that Paul is praying for.

According to Paul, *agape* love is a sacrificial and self-giving love, the love that God poured upon us when he sent Christ to die on our behalf.

This is also seen later in Philippians 2:1-11 where Paul tells the church to have the same (*agape*) love, and then gives them the picture of Christ emptying himself, coming to earth, and dying on the cross, as the ultimate example of that love.

And since God poured his selfless love upon us through Christ, we too, according to Paul are called to embody that same love within the community of faith.

**But it isn’t just a static love.** Paul doesn’t say, “Hey Philippians, you only have to love each other this much.” Which if we are honest would have been nice.

As humans, we like to know how much or how little work we actually have to do. So we probably would have enjoyed it if Paul had put a limit on this selfless love.

**But he doesn’t.** Instead, he goes the opposite direction and prays that their love would “*abound more and more.*” **That it would super abound or grow excessively.**

**Paul’s prayer and desire is that they would be marked by a selfless, ever-growing, and ever-increasing love for one another.**

The infinite sacrificial love of Christ that they received on the cross, is now meant to be the self-giving love that characterizes and grows within each believer in their church.

### **Application:**

Now, as I said at the beginning, I believe their mutual love for one another is one of the reasons Paul prayed for their selfless love to grow. However, I think there is another reason why Paul prayed this way for them.

It is because there were seeds of selfish ambition and pride that had taken root in this church. This is why he reminds them in the first part of Philippians 2:3:

**[3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit,...**

So yes, they were supporting Paul and giving freely to his ministry. However, there were still those in the church who were not motivated by the sacrificial love of Christ and were instead more focused on their own desires, wants, and needs than they were on the needs of the body.

And in 2024, I don't think our situation as a church is probably that different from theirs. As I said last week, we are a church that gives a fairly large sum of money to fund global missions, and there are many of you who give of your time, talents, and resources so that we can function as a church.

I thank God for all of that, and like Paul, I believe we can pray for our church with joy because of the resources given and the work that is being done.

But despite all of those good things, we should also be willing to do a personal inventory and ask ourselves, **“Is my life motivated and marked by a selfless and sacrificial love for God’s people, the church? Is our church, marked by a self-giving love for one another?”**

Now listen. I am not saying this so that all of you feel like you need to give more or serve more in the church. That might be what some of you need to hear and do, but that isn't my main concern here.

Do we see the richness and goodness of Christ's sacrificial love for us, and are we motivated to pour out that same kind of love for others within the family of LEFC?

Because if we are going to be a church that partners in the work of spreading the gospel, selfless love can't just be something we talk about, but must be something we live out and grow in toward one another.

As Jesus said in John 13:35:

***[35] By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love (agape) for one another.”***

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But if this kind of love is meant to be a defining mark of our fellowship and is supposed to be something that we grow in as a church, how does that happen? Or, what should that growth look like? According to Paul:

Our love for one another should grow with knowledge and wisdom.

**Philippians 1:9**

***[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,***

When Paul uses the word “knowledge” here it is the Greek word *epignosis* and it points to **a growing understanding of a particular object or person that comes from experience or through a personal relationship.**

And when Paul uses this word in the New Testament, more often than not, the personal or relational knowledge that he has in view is our knowledge and experience of our triune God. As he writes in Ephesians 1:16-17:

***[16] I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge (epignosis) of him,***

So if Paul is talking about our need to grow in our knowledge of God, then how does that relate to our growth in selfless love? For that answer let’s look together at 1 John 4:7-8:

***[7] Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. [8] Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.***

Here is how this works:

Our triune God is the origin of the agape or selfless love that Paul is praying for in the Philippians. **As John says “love is from God.”** And it’s a love that was wonderfully and graciously poured out upon them and us when he sent Christ to die on our behalf.

Therefore, if we are going to grow in that kind of love for one another, then we need to deeply and intimately know and love the God who first loved us and freely gave his Son for us. As John also says: **“whoever loves has been born of God and knows God.”**

**Because our ability to selflessly love one another comes from the God who has sacrificially loved us.**

### **Application:**

So I want to encourage you this morning, that your relationship with our triune God should be the highest priority in your life. You should want to seek, experience, and know him through his word, prayer, and the fellowship of his people, the church.

This priority is made clear by Jesus when he reiterates the greatest commandment from Deuteronomy. As he says in Matthew 22:37-38:

***[37] And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. [38] This is the great and first commandment.***

Knowing and experiencing God should be the longing and driving force of our lives.

Then, as we grow in our knowledge and love of God, the overflow flow of that relationship will begin to manifest itself in a selfless love for one another.

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However, this is one of those things that probably feels more easily said than done. Because the truth is, loving other people is hard, and I don't think we often know what that's supposed to look like.

**Paul knew that.** Which is why he prays in Philippians 1:9 that their love would also grow with **“all or complete discernment.”**

Now, the meaning of the Greek word for “discernment” **points to an insight that guides our actions.** Another common word we might use here is **“wisdom.”**

So Paul, for sure, wants the Philippians to grow in their ability to love one another with the sacrificial love of Christ.

**But he also knows that this is only possible as they first grow in their knowledge and love for God, and as a result, grow in their understanding of how to apply it within their fellowship.**

### **Application:**

Now thankfully, Paul doesn't pray that they would understand how love each other and then leave without answers. As in most of Paul's letters, he is going to spend the majority of his time, especially in Philippians 2, unpacking how they can practically live out the love of Christ within their faith community.

But until we get there, I think we can start the process by examining our own hearts with these questions:

**Do we regularly spend time in prayer, asking God how we can better love and serve his people? Have we asked him how our gifts, time, and resources can be poured out in a deeper way to the faith community around us?**

I have to admit, this is something that I struggle to pray. I begin to think, I've got my job responsibilities and if I complete them, I've done enough and I don't want to be asked to do anything else.

Now, do we have limits? Absolutely! We are human, and we only have a finite amount of time, energy, and resources. But our default, my default, heart condition should never be, “I've done enough.”

Instead, the selfless love of Christ should compel all of us to want to grow in our ability to pour out our lives in service to one another. **And to do it so that the otherworldly love of God would be seen and experienced in our church and lives would be transformed by Christ.**

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This brings us to next focus area of Paul's Prayer.

## The Outcome of Our Love for One Another

And according to Paul there are two main reasons why our selfless love for one another should be growing with a deep knowledge of God and with wisdom. And the first one is:

Our love for one another will focus on what is important

### Philippians 1:9-11a

**[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11a] filled with the fruit of righteousness...**

Now, I realize you are probably sick of me defining words for you, but this is one of those passages where there just happens to be a lot of terms that need explaining.

And one of those is the word “approve” which in Greek is *dokimazo*. It’s a word that generally means “to test” and is usually used when referring to “testing metals to see if they are genuine.”

But in this context, Paul uses it to mean **testing or approving what is excellent or superior, or choosing between what is good and what is the best.**

So Paul’s point here is this: If the Philippians are filled with a love for one another that is growing in their knowledge and love for God and is full of wisdom, they are going to be a church that gives their energy and attention not just to good things, but to the best things.

### Application:

And my hope is that this brings a lot of relief to your soul. Because I know that praying and asking God a question like, **“How can I better love and serve your people?”** can feel like you are signing yourself up to do an endless list of duties and tasks that will leave you burnt out and empty.

**But that isn’t what Paul is praying, nor is that what God is asking of you.** Instead, what Paul has in mind is that we would stop focusing on the things that are a waste of time and even on the things that may be good, but aren’t best.

So that we would continually be asking and praying “Lord, what are the best things that I can be doing to love and serve your people?” Or “How can I best use my time, energy, and resources, in this community of faith, so that people would come to know you and love you?”

Because a God-given selfless love that is full of wisdom, will always be looking and working for what is best for God’s kingdom and for his people.

As Paul writes in Ephesians 5:15-16:

**[15] Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, [16] making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.**

And when we focus on what is important, making the best use of our time, we will begin to realize that our time is best spent in serving, loving, and building others up in Christ.

This is the second reason Paul gives us for why we should have a wise and God-filled love for one another.

Our love for one another will prepare us for eternity

### **Philippians 1:9-11a**

**[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11a] filled with the fruit of righteousness...**

Again, terms are important, and at first glance, it's easy to miss or misinterpret what Paul is saying here.

When Paul uses the word Pure (*eilikrines*) it actually refers to having **“sincere and pure motives.”** And then when he uses the word blameless (*aproskopos*) it means **“to not lead others into sin or to not cause others to stumble.”**

We can see this in 1 Corinthians 10:32, which is the only other time that this Greek word is used. It says:

### **1 Corinthians 10:32**

***[32] Give no offense (aproskopos) to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God,***

When we put these terms together, we see that the outcome of having a growing and selfless love that is full of wisdom and focused on the best things is that we will become a people who genuinely desire to keep others from stumbling in their faith.

Meaning, that we will desire to work for their good and their growth in godliness, holiness, and love so that they would endure in their faith and be ready for **“the day of Christ,”** that day when Jesus returns.

This is why Paul adds the line *“filled with the fruit of righteousness...”* in verse 11. Because the fruit that Paul has in mind is the fruit of good works that we do for others as we help them grow and persevere in their faith.

### **Application:**

**Let's just stop and think about that for a minute.** Our love for others is supposed to be selfless and growing, filled with the knowledge of God and wisdom, so that we can focus on what is best.

And according to Paul, the best thing that we can do is to love and build others up in their faith so that they would be **prepared to meet Jesus.**



Have you ever thought about your purpose in that way? That you are called to love and build others up so they would be prepared to meet Jesus?

Wow. That is a high calling that God has put on our lives as Christians. **But I also believe that it brings clarity to what is important and what isn't.**

We spend so much time worrying or spending time on things that have no eternal value. Things that will probably be burnt up and won't matter when Christ returns.

But Paul prays a prayer that gives the Philippians and us a sobering picture of what life is all about.

For the Philippians, life isn't supposed to be about selfish gain and ambition, security, or trying to avoid persecution. And for us, it's not about retirement, comfort, ease, or health.

Instead, Paul wants all of us to look past our current circumstances to see the reality that eternity is coming, our citizenship is in heaven, and our call as followers of Christ is to prepare our community, this church, for that day when we see Jesus face to face.

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But as sobering and weighty as this calling may be, Paul is so good to always bring us back to the foundation of our faith, which is ultimately the foundation of our love for one another.

## **The Foundation of Our Love for One Another**

### **Philippians 1:9-11**

**[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

When I talked about the reasons that Paul wrote this letter, I mentioned that one of those reasons was to give comfort to the Philippians. They were not only worried about Paul in prison, but they were worried, as we will see next week, that the gospel wasn't actually doing anything.

That God had abandoned Paul in prison, and because of their persecution in Philippi, he had abandoned them. But the opening verses of this letter are meant calm these fears and to give them the confidence that God is not only still there but that he is working in them and through them.

As Paul wrote in Philippians 1:6 from last week:

***[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.***

God has started a work in them, he is doing a work in them, and he will be the one to complete that work in them.

And it is with that confidence that he can now make this prayer that their love would be selfless and would grow in such a way that it would be filled with good works that are preparing people to meet Jesus.

But just to be sure that they didn't forget that God was the one who will do this work in them and through them, he says in this prayer that it all comes **“through Jesus Christ.”**

### **Application:**

Now, for some of us, this reminder by Paul might seem a little unnecessary. Yet, I want to contend and fight for the idea that I believe this is reminder by Paul is totally necessary and is of supreme value.

Church, I have given you a lot this morning. In these three short verses we have received the following things:

- A call to embody and live out the sacrificial and selfless love of Christ.
- A call to grow continually in that love for others.
- A call to grow in our knowledge and love of God.
- A call to wisdom and discernment so that we know how to love and serve others.
- And we are to do all of this so that we will spend our time on what is most important.
- Which is working to build others up in their faith so they are ready to meet Jesus.

And after receiving all of this you probably did one of three things.

1. You checked out because you couldn't remember it all.
2. You shrugged your shoulders because you realized you couldn't actually do all of that.
3. You began to obsessively think through how you could actually do those things and your pulse is now somewhere around 140.

But Paul is reminding the Philippians and us, that this call to live out and embody a selfless love that overflows in good toward others and prepares them for Jesus isn't dependent upon us.

Because let's be honest, when we begin to believe that the Christian life is dependent upon us we either crumble under the weight and pressure of getting everything right or we become arrogant and prideful as if somehow we can save ourselves and don't need Jesus.

And as we continue in this letter we will both of these issues showing up within the church of Philippi.

But Paul's prayer pulls us out of our self-reliance and keeps us from arrogance and pride, and at the same time, it keeps us from giving up when our faith gets hard.

Instead, it gives us the confidence that we can continually and relentlessly pursue a God-centered and Christ-bought love that builds up his church because we know that Jesus is the one who empowers it, and he is the one who will accomplish the work.

**He will bear the fruit of eternity preparing works in your life and in the lives of his people.**

And we can be assured that he will do this because his plan is to use our selfless eternity preparing love for one another to accomplish the ultimate purpose for which we were created. **That he would be glorified.**

**The Goal of Our Love for one another**

God's glory

As Paul writes at the very end of Philippians 1:11c:

**[11c]...to the glory and praise of God.**

You and I, and this church, exist for one purpose and one purpose only. So that God would be honored, worshiped, adored, and glorified.

As God says through the prophet in Isaiah 43:6-7.

**Isaiah 43:6-7**

***[6] I will say to the north, Give up,  
and to the south, Do not withhold;  
bring my sons from afar  
and my daughters from the end of the earth,  
[7] everyone who is called by my name,  
whom I created for my glory,  
whom I formed and made."***

And everything that God is doing in us individually and in us as a church is working for that one grand and glorious purpose.

So let's have confidence in God this morning, and begin to take seriously Paul's prayer that we would become a people who deeply love God and one another with the sacrificial love of Christ.

Realizing that we have been given the glorious and weighty task of pouring out our lives in service to others so that they would be prepared for an eternity with Jesus.

And let's do this work willingly and joyfully, knowing that the fruit comes from Christ and will result in our fulfilling the purpose for which we were created. To bring glory, honor, and praise to our perfect, loving, and merciful, Triune God.

**Let's Pray.**