
The Letter of Paul to the Philippians
Part 4 – It is Jesus Who Causes the Christian's Growth
Philippians 1:3-11

This morning, as we continue our look at Paul's God-inspired letter to the believers in Philippi, let us be reminded always about the main truth Paul is sharing with them and with us.

Grace and peace is ours from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Where you find someone who knows about the grace of God, has received the grace of God and lives in the grace of God, there you will find someone who lives in great peace. Living in great peace with their God, with others and with themselves. And that is the place we all want to be isn't it? At peace with God, with those around and with ourselves.

Well, this life of peace can be yours. It is offered freely to you by the Creator of the Universe through His Son Jesus but as we saw last week, we can get sucked into a life of self-pity.

We all know that life is challenging. There are many things that come our way that are difficult. Physical ailments, child problems, work problems, marriage problems, world event problems, political problems and on and on it goes. There is no end to the amount of things happening around us and to us that can steal our peace.

If you have been sucked into a place where your peace is gone, I gave some practical advice last week that will help you and you can find on our church web-site. Each week the sermon I give is put in print on our web-site and the video of the service on our Facebook page.

Unfortunately for the last two weeks there has been a glitch with our video connection. Even though the service was broadcasted live, it did not record. We are working on it.

This study on the letter to the Philippians is a good study though for everyone, including my self to go back through. Repetition helps us to retain more of the truths that are shared and we want as much truth operating in our lives as possible right? It is living in the truth that will set you free and bring peace into your life.

Okay, let's read through our passage this morning found in Philippians, beginning in verse 6 of chapter 1.

Philippians 1:3-5, “ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

In the first couple of verses Paul shares with the Philippians how much he is praying for them. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, I offer prayer with joy he says.

Paul is probably reminded of Lydia who was one of the first converts in Macedonia, in Philippi. Or the jailer and his family who were saved. Look back with me at Lydia's story in Acts.

Acts 16:14-15, “And on the Sabbath day we (Paul and Silas) went outside the gate (of Philippi) to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to things spoken by Paul. And...she and her household (were) baptized...”

A couple of interesting things we find here. Lydia was from the city of Thyatira. There is only two places in the Bible where the city of Thyatira is mentioned. Here, in the fact that Lydia is from there, and in Revelation as one of the seven churches John was to write a letter to.

This fact makes me wonder if Lydia, who was visiting Philippi when Paul was there, I wonder if she and her family were the ones God used to plant the church in Thyatira? I think this might have been a possibility as look what happened to her in the last part of this verse 14.

“and the Lord opened her heart to respond to things spoken by Paul.”

1. It was the Lord who opened Lydia’s heart.

The Holy Spirit was stirring in Lydia’s heart and the word of God found a receptive heart and she and her household were wondrously transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus.

In verse 6 Paul wrote, **Philippians 1:6, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

Paul calls what happened in Lydia’s heart and the rest of the saints in Philippi, a good work. It is more than a good work, it is the best work for there is no better work that God ever performs than the miracle of the new birth in His kingdom. The regeneration and salvation of a soul. Forgiven and delivered from our trespasses and sins and to be made alive to real life in Christ Jesus.

This is God’s grace that is available for all people. While we were yet sinners, while we didn’t deserve it, God sent Christ die for us so we could be reborn into true life with Him. This is grace at its most powerful.

In God’s grace, Lydia’s heart was opened to receive the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. I have no doubt that because you are here this morning you have been moved by the Holy Spirit to open your heart to the message of salvation.

If you are unsure you responded to this message, please get with me or another trusted person you know who is a believer so you can get this issue settled and so you can move on with the Lord. Because there is more, much, much more.

In verse 9-11 Paul continues to pray possibly for Lydia and her family, for the jailer and his family and for the rest of the Christians in Philippi. Look with me.

Verses 9-11, “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Paul prays for the Christians in Philippi, that their love may abound more and more in real knowledge and discernment.

2. True love, a God given love is a mature love that is knowledgeable and discerning

So many times we hear the word love thrown around and used lightly. And while this use of the word love is probably partially true, a lot of the love the world knows is built upon emotions. If I feel good about you in the moment then I love you. If I don't then I don't love you. It depends on my emotions in the moment.

In one of the studies I have done it talks about the different levels of love. The first level is an emotional type of love like what I just mentioned. The second level of love is kind of a wilderness experience. The emotion is gone and there is kind of a barrenness. A lot of marriages end in this stage. When the emotions are gone.

But if you are blessed enough to make it through the wilderness in your marriage there is a third level, an invincible type of love. In this level the couple's love begins to grow at a deeper level. They know they will be faithful to one another. They enjoy being with one another and they look forward to what is in store in the future. This is the kind of deep love Paul is praying for the Christians in Philippi to experience and grow into.

How does the Christian grow in this invincible kind of godly love? A love that is kind, gentle, patient, peaceful and full of joy?

Look back with me at Philippians 1:6, **“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”**

Paul says he is confident that the One who called you into a relationship with Him, He is the one who will perfect that relationship.

3. God gives us an **invincible** love

This is another great move of grace of God in your life. He moved upon your heart to be open to the good news of salvation and now He is going to move on your heart to grow in a deeper, Christ-like invincible love. How does this occur? Much like the example I am about to show you.

As some of you know, Marlin and I are working on a couple of old cars. One of the parts of the car we are working on is this hood.

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Now, I will confess that I have had little to do with this hood other than help take it off. Marlin has been the one who has done all the work on it.

If you will notice there are quite a few spots of gray on this hood. These spots are areas that Marlin has been working on. This is a laborious process and he is doing a wonderful job. In order to take out the blemishes he sanded the hood and put some filler in the spots that needed it. He then sands them, fills them again and sands them again. Over and over the hood he goes until he is satisfied.

Marlin has even take the hood out of the shop and looked at it in the sunshine to see if there are more blemishes that need to be worked on. When he gets done it won't be as good as new, you can never return it completely to its original form, but he will get it close and when he does, it will look great. But it is a process.

The same is true of our growth in Christ. Again, in verse 9 Paul prays for growth in love through knowledge and discernment. And guess what? It is a process, it takes work and time for the restoration process to occur.

But here's the deal. Like the hood Marlin is working on has no capacity to restore itself, you have no capacity to restore yourself in Christ-likeness. That is God's and Jesus' work and they are more than happy to do it.

4. You have no ability to restore yourself in Christ-likeness

If this is the case then let's look to see what Jesus says about how we move ahead and grow in love. First Jesus said in **John 14:6**, "**I am the way, the truth and the life...**"

There are those who say you must do this, do that, give up this, start doing that and on and on they go about the things you must or must not do in order to maintain your relationship with God.

Later in this letter Paul calls these individuals dogs, evil workers, people of the false circumcision. They are wrong in their approach because they are trying to do the process in their own power but they have no more power in the process than the hood Marlin is working on.

Jesus said I am the way. I am the truth. It is because of Me, through Me and by Me and that you can grow for I am the life. How does this occur? Look what Jesus tells us.

John 15:4-5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; they who abide in Me and I in them, they bear much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”

5. Hanging out with Jesus means we get to grow in true love and become fruit bearers.

Reread verses 9-11 again, **“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”**

Hanging out with Jesus means that we get to grow in knowledge and not just any knowledge but real, heaven sent knowledge. Hanging out with Jesus means we get discernment. Discernment in what is right, what is the right timing. We get discernment so we know when to talk to people about the hard stuff and when not to.

It means we get to live in excellence and sincerity and be blameless till Jesus comes back. It means we get to be filled with and begin bearing the fruit of righteousness. The fruit of righteousness being love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness and self-control.

I don't know about you but I need and I want these things at greater levels working in my life and the only way, the only way to obtain them is through hanging out with Jesus because He is the truth and the life.

The grace of God through His Son Jesus is being extended to you to grow in love. The question is, are you receiving it?

Abiding and hanging out with Jesus is not just showing up to church once a week. It is not saying a prayer of help when things are tough. Hanging out with Jesus is positioning yourself to hear from Him. Spending time in His word, praying, listening and allowing Him to do the work in your heart that needs to be done. Take the dings out, sand a little on you, straighten things out a little, maybe even give you a new paint job.

As Marlin took the car hood out into the light, we have the great opportunity to let our lives be taken out into the Light, the Light of Christ where His love in us will begin to grow in real knowledge and discernment and fruits of righteousness will be ours.

Our God is so cool. So good. All we have to do is relax and spend time in the hands of our Savior and He does the rest.

I wanted to end this morning by sharing a short video. It is for Night to Shine but it is a true message for all of us.

https://www.timtebowfoundation.org/videos/night-to-shine-2020?utm_source