

## THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“A Blessed Prayer”

Philippians 1:9-11

### Introduction

1. A clear statement has been given about slaves, saints, and saved (vv. 1, 2). Along with the bishops and deacons, this provides the salutation of love to the church at Philippi.
2. The apostle Paul is filled with thanksgiving for the believers, hence he prays for them (vv. 3, 4), is gratified for their fellowship (probably their gifts) (v. 5), enjoys confidence about God’s work in them (v. 6), and has reciprocating thoughts with them (v. 7).
3. So persuaded is Paul about his good thoughts regarding the Philippians, he calls God as his witness (v. 8) that he really does pray for them (vv. 9-11). Note his openness “And this I pray.” There is no doubt as to the fact of his prayer nor the content of his prayer. The prayer content relates to four areas:

#### 1. THE HEART v. 9

The key here is that the love of the Philippians (your) might increase. What a purport for prayer (cf. purpose). The verb “abound” means to “overflow.” This, of course, means spiritual growth! The idea smacks of the work of the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39). Three additional subareas are listed:

##### a. Overflow -- more and more

The idea is difficult to capture, but surely there is the thought of boundless love. Love would be towards God, towards believers, and toward the world. Oh, Lord, increase our love!

##### b. Overflow -- in knowledge

An intensive preposition is compounded with the usual verb to indicate a real deep knowledge. This thought is used by Paul 16 times and 4 times by Peter. It expresses a depth of knowledge which gives rare insight (1 John 4:7).

##### c. Overflow -- in judgment

This is manifold (“all”) for its demands to be exercised. Discernment or insight is at the root of this word. The Messiah is sent to be with this -- quick of understanding or quick of scent (Isa. 11:3). It may well refer to the sense of spiritual smelling. 1 Cor. 12 might provide this idea (v. 17). Hence in the body there are spiritual feet, hands, ears, eyes, and noses!

#### 2. THE MIND v. 10

There is real design for the prayer of v. 9. It is a view to (that-- unto) approach a distinct object.

##### a. Mental approval

The articular infinitive emphasizes the goal of the overflowing heart. It is so that the believer will be able to discriminate. The verb used means to prove so as to set the seal of approval on one rather than another. Hence, to prove means to approve (cf. 1 Cor. 9:27).

##### b. Moral excellence

The neuter present participle, “things that are excellent,” may also be rendered “things that differ.” On the whole the former is preferred. Since it agrees with the concept of judgment (v. 9). Hence the mental approving is concerned with “things that are excellent.” The mind, therefore is directed to what is most discriminating. While

recognizing the distinction between good and not good, the good and better are the real issues. Blessed gift of discrimination based on the kind of heart described in the previous verse!

#### 3. THE CHARACTER v. 10

The progression of thoughts here is clear. First the heart, then the mind, and now the character is affected. The purpose clause with the verb “be” is indeed incredible. As the Spirit indicates, the character is touched in three dimensions.

##### a. Concerning ourselves

This is the emphasis of “sincere.” This word is only found here and in 2 Pet. 3:1, but its derivation seems to related to pure, single hearted. It suggests to be tested by the sunlight, something like an X-ray. Certainly the concept of simplification of motive and conduct is inherent.

##### b. Concerning others

“Without offense” may be intransitive or transitive. The former would emphasize the inward life of the Philippians and the latter concerns causing others to stumble. Surely both are meritorious (cf. Heb. 12:13).

##### c. Concerning our Lord

The character of the child of God should be with reference to or with a view to the “day of Christ.” Surely this is a major issue in the Word (Titus 2:11-13; 1 John 2:28).

#### 4. THE CONDUCT v. 11

What a climactic verse for this marvelous prayer. The perfect passive participle patently affirms the intent of the entire prayer. As Paul sat it out in the Roman prison, he was directed by the Holy Spirit to consider the heart, the mind, and the character of the Philippians. As a capstone to his prayer for them, the thought of consistently being filled captured his pen. Three considerations are sent forth:

##### a. Filled -- with what?

While there is divergence whether the text reads “fruits” or “fruit,” the idea is that righteousness is fruitful. All else considered, the prayer expects an abundance of fruit in a believer’s life.

##### b. Filled -- through Whom?

The only One through Whom fruit is possible is the Lord Jesus Christ. By His spirit, He promises new life and so also produces the fruit. He is the basis for it all (cf. John 15:1-8).

##### c. Filled -- for what?

Hallelujah. Who else but God gets all the glory and praise. The true goal of the whole process of salvation (Paul’s prayer) is the Lord (Ro. 11:36).

### Conclusion

Want to know how to pray? Read these verses. Here is a great stimulation and education on prayer. It is so sweet and instructive. God help us to pray like this for one another!