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## Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

### 1: 9-11

The prayer for the Philippians DIG: What five specific spiritual attributes did Paul pray for on behalf of the Philippians? What kind of love did Paul envision? What does it mean to discern the things that are excellent? What does it mean to live a sincere and blameless life? What is the evidence of our salvation? What is Paul's ultimate goal here?

REFLECT: How would you rate your prayer life from 1 to 10 (with 10 being passionate and 1 being nonexistent). How much do you pray for yourself and how much do you pray for others? Take five minutes to put Paul's prayer into your own words. In what ways are you showing the fruit of the Spirit in your life today? How do you glorify God in your life?

**The truest longings of the heart are revealed in prayer.**



At the beginning of **his** letter, **Paul** told **the Philippians** that **he prayed** for **them** on a regular basis, and that **he** made those **prayers** with **joy**: **Whenever I pray for you I always pray with joy (1:4)**. Now, flowing directly out of **his** own longing for **them with the tender affection of Messiah Yeshua (1:8)**,<sup>23</sup> **Paul's prayer** reveals five specific attributes that **he** tirelessly **prayed** for on **their** behalf; **their** spiritual growth in **love, excellence, integrity, good works**, and in **glorifying ADONAI**. These are the **God**-ordained spiritual essentials for which all believers

should **pray** for themselves and others. As several other texts demonstrate (**Romans 5:3 to 4:2**; and **Second Peter 1:5-7**), these spiritual attributes that **Paul** mentions here in **verses 9-11** are sequential, each building on the foundation of the previous one. Abounding in **love** produces spiritual **excellence**, which produces personal **integrity**, which produces **good works**. Together, **they** attain the supreme objective of **ADONAI’s praise and glory**.<sup>24</sup>

**1. Love: And this is my prayer: that your love may overflow more and more.** Many years earlier, where an existing **love** also needed some further prodding, **Paul** prayed similarly for **the Thessalonians** that **their love might increase and overflow (First Thessalonians 3:12)**. In that case **he** specified the direction of the **love** for which **he prayed: for each other and for everyone else**. The context of these prayers suggest **their love** for **one another overflows more and more**. This is a concern that **the apostle** will raise in **2:2** when **he** says: **Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love**. But **love** should be more than sentimental; it should be with **full knowledge and discernment (1:9 NLT)**.<sup>25</sup>

**Knowledge** is from the Greek word speaking of gained by experience, as contrasted with intuitive knowledge, which is from another word. A prefixed preposition intensifies the word, so it should be read with full **knowledge**. The **full knowledge** which **the Philippians** needed to gain by experience was a better understanding of **God’s Word**. A believer can have an “understanding” of **the Word**, that is, be able to explain its meaning to others, without having an experiential knowledge of the same. But when that believer has put **the Word of God** into practice in his life, then he has what **Paul** is talking about here. This is the difference between a young convert and a matured believer. The former has not had time to live long enough to live out **the Word** in his life, the latter has. The former, if his life is wholly yielded, is a delight to look upon, as one who would enjoy the vigor and enthusiasm of a new believer. The latter, however, has life experience, is mellowed, and mature in the faith. This was what **the Philippians** needed, but it would take time for it to be realized. This maturity would put guardrails around **their overflowing love** and would insure its proper application and wise outreach.<sup>26</sup>

**Discernment** (Greek: *aesthesis*) is the source of the English word aesthetic. But the meaning of *aesthetic* is almost the opposite of “aesthetic,” which has to do with personal taste and preference. **Paul** calls believers to put aside personal tastes and

preferences, and rather, to focus on achieving mature insight and understanding. It refers to a high level of biblical, theological, moral, and spiritual perception. In the B'rit Chadashah it is a spiritual gift given to the Church (see the commentary on **First Corinthians to see link click Cq - The Distinguishing of Spirits**). It is a biblically **knowledgeable** and **discriminating love** that is under control of a **Spirit-controlled** mind and heart. It is the kind of **love** that can fulfill **Paul's** warning to **the Thessalonians: Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good and abstain from every kind of evil (First Thessalonians 5:21-22)**. This abounding in **love** produces spiritual **excellence**.

**2. Excellence:** Having laid down the priority of **love** in **verse 9**, **Paul** continues **his** discussion of the elements of spiritual growth by looking at the second attribute: **excellence. So that you may approve** (Greek: *dokimazo*, can be translated *discern*) **the things that are excellent (1:10a NASB)**. The phrase **so that** indicates that the first spiritual attribute is the foundation of the second. The progression is from **love**, which incorporates knowledge of **God's** truth and spiritual **discernment** to **excellence**, that is, to thinking and living biblically. When a believer is dominated and controlled by **the love** of **ADONAI**, there will be a corresponding desire to live according to **His** will as fully and as faithfully as humanly possible. To **discern the things that are excellent** means to assess, determine, and carefully identify whatever is best. It is much like **Paul's** later command: **Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things (4:8)**. The **excellent** spiritual attributes are all the truths, thoughts, words and **good works** that are expressions of **God's** will for the believer. This **excellence** produces **integrity**.

**3. Integrity:** A third essential for growth in godliness is personal and relational **integrity** (see the commentary on **Proverbs Cc - The Path of Righteousness**). **So that you may live sincere** (Greek: *eilikrines*, carries the ideas of *cohesiveness, oneness, and unity*) **and blameless lives (1:10a Greek)**. **Blameless** expresses the extent of and goal of integrity. It has the idea of not falling into sinful conduct and not causing others to fall into sin. This is not a call to the perfection of holiness that is true only of **YHVH** and those believers in heaven. It calls for us to do all we can to give **the glory** to **ADONAI** and to live honorably before **Him** and others. Believers are to live lives of **integrity** as **Paul** did (**Acts 23:1; 24:16; Second Corinthians 1:12; and Second Timothy 1:3**).

In ancient Rome fine pottery was relatively thin and fragile and often developed cracks while being fired. Unscrupulous merchants would fill the cracks with a hard, dark wax, which would be concealed when the object was painted or glazed, but would melt when the pottery was filled with something hot. In ordinary light, the deception was usually undetectable, but when held up to the sunlight it was clearly exposed, because the wax appeared darker. Reputable dealers would often stamp their products *sine cera* (without wax) as a guarantee of high quality.

Just as such pottery was held up to the sunlight to reveal cracks or other defects, the obedient, faithful believer makes sure to expose his or her life to the sunlight of Scripture. As the writer to the Hebrews has declared: **See, the Word of God**, that which offers **rest** to the believer, **is alive! It is at work and is sharper than any double-edged sword** (Greek: *machairan* meaning *a short dagger*) - **it cuts right through to where soul meets spirit and joints meet marrow, and it is quick to judge the inner reflections and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12)**. Sadly, many people try to cover their faults in various ways in order to appear less spiritually flawed than they really are. They use such things as regular church attendance, generous giving, activity in church functions, and spiritual lingo to give the appearance of spiritual **integrity**. But when they are severely tempted for their faith, the cracks show.

To have **integrity** also means to stand against **the world**. **James** made it clear that **pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world (James 1:27)**. **John** warned: **Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them (First John 2:15)**. And **Paul** pleaded: **Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2)**.<sup>27</sup>

**Until the day of Messiah's return (1:10b NLT)**. This reminds us of **verse 6**. It was **He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day when Messiah Yeshua returns**. Then we will receive our **crowns** (see the commentary on **Revelation Cc - We Must All Appear Before the Bema Seat of Christ**). Here are two good tests for us to follow as we exercise our spiritual **discernment**: First, will it stumble others? and secondly, will I be **blameless** when **Messiah's** returns?<sup>28</sup> This **integrity** produces **good works**.

**4. Good works:** Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Yeshua Messiah (1:11a NIV). The fourth essential for spiritual growth is **good works**, which **Paul** refers to as **the fruit of righteousness**. The progression continues. Godly **love** produces spiritual **excellence**, which produces **integrity**, which produces **good works**. **Having been filled** translates a perfect passive participle in the Greek text, referring to something that happened in the past and has continuing results. In other words, when believers stand before **the Lord at the Bema Seat of Messiah**, they would have already **been filled with the fruit of righteousness**. That refers to a divinely complete state, or condition, of **righteousness** that is based on the **love, excellence** and **integrity** that **Paul** has just explained.<sup>29</sup>

**Good works** are not the means of salvation, but **they** are the evidence of our salvation. Therefore, **the fruit of righteousness** is **the good works** that **ADONAI** desires to see in our lives. Such **good works** always begin with godly attitudes, some of which **the apostle** details in **his** letter to the churches in Galatia: **The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:21-22)**. Not only that, but **Paul** compared winning souls to **Messiah** as bearing **fruit (Romans 1:13)**, and **he** also names **holiness** as spiritual **fruit (Romans 6:22)**. **He** urged us to be **fruitful** in every **good work (Colossians 1:10)**, and the writer to the **Hebrews** reminded us that our praise is **the fruit of our lips (Hebrews 13:15)**. These **good works glorify ADONAI**.<sup>30</sup>

**5. The glory of ADONAI:** The fifth essential attribute for spiritual growth that **Paul** mentions is by far the most important. **For this will bring much glory and praise to God (1:11b NLT)**. **Yeshua** said: **My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be My disciples (John 15:8)**. **ADONAI** makes believers fruitful for the sake of **His glory**. So **Paul** commanded: **Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (First Corinthians 10:31)**. And in another letter explains that **we have obtained an inheritance . . . to the end that we who were the first to hope in Messiah would be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also . . . were sealed in Him with the Ruach of promise . . . to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:11-14)**. In the middle of **Ephesians**, as if overwhelmed by the wonderful truths **he** had just spoken of, **he** rejoiced: **Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the Church and in Messiah Yeshua**

**to all generations forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).** Therefore, the supreme objective and result of the life of godly **love, excellence, integrity,** and **good works** is to **glorify and praise ADONAI.**<sup>31</sup>

*Dear heavenly **Father**, praise **You** for being so very wonderful! How Awesome that the relationship with **You** is a living union where **You** abide in those who **love You (John 14:23).** **Love** is the foundation to all the decisions that we make. **Loving** and trusting in **You** as the number one priority in life, is what helps and guides me to maturity and to be able to **live sincere and blameless life (Philippians 1:10a).** **Father** help me to grow in my **love** and **trust** in **You.** Shine **Your love** on me in good times, send down rain showers to water me in grey times and strong winds in hard and difficult times to cause me to look up to **You** for **Your** protection and guidance. **These trials are so that the true metal of your faith (far more valuable than gold, which perishes though refined by fire) may come to light in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Messiah Yeshua (First Peter 1:7).** **You** are such an awesome **God!** What a joy it is to mature in my faith and to grow more and more like **You.** In **Messiah Yeshua’s** holy Name and power of **His** resurrection. Amen*