PRAYERS OF LONGING: PRAYING WITH PAUL Water from Rock, August 1, 2017, Tim Smith

“If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up people together to collect wood and don’t assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.” (Antoine de Saint- Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*)

PRAYER OF LONGING # 4: PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

Paul’s Relation to the Philippian Christians

1. The story of the founding of the Philippian Church is found in Acts 16. It is the first church Paul established in Europe.
2. The Philippians had long “shared” (koinonia) with Paul through their gifts to the ministry (Philippians 4:10-14, 16; 2 Corinthians 11:9) and by their suffering for the Gospel (Philippians 1:7, 29-30). *“For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well”* (Philippians 1:29).

Paul’s Prayer of Thanksgiving: 1:3-8

1. Paul joyfully gives thanks for the Philippians “sharing” in the Gospel ministry. Their “sharing” or koinonia was expressed in financial resources both before and during Paul’s imprisonment as well as their suffering for the Gospel. Paul is joyfully thankful for the Philippians’ practical involvement in the Gospel ministry.
2. Paul sees their “sharing” as an expression of God’s grace. They stood one with Paul in his defense and confirmation of the Gospel. Their lives are bound together by their “sharing”.
3. Paul regards their “sharing” in the Gospel as the work of God that God both began and will complete at Christ’s return.
4. “In [Philippians 1:6](http://www.studylight.org/desk/index.cgi?q1=Philippians+1:6&t1=en_nas) Paul says that he is confident that God who has begun a good work in the Philippians will complete it so that they will be ready for the day of Christ. There is a picture here in the Greek which it is not possible to reproduce in translation. The point is that the words Paul uses for to begin and for to complete are technical terms for the beginning and the ending of a sacrifice. Paul's whole sentence moves in an atmosphere of sacrifice.” (William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible*). See Philippians 2:17: *“But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.”*
5. Paul sees the life of the believer as a sacrifice ready to be offered for Christ Jesus. Compare Romans 12:1 about presenting your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

Paul’s Prayer of Intercession

1. Paul prays for the continuation of the very things for which he has just given thanks in vv. 3-8. The Philippians had already given evidence of possessing the love that God alone can produce. Paul asks that their love might increase.
2. Paul prays that their love *“overflow,* and be linked to *“knowledge”* and *“full insight.”* He prays not just for love but for an insightful love coming with knowledge and discernment. Love acts wisely, making decisions based upon discernment. Real love is not blind. Love acts like hate when it does not think.
3. See *The Message* translation: *“So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately.”*
4. "The growing-point for the Christian, as Paul discerns it, is *love*, a seed from which he anticipates vigorous growth as it abounds more and more. Its upthrusting shoots are received and held by two stakes, *knowledge and all discernment*, and under their control begin to put forth leaves and blossoms.” (J. Alec Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*)
5. Augustine of Hippo in his classic work *Confessions* said: “The essence of sin is disordered love.” It is love that is out of order. Virtue is ordered love and sin is disordered love. Disordered love always leads to misery.
6. Paul prays for love with knowledge and full insight *“to help them determine what is best.”* The Greek verb translated *“to determine”* (dokimazo) was a word used for the testing the assaying of metals to determine its ingredients and qualities. Often we are not “determining” good and evil but determining what is “best.”
7. Paul prays for insightful love to help them determined what is best, so that when Christ comes they will *“pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness.”*

Philippians 1:9-11 (*The Message*)

*So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover’s life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.*

Philippians 1:1-9

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,*

*To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

*2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*3 I thank my God every time I remember you, 4constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. 7It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God’s grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. 8For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. 9And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10to help you to determine what is best, so that on the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*