

Reading Philippians 1

This week, in our reading challenge, we begin the book of Philippians. Among the many wonderful and encouraging passages, you will encounter Paul's brief prayer for the Philippian believers in verses 9-11:

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

This is indeed a short prayer. Why spend time commenting on it? There are *three* main reasons I want to highlight.

First, Scripture provides an easy way to pray according to God's will. Left to ourselves and our own best guesses, we often don't know what to pray for or how to pray according to God's will. Scripture helps us in this. The Westminster Shorter Catechism (Q 99) highlights the importance of using the whole word of God to direct us in prayer (especially the Lord's Prayer, as a pattern or outline). Every once in a while, it is good to take inventory of our prayers—*what do we pray for? Do our desires and the content of our prayers reflect God's desires and purpose revealed in His word?*

Second, using Scripture to inform and shape our prayers gives godly variety and helps us to avoid vain repetition. Many of us grew up with standard, rote prayers said before meals and perhaps before we went to sleep at night. Even as adults, we default to certain phrases and resort to formulaic prayers. This is not inherently wrong. However, such prayers can reveal a disengaged heart and mind and become vain repetition. Using Scripture in prayer helps us to focus, and it provides variety of content so that we don't just pray for the same things all the time. Certainly, we can pray about anything, but let's not neglect the weightier matters.

Third, Paul's recorded prayer provides an example of praying according to the purposes and priorities of God. This is a prayer that you can pray for yourself and others. In fact, I would encourage you to get into the habit of turning your daily readings into prayer.

I would like to close with a very appropriate application—using these verses to frame a prayer for SAPC:

Lord, we pray that you would stir our hearts to abound more and more in love—for you and for others. Along with that, give us knowledge and all discernment, so that we may be able to approve what is excellent—to know how to express love in ways that would truly benefit others and glorify You. Grow us, Father, to be more conformed to the image of Christ in purity as we eagerly wait for His appearing—that we may blameless, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ. We pray this for your glory and praise—in Christ's name, Amen.

Keep reading!
Jason Hunt