

Philippians 1:3-11

Growth

Image Church // Prayers for the Church: Week 2

Introduction

Good morning Image Family, I hope you're doing well!

Time of prayer:

- Help us to believe that God is sovereign, that you are our one true King...
- Our world and our nation is broken in so many ways, God we need you- we look to you...
- Would we see the salvation offered in Christ through the cross and not through a political system...
- Because of that would we model peace and unity and that we would show that our trust doesn't lie in the political square, our trust is in God alone...
- Would we be a beacon of hope to a lost and dying world

Psalm 33:13-22

13 The Lord looks down from heaven;
he observes everyone.

14 He gazes on all the inhabitants of the earth
from his dwelling place.

15 He forms the hearts of them all;
he considers all their works.

16 A king is not saved by a large army;
a warrior will not be rescued by great strength.

17 The horse is a false hope for safety;
it provides no escape by its great power.

18 But look, the Lord keeps his eye on those who fear him—
those who depend on his faithful love

19 to rescue them from death
and to keep them alive in famine.

20 We wait for the Lord;
he is our help and shield.

21 For our hearts rejoice in him
because we trust in his holy name.

22 May your faithful love rest on us, Lord,
for we put our hope in you.

Would this be true of us... Amen,

Amen.....

Well Image family to turn from the somber to the suspenseful, I want to share with you some really exciting news in the life of our church...

If you were paying attention last week I dropped in a teaser, I am really excited about this, and I think you will be too... Right now, we are in the process of moving forward on a permanent location for us as a church.

And yes, I said **permanent**, which means that this would finally be a long-term space that we would call home!

This is an incredible opportunity that God in His faithfulness has put in front of us... It's a space that allows us to do everything that we want to do, everything that we believe the church should be about... This space would serve as not only a gathering space, but also a missional hub!

And not only that but it's in a centralized location for all of you that call Image Church Home...

Now I know that you may have a lot of questions, but here's what I need from you... **Nothing official yet**, so I need you to stay locked in and engaged in the days and weeks ahead- this process is going

incredibly well and it's moving along at a good pace... We're hoping to be able to roll out specifics in the next few weeks...

So, stay tuned for more information and be praying to Lord see's this through!!! We have some incredible days ahead Image Family!!!

OK, well, this morning we're going to be continuing our series that we kicked off last week called **Prayers for the church**... Where we're looking specifically at prayers that Paul prayed for the church in the NT, and we're holding them up asking that the things that he prayed would be true for us at Image Church in 2021...

We're saying: *God we want to see the prayers that Paul prayed become a reality for us today!*

So, the goal is that as we look at these prayers, that they would serve as framework for our prayers, pursuits and aspirations for today!

And this morning we're going to be looking at the prayer that Paul prayed for the church in **Philippi**.

So, if you have your bibles go ahead and turn to Philippians 1...

Last year we worked through the book of Philippians, and if you remember, **Philippians** is a special story because it's the first church in the city of **Philippi**, and it's also most likely the first church in all of **Europe**...

There were no Christians in Philippi until **Paul planted a church** there on one of his missionary journey's...

And the **church planting team** of this new church was composed of a former **demon poses slave girl**, a **wealthy gentile businesswoman**, and a **blue collar**, government employee who guards prisoners...

And so, Paul writes this letter to encourage this fairly new church in their faith, and to show them what it looks like to continue to grow as Christians, to mature as Christians...

And similar to **Colossians** Paul starts off his letter with a prayer... And I think there's so much that we can learn from this prayer that Paul prays...

Now, last year when we looked at this text, I didn't unpack it, instead, I used it as a springboard back in time to teach through **Acts 16** to give a framework for how this church started so that we could have context around why Paul starts out like he does here...

So, I'm excited about diving in on this text this morning and looking at the prayer Paul prays for this church, and examining the truths that we see in his prayer and holding them up as aspirations for our church today!

Ok, here we go, we're going to start in verse 3...

Philippians 1:3-11

3 I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, **4** always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. **7** Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Ok, so Paul starts with a prayer of thanksgiving here, and there's some things that we can learn from this, and some places we should challenge here by how and what Paul prays...

Here's what we need to see, I'm going to use proactive language here for the sake of application. *Here's the place of encouragement for us...*

1. Would we be thankful for the church and affectionate toward one another

Verse 3-4: I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer

Verse 8 For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

I think so often we take the church for granted... We look at it as a service that exists for us, instead of a movement that we're called to be part of... *Man how I want us to long for one another/the church!*

A family that we get to be part of...

- *Like any family we got our crazy uncles...*
- Appeal to **non-Christian**- if you're listening and you're not a Christian...
- This is incredible! Spiritual mothers and father, brothers and sisters!
- Do you see *how Paul talks about the church?!?*
 - **Can you say the same thing? Do you have these kinds of relationships? Have we cultivated this type of atmosphere? Are you part of initiating it?**
 - *If not, who are you expecting to create it?*
 - This is what we want to be about here! you have to be engaged!!
- A bunch of broken people brought together by Jesus and made part of His family...
 - Ex. **demon poses slave girl**, a **wealthy gentile businesswoman**, and a **blue collar**, government employee

The church is an incredible thing that I think we take for granted to often... **Let me ask you this:** *How often do you thank God for the church??* And don't think me, or our staff- the church is a body of people...

- **Let me ask you this**, do you spend more time looking for ways to critique the church or do spend more time thanking God for the church?? If there's not an offset in the balance, then there's a problem...

Would we be a church that doesn't take the church for granted...

Would we be affectionate toward one another; would we be a family!

Second encouragement that we need to see here in Paul's prayer...

2. Would we partner together in gospel ministry

Verse 4-5 always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

Verse 7 Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

The word for **partnership** there is the word **koinia** which is commonly translated as fellowship...

Now, if you're anything like me you grew up at a church where you actually had a **fellowship hall...** *Accept it wasn't a hall it was a room...* And there would be occasional meals in there that were *pot-luck...*

- *And you tried to discern by the power of the Holy Spirit what you should eat that was made by people you have never met...*
- *Then you sit around a table with people you don't really know and have some surface level talk and then go home... **Welp, we fellowshiped today...***

But that's not what fellowship is... The word **Fellowship** here means *sharing in activities or privileges with others in the church for the sake of the gospel...* Sharing in the mission of the gospel together...

So, what does this look like in our church? What does it mean to partners in the gospel?

Well let's start by looking at what made the church in Philippi a gospel partner and then we can work from there...

- No church was as generous as the Philippian Church. He says so in Phil. 4:15 and also in his letter 2 Cor. 8:1-5 and 2 Cor. 11:9. ***Gospel partnerships are built on generosity because it flows from our relationship with Christ who was incredibly generous towards us.***¹

Ok, so **generosity** is a way that we can partner in the gospel...

Your generosity fuels everything that we do...

Did you know that **not only** does it allow us to **operate** but it allows us to bless people, meet the needs of people, giving to organizations and needs in our city and beyond....

- ***We actually are set to give away about 14% of our income this year, and that's not including the different ministries in our church and the ways that we give through those different ministries...***

And so, when you give, you're partnering with us and with the rest of our body in the ministry of the gospel... And this is no other than a response **to how generous God has been with us through Christ!**

And this is something that's not just a good idea for you to participate in, it's something **the bible calls you to participate in...**

- Jesus actually talks about money more than he talk about heaven or hell...
- And sacrificial giving was one of the defining marks of the early church...

So, let's talk about what it looks like with your money for just a second, and then we will talk about other ways to be generous- as we seek to partner together for the gospel...

People often ask how much should I give...

- OT giver vs NT giver... 30 something % verse 100%
- *The question really isn't how much should I give, but how much should I keep...*

After all this is really for you more than anything- money is a root idol- it fuels a lot of other idols in our life... The way that we combat that is by giving...

- ***Jesus doesn't want money out of your wallet He wants idols out of our hearts...***

Giving also increases our dependance on God by letting go of the of our dependance on money- we do that by giving... It challenges out hearts but in it we reap great rewards... In heaven and on earth...

- **Here: Acts 20:** satisfaction of giving/meeting needs.
 - God meeting your needs...
 - **Example.** My wife and I have experienced this
- **Heaven-** treasure... **Matt. 6:** Store up treasures in heaven.

At the end of the day, you money goes toward the things that are most important... ***What does how you give say about what you value??***

We will look at something we want and justify it... do we do the same thing with giving?? What are you saying "no" to in order to "yes" to being generous??

Ok so, I know you're still wondering about ***the amount piece thing...***

- According to **Malachi 3:10** as well as other places in Scripture, **10%** is a great place to start- again NT pushes this way further- people selling homes and fields and stuff to meet need...
- Oh and by the way **Malachi 3** is also the place where God says test me... Giving is the one place God challenges you to test Him!

¹ Nathan Neufang

But it is way less about an amount and more about a dependence and a heart position... The way I like to define how much to give based on the NT is give until you feel it...

- For many, and most 10% is not enough, for others they need to start with 2% or 5%... Again, it's more about the heart and about the sacrifice...

I think the reason Jesus didn't give us a direct number is because we'd be too quick to check a box!

You say ***do I give off of my income before or after taxes...***

Your income is your income- just because you have to pay ***Uncle Sam*** doesn't mean that you take a cut from giving to Jesus Kingdom- you taxes are a bill just like any other expense, what you make after taxes isn't your income- what you make before, that's your income...

- And at the end of the day, it's all a gift and it's all from God anyway...

People also ask where should I give...

- **What we see in the NT is giving through the church...** doesn't mean you don't give outside of the church, it just means that that should come secondary to giving to the church...
- Also, if more people in America gave to the local church we could just about fund all the other ministries!

Ok really quick, I want to talk about some other ways that we partner in the gospel though generosity is by leveraging our **time** and **talent**...

This is serving alongside the church- this is serving within the church...

What are you good at and how can we leverage it? Where are you planning to serve this year? ***What are some initiatives you could own or start in our church this year?***

How do you plan to steward your time and talent in partnership for the gospel with our church?

- Start a missional business that's kingdom minded?
- Starting a bible study at work?
- Identifying a neighbor in need, meeting a neighbor?
- Serving at Osborne or Fair Oaks?
- Identifying other needs in your community that you can team up with other in your CG to meet??
- Starting a new CG- which we desperately need more of!
- Helping for the weekend gathering?
- Loving on some of our college students?
- College students could it be loving on some of our families?

How are you going to partner with Image Church this year??

Let's look at the 3rd encouragement from Paul's prayer...

3. Would we understand that we're all still a work in progress

Verse 6 I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

No one has arrived- *And I'm not saying that for you to someone else, I'm saying that to you!*

Listen this is some great news for all of us...

- **Christian...Gospel**
- **Non-Christian... Gospel**

Listen, ain't none of us arrived in the Christian life... I think so many times the problems that exist in the church exist because people speak out of a place of having it all figured out...

I just think the church could be a different place if we can to the table realizing that we're all broken and that our only hope is Jesus...

Would we view each other through the lens of work in progress!
Would we view the church as a whole like this!

I don't know what you walked in here with, **but I want you to know that you are a work in progress, there is no pressure to arrive... Would you feel the freedom of that??**

Ok, let's keep looking at what he prays...

9 And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, **10** so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Here's the last 2 points of enragement for us to see here, #4...

4. Would we grow in love (v9)

Would we grow in love with God and with others...

Example: Marriage- all about growing in love and part of that is seeing love in a different light and in doing so you grow deeper in your love for one another...

We want the same to be true for us when it comes to one another...

And the way that happens is by growing in our love for God- ***we love others in light of how we have been loved- if we don't see God's love rightly we can't love others rightly...***

Growing in love for God should be something that's progressive we see that in how Paul prays...

The Christian life isn't marked by becoming better person, but by falling in love with Christ more...

Would that be true of us... And this last thing Paul prays is going to be the key for how we do that..

Here it is, the last point of encouragement for us from Paul's prayer...

5. Would we would grow in knowing God (v 9b)

That we would continue to dive into the limitless depths of who God is...

Paul prays that the church would grow in the **knowledge of God** so that it will increase their **love for God** which will help them to have discernment in how they should live as a Christ-followers, and as they walk in this it will prove that they have been made pure and blameless through Christ!

He wants to bring them along in their spiritual journey... He wants them to grow in their spiritual maturity...

See as we grow, we'll find that we begin to have more discernment and we'll begin to bear more fruit...

Example. Driving with my dad- *son don't look at the line you don't want to cross- look at where you want to be going...*

We spend a lot of our time looking at the wrong things expecting to be a "better Christian" when all we need to be looking at is Jesus...

And when we do we will see growth in

- **Discernment...**
 - Ability to make more Godly decisions...
 - What kind of things Jesus would do...
 - "what does God want for your life" – grow in your knowledge of God...
- **We will begin to bear more fruit...**
 - The way you live will change in light of who God is and what He's done...

- o Start with Him... transformation starts at the heart level...

I think most people want these two things, the question is ***are you putting yourself in position to grow in the knowledge of God??***

- God's given us tools and spaces- gathering, life together, missional living...

Conclusion [VAMP]

So, there it is... Based on Paul's prayer we walked through 5 challenges or encouragements that we want to be true for us, that we want to ask God for at Image Church...

- 1. Would we be thankful for the church and affectionate toward one another**
- 2. Would we partner together in gospel ministry**
- 3. Would we understand that we're all still a work in progress**
- 4. Would we grow in love**
- 5. Would we would grow in knowing God**

Oh would these things be true for us Image Family!

Where is it that you need to respond to the gospel?? How do you need to begin praying like Paul? Where do you need to take a step of intentionality toward living these things out in light of the gospel??

Some of you are listening and you're searching... Would you believe, receive, and become part of God's family through the vehicle of the local church...

Some of you need to commit to the church... You have been dating the church for a while and you need to become part of the covenant family...

- Become a Covenant Member- we have a New Members Class coming up in February- go ahead and RSVP!

Pray