

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"The Prayer of Paul's Pastoral Heart"

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 1:7-11; 2:3-5; 3:10; 1 Thess. 5:16-18;

It is one thing to know what we believe when life is comfortable; it is another thing to discover what comes out of us when the pressure is on. When the heat comes, when circumstances squeeze us, what is coming from us? Paul writes Philippians from prison, yet his focus is not consumed with his imprisonment. He is rejoicing, praying, giving thanks, and thinking about others. He is practicing what he preaches. His joy transcends his present circumstances because his perspective is not simply fixed on where he is—it is fixed on what God is doing.

That same perspective shapes Paul's prayer for the Philippians. He has already expressed confidence that the One who began a good work in them will carry it on to completion until the Day of Messiah Yeshua. Now he begins to describe what he wants that continuing work to look like. Paul understands the "now and the not yet." I am not who I was, and I am not yet who I will be. I am new in Him, and I am becoming new. So the prayer of Paul's pastoral heart is that the work God has begun would continue deeper and deeper within them until their love, their discernment, and ultimately their lives are producing fruit that will endure.

1. LET THE HEART OF MESSIAH SHAPE HOW YOU LOVE PEOPLE

Paul begins, *"It is right for me to feel (φρονεῖν, phronein, "this mind") this way about you all, because I have you in my heart—for you all are partakers of grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Good News. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Messiah Yeshua"* (Phil. 1:7-8). Notice how often Paul emphasizes **all of you**. There may already have been seeds of disagreement and division among the Philippians, yet Paul does not align himself with one group against another. His heart is toward all of them. The word behind "feel" (φρονεῖν, *phronein*) carries the idea of a mindset, disposition, or attitude—the same kind of language Paul will use when he says, *"Have this attitude in yourselves, which also was in Messiah Yeshua"* (Phil. 2:5).

This affection was not sentimental. Their hearts had become blended together through their shared participation in the Good News. They had Paul in their hearts when he was openly defending and strengthening the gospel, but they also had him in their hearts when he was imprisoned and, from their perspective, unable to "produce." And Paul had them in his heart as well. They had become fellow partakers—*sun-koinonoi*—sharing together in the grace and favor of God. Paul says his longing for them comes from the very affection of Messiah Yeshua. That is the heart God desires to form in us: a love that is not based merely on what someone can do for us, but a love that reflects Yeshua, comes

alongside others, and remains present even in weakness, difficulty, disagreement, or confinement.

2. LET YOUR LOVE KEEP GROWING IN KNOWLEDGE AND DISCERNMENT

Having expressed how deeply he loves them, Paul tells them exactly how he is praying: *“Now this I pray, that your love might overflow still more and more in knowledge and depth of discernment”* (Phil. 1:9). Paul is not accusing the Philippians of being unloving. Quite the opposite—he has just described how profoundly they have demonstrated their love. But there is still more. Here again is the “now and the not yet.” You are loving, but I am praying that you will become more and more loving. The word is *agape*—the selfless, sacrificial kind of love modeled for us in Messiah. It is love that seeks the benefit of another regardless of what is coming back in return.

But Paul does not simply pray for more emotion. He prays that their love will overflow **in knowledge and depth of discernment**. This is not merely intellectual knowledge or knowing more facts. It is a full knowing that comes through relationship, experience, understanding, perception, and moral insight. Paul wants them to “get it” at the deepest level. The prayer is not simply, “Lord, make them more loving,” but, “Lord, let the love of Messiah become so deeply rooted in their understanding and experience that they know how to walk it out.” That’s important, because love without discernment can easily become misguided, while knowledge without love becomes cold and fruitless. Paul prays for both to grow together.

3. LET GOD PRODUCE THE KIND OF FRUIT THAT WILL ENDURE

Paul tells us where this growing, discerning love is headed: *“in order to approve what is excellent—so that in the Day of Messiah you may be sincere and blameless”* (Phil. 1:10). The idea behind “approve” is something being tested and shown to be genuine. Think of gold going through the fire: the impurities are removed, but what is real remains. And the word translated “excellent” carries the sense of what will carry through—what will endure. Paul is praying that the love God is producing in them will be so real, so deeply rooted, that when the testing comes, it carries through.

That is where this becomes deeply personal. What comes out of us when the heat is on? What fruit appears when someone hurts us, when we are misunderstood, when circumstances disappoint us, or when we do not get our way? Paul prays that they will be *“filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Yeshua the Messiah, to the glory and praise of God”* (Phil. 1:11). The goal is not simply better behavior or greater theological knowledge. It is righteous fruit—and even that fruit does not originate in us. It comes **through Yeshua the Messiah**. When the pressure comes and the light shines, the prayer is that what is revealed will increasingly be His character, His love, His righteousness, and His life being produced in us.

CONCLUSION

This is the prayer of Paul’s pastoral heart. He loves these people deeply, and because he loves them, he does not simply pray that they will be comfortable or successful. He prays

that the work of Messiah will go deeper. He prays that their love will overflow still more and more, that they will grow in knowledge and discernment, that they will recognize what really matters, and that when the testing comes, what God has produced in them will prove to be genuine. He wants them to live the life of the future in the present—to become more and more today who they will fully be when they see Messiah face-to-face.

That is a prayer we need to pray for our lives: “Lord, do not let this remain something I merely understand. Produce it in me.” Maybe the pressure in your life has revealed attitudes, ambitions, wounds, resentment, or selfishness that are competing with the heart of Messiah. Bring those things to Him. Ask Him to let His love overflow more and more in you—to give you knowledge, discernment, and the heart to recognize what actually matters. Ask Him to produce fruit that survives the heat. The One who began the work is faithful to finish it. So surrender yourself again today and pray, “Yeshua, make what You are doing in me real, deep, fruitful, and enduring, so that my life brings glory and praise to God.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Phil. 1:7–8, what does Paul’s repeated emphasis on “all of you” reveal about his pastoral heart toward the Philippian believers?
2. What does it mean that Paul and the Philippians had become “fellow partakers” of grace in both his imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the Gospel?
3. Why does Paul pray not simply for more love, but for love that grows in “knowledge and depth of discernment” (Phil. 1:9)?
4. When pressure, disappointment, disagreement, or frustration comes into your life, what kind of fruit is most often revealed? What might God be showing you about where His work needs to go deeper?
5. Is there someone you find difficult to hold in your heart right now? What would it look like to ask Yeshua to give you His attitude and His kind of selfless, discerning love toward that person?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that the work You have begun in us is not finished. Thank You that we are not who we were, even though we are not yet everything we will be. Continue Your work in us until the Day of Messiah Yeshua. Let our love overflow still more and more—not simply in emotion, but in knowledge, discernment, wisdom, and understanding. Give us the heart of Yeshua toward the people around us, and keep selfish ambition, pride, offense, and division from undermining what You are producing in us. Lord, when the heat comes and when the pressure is on, let what comes out of us be the fruit of righteousness. Purify what needs to be purified. Teach us to recognize what truly matters, and form in us the kind of love that will carry through every test. May our lives increasingly reflect the character of Messiah Yeshua, and may everything You produce in us be to Your glory and praise.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.