

Grace to be Like Jesus

Gilbert Silva

Philippians 1:8-11 (NLT) God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. ⁹ I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. ¹⁰ For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. ¹¹ May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

This passage is one of several of Paul's recorded prayers for the believers. Paul prayed frequently for the church.

He recognized the significance of prayer for the saints because their progress in becoming more like Jesus was dependent on divine grace. Without the grace and power of God we cannot be like Jesus.

Grace to be like Jesus

Philippians 1:6 (NLT) And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

Philippians 2:13 (NLT) For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him.

We cannot be like Jesus without the grace and power of God.

Of course, this doesn't mean that we have no role to play in becoming more like Jesus.

Philippians 2:12 (NLT) Dear friends, you always followed my instructions when I was with you. And now that I am away, it is even more important. Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear.

God is responsible for providing the grace for life and godliness but we are responsible to actively use that power to live like Jesus and love as He loved.

Love like Jesus

The prayers of Paul were motivated not by a religious requirement, but by a genuine love for the church.

(NLT) "God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus."

(AMP) For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus [whose great love fills me].

(CEV) God himself knows how much I want to see you. He knows I care for you in the same way Christ Jesus does.

Notice how Paul speaks of Christ's tender love and compassion rather than his own.

Paul had become a student of Jesus and had come to see that it is His style of love and compassion that makes the most impact in our relationships.

He was aware that there was a moment when he was determined to be the best and stand out from the crowd.

But his meeting with Jesus changed everything. All he wanted to be was more like Jesus, not so that others would recognize his ministry or personal holiness, but to have a ministry and character that was made possible by God's mercy through Christ.

Paul's love was not a self-developed love but a love imparted by the Spirit through Jesus.

Listen to what he writes to the believers in Rome.

Romans 5:1- (NLT) By faith we have been made acceptable to God. And now, thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. ² Christ has also introduced us to God's gift of undeserved grace on which we now take our stand. So we are happy, as we look forward to sharing in the glory of God. ³ But that's not all! We gladly suffer, because we know that suffering helps us to endure. ⁴ And endurance builds character, which gives us a hope ⁵ that will never disappoint us. All of this happens because God has given us the Holy Spirit, who fills our hearts with his love.

Paul's love for people was the imparted love of Christ entering his heart through the Holy Spirit. It was a love made possible by God's grace that he put into action.

This was the same attitude he had when it came to ministry.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (NLT) I am the least important of all the apostles. In fact, I caused so much trouble for God's church that I don't even deserve to be called an apostle. ¹⁰ But God treated me with undeserved grace! He made me what I am, and his grace wasn't wasted. I worked much harder than any of the other apostles, although it was really God's grace at work and not me.

Again, God provided the grace, power and ability and he actively used that power to minister to others.

Paul's prayer was not only that he would come to know Christ and become more like Him, but that all believers would grow and show by their actions that they, too, were true disciples of Christ.

If we truly follow Christ, we should strive to become more like Him every day. Of course, this is not automatic; God provides the grace and ability but we must actively use that grace to be more like Jesus.

Responding to grace

There are three things that Paul prays for concerning the believer's

1. That their love would continue to grow

Philippians 1:9a (NLT) I pray that your love will overflow more and more...

The love that has been poured out in our hearts has the capacity to grow. The best way to grow in love is to interact with people, especially those who may be difficult to be around.

This is what Jesus taught us.

Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT) If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Love is not something you feel, but rather something you do. Love is seen in our actions more than our words.

1 John 3:18 (NLT) Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Love in action

If you want to know what the actions of love looks like than listen to these passages.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NLT) Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

Jesus' followers live differently, demonstrating love consistently toward others.

2. May you grow in knowledge and understanding

Philippians 1:9 (NLT) I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding.

Colossians 1:9 (NLT) So we have not stopped praying for you since we first heard about you. We ask God to give you complete knowledge of his will and to give you spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Knowing Christ as Lord and Savior is not the end of a journey, but rather the beginning of an extraordinary relationship.

For example, when you marry someone, it is not the conclusion of your pursuit to get to know them, but rather the beginning of a lifetime journey to get to know them better every day.

Paul prays that their love would continue to grow and that their knowledge and understanding of Christ and His would increase.

Why does he pray this?

When these things grow discernment and holiness grows.

Philippians 1:10 For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return.

What is it that God wants from us? What is it that truly matters?

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-4 (NLT) Inally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You live this way already, and we encourage you to do so even more. ²For you remember what we taught you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. ³God's will is for you to be holy, so stay away from all sexual sin. ⁴Then each of you will control his own body and live in holiness and honor ⁵not in lustful passion like the pagans who do not know God and his ways.

This is what Paul focuses in the final part of His prayer in our opening passage.

3. May you be filled with the fruit of salvation

Philippians 1:11 (NLT) May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ for this will bring much glory and praise to God.

God is responsible for providing the grace for life and godliness but we are responsible to actively use that power to live like Jesus and love as He loved.