

THE PEOPLE IN PAUL'S HEART
Phil. 1:1-11

Intro: My subject tonight is taken from the expression which is found in the middle of v. 7: "I have you in my heart."

It is emphasized again in v. 8.

Paul seems to have loved the Macedonian churches of Philippi and Thessalonica in a special way. At least his epistles indicate a special bond of affection with them. And, as we read the epistles to these churches we can see why Paul loved them.

But, in considering this epistle which is characterized by many references to joy and rejoicing, we want to learn why there was so much joy in the heart of the Apostle in spite of his circumstances. We must remember that it was written about A.D. 60 while he was a prisoner in Rome.

The passage we have tonight can be considered as an introduction to the epistle. And in it we can see why Paul loved them and some of the reasons why he rejoiced.

I. HIS GREETINGS TO THEM (Phil. 1:1, 2).

V. 1 speaks of various relationships:

- 1) Paul's relationship with Timothy (although the rest of the epistle is only from Paul). Timothy is referred to in the third person in 2:19-24.
- 2) Their relationship to (it should be) "Christ Jesus."
- 3) The spiritual condition of the Philippian believers.
- 4) Their relationship to "Christ Jesus."
- 5) Finally, his recognition of the leaders in the Philippian church: "Bishops and deacons."

What an amazing amount of truth he can pack into one verse!

V. 2, his common greeting in most of his letters, shows the continuing need of every believer, and how that need is supplied--"from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

Grace is enabling grace for each day's need; peace is a word expressing harmony within the believer's heart, in his relationship with other believers, and in his relationship with the Lord. This really is a prayer--not just a wish.

II. HIS PRAYER FOR THEM (Phil. 1:3-11).

There are two kinds of prayer referred to:

- 1) Thanksgiving. Cf. v. 3.
- 2) Intercession. Cf. vv. 4, 9-11.

His thoughts seem to run like this:

- 1) He wants them to know that he is praying for them. How wonderful it is when writing letters to be able to tell people this truthfully.
- 2) He wants them to know that thanksgiving is a part, a major part of his prayers for them.
- 3) But he also wants them to know that he has requests that he is bringing to God for them. This he is going to spell out in some details, as we see when we get to v. 9.
- 4) Before he gets to the requests, he tells them why he has been praying for them. There are basically three reasons:
 - a) In the first, he looks to the past (v. 5). They were his co-workers in the Gospel. See the latter part of v. 7, too.
 - b) In the second, he looks to the future (v. 6). What he had seen the Lord doing was proof to Paul that it was a work of God. And, being a work of God, it would not stop until "the day of Jesus Christ," when it would be finished.
 - c) In the third, he speaks of the present. He loved them (vv. 7, 8).
 - (1) They had suffered with him.
 - (2) They had served with him.

"Defense" probably refers to Paul's careful presentation of the Gospel to people who did not know the Lord. Thus, it speaks of evangelism.

"Confirmation" is the work of establishing those who know the Lord. Thus, it speaks of edification.

"Grace" probably has a special meaning here and refers to the special calling which Paul had received from the Lord.
- (3) Paul's solemn oath confirming the deep nature of his love for them. It was greater than human love ever could have been because it was "in the tender mercies of Jesus Christ." He loved them with the love of the Lord!
- 5) Then he tells them exactly how he is praying for them.

There is no better way to learn to pray than to pray the prayers of the Bible. They are here to teach us, and we must not ignore them.

Note: "And this I pray."

We have passed over many of the reasons for the joy that was in Paul's heart, BUT LET ME SAY AT THIS POINT THAT ONE OF THE GREATEST SOURCES OF JOY IN OUR LIVES AS BELIEVERS COMES THROUGH FAITHFUL, FERVENT PRAYER--ESPECIALLY INTERCESSORY PRAYER!

What are his requests for the Philippian saints?

- a) He prayed about that which probably was their strongest point: their love (v. 9).

Never neglect to pray about the strong points in any Christian's life. His strong points can easily become his problem.

E.g., love, or prayer, or teaching the Word, or giving, or service.

He prayed that it would grow because we never love the Lord or each other or the world of people like we should and can. BUT HE PRAYED THAT THEIR LOVE WOULD BE DIRECTED "in knowledge and in all judgment."

Paul cannot keep away from these two points: the knowledge of the Word, and the practical application of the Word. Love must be limited by the truth, as the Apostle John tells us in 2 John.

- b) He prayed about their likes. Cf. v. 10a.

Note how Paul uses this expression again in Rom. 2:18.

Every believer needs to be able to distinguish between things that differ because some are right to do and some are wrong.

But, more than that, the believer needs to like and to do what is right!

Paul is praying about their spiritual discernment. They need to be sensitive to that which is right and wrong, and then choose the right--because it is right in the sight of God.

- c) He prayed about their lives. Cf. v. 10b. This is what they were to be.

This request is capable of a twofold meaning:

- (1) The first is positive: "sincere." We must have all of those things in our lives which should be there--according to the Word of God.

This is a greater problem than most of us realize. We usually concentrate on avoiding the evil, but we may be neglecting the good.

- (2) The second is negative: "without offense." There are things which every Christian should avoid.

"Till" the day of Jesus Christ should be "for."

What are the contemplated results of such a prayer?

The results are twofold:

- 1) The first has to do with them--in v. 11.
 - 2) The second has to do with God--in v. 11b.
- They go together.

For the Philippians: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Note: "filled . . . fruits . . . righteousness."

What are the fruits? Cf. Rom. 5:1 ff. as it relates to the Gospel.

For God: "unto the glory and praise of God."

Nothing can bring us blessing which does not bring God glory. BUT PAUL COULD GUARANTEE THAT, IF THEY LIVED LIKE HE WAS PRAYING THAT THEY WOULD LIVE (AND THEY WOULD NOT WITHOUT PRAYER), THEN THIS WOULD BE THE RESULT!

Concl: Do you want to know some of the secrets of a life of joy? If the first 11 verses were all that we had of the Philippian letter, this would be enough for any of us to enter into the kind of a life that had brought such joy to Paul--and to the Philippians.

Let us focus our attention on these things!

Let us pray about these things for ourselves!

And let us pray about these things as we pray for each other!