

## Philippians 1:8-9

Every believer has this amazing promise that at least one person is praying for us with incredible intensity and love. That Person is Jesus Christ, even now He stands at the right hand of God the Father, interceding for us (**Romans 8:34**).

In this opening paragraph as Paul writes to the church at Philippi, he affectionately writes of his love and concern for them. In verse 3 Paul tells them he is always praying for them. They're on his prayer list and on his mind. In verse 7 Paul tells them they are on his heart. In verse 8, he is making an oath, "*For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*"

The Greek word "yearn" means to strain toward something. This word was often used to describe an Olympic runner's desire to win. The Greek word describes the runner as he strains with every muscle and nerve and fiber of his body and as he reaches the finish line, he leans forward. That's Paul's passion here, he is straining with everything in his being on their behalf. Paul is literally opening his prayer journal and showing them exactly what he is longing to see happen in their life.

What Paul will identify that he is yearning for, for the Christians at Philippi are the same things that God wants to develop in our own lives today. At the end of this verse, Paul said these deep longings I have for you are the affections that Jesus Christ has for you as well.

Paul is giving us his Prayer List for them and for us. There are at least 9 prayer requests listed here:

- Prayer request for your family members and believing friends
- Prayer request for your pastors/elders
- Prayer request for your deacons, teachers, today we would add youth leaders, nursery volunteers, secretary, admin.
- Prayer request for you entire church family, as Paul does here
- Pray for yourself

### Passion for Life:

Notice verse 9, "*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more.*" The Greek word "abound" "*perisseuo*" in the present tense is progressive and it expresses the idea of continuing, overflowing, abounding love.

The Greek word love is "*agape*", is an unselfish, self-sacrificing love which is a deep and caring love, a loyal undying long term commitment to another.

There is no subject for the word *agape*. Paul doesn't specify the object of your love . . . which means that Paul is actually telling them that every dimension of life we are to demonstrate a lavish, ongoing, limitless love.

Paul is referring to the kind of *agape* passionate love that endures the difficulties of discipleship, servanthood, and spiritual disciplines.

### Development in Life:

Paul says, "*I am praying for your love to abound more and more, notice, with knowledge.*" The Greek word used here for knowledge is used without exception in the New Testament for spiritual issues, the knowledge of God; the knowledge of spiritual truth; the knowledge of doctrine, it's a knowledge that comes exclusively from the study of God's word.

The famous sentimental song from the 60's that sang, "*All you need is love...*" – sold millions. The words say, "*All you need is love . . . to be all you were meant to be . . . all you need is love.*" That isn't really a good idea, because that is not directed love. A person could define love to mean whatever they wanted it to mean and then say, "*That kind of love is all I need*".

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Love could be incorrectly defined as ...

- Loving yourself more than anyone else, living a self-filled life that is never truly fulfilling
- Loving money more than love for the law resulting in stealing and or counterfeiting
- Loving chocolate more than vegetables
- Loving someone more than you love biblical morals causing break ups in one life after another including marriages
- Loving worldly pleasures more than loving the purpose God designed for your life
- Loving prestige and attention more than humility and an effective witness
- Loving a relationship that may not be the relationship God intended for you

All we need *isn't* just love . . . what we *need* is the *right* kind of love. No matter what our feelings tell us, no matter what our culture approves and applauds, no impulse, no inner feeling or passion that leads us to disobey scripture can be blessed by God as biblical love. True love won't argue with the truth about love from the Creator of love.

Some Greek words for love:

- Storge – a Greek word for love that loves with strong family feelings
- Philia – a love that shares deep affection and commonality
- Philio – brotherly love
- Eros – a love bound by sexual desire (cultural expression for love)

Paul uses the Greek word “agape” here in this text. It means the highest form of commitment and fidelity, which then serves as a boundary for allowable sexual intimacy and family commitment and deep affection as described in God’s word. Agape is the most often word used in the New Testament – more than 300 times.

### Examples:

- God’s love for the world, “*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*” (**John 3:16**)
- Agape is used to describe a husband’s love for his wife & the love of Christ for His church – “*Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church*” (**Ephesians 5:25**)
- It’s the word used to describe God’s love for the sinner (**Romans 5:8**) “*God showed His love for us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*”
- Agape is the word used of God’s love for the believer (**Romans 8:35**), “*... who shall separate us from the love of Christ? And the answer is? “Nothing will ever separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus”* (**Romans 8:39**)

### Practice in Life:

Verse 9, “*And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.*” There’s Paul’s third prayer request – for us to be discerning.

The translated word “discernment” that Paul uses is a Greek word that never again appears in the New Testament. It’s the word “*aesthesis*” and you can translate it sensibility or insight. It’s a word that broadly refers to the application of biblical knowledge.

Paul is praying that they will learn Biblical principles, and from that develop the Biblical practice. The truth is, unless we believe correctly, we will not behave correctly.

“*Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the delight for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin.*” [John Wesley’s mother words to John when he went to seminary at Oxford in June of 1720]

Paul is praying for the believers at Philippi, and for you and me:

- To overflow in love
- To develop in learning the biblical truth about love and life
- To practice applying what we’re learning with agape love