



## Sermon, Sunday December 15, 2024 "Through Jesus Christ"

**SCRIPTURE: Philippians 1:3-11** <sup>3</sup> I thank my God for every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every one of my prayers for all of you, praying with joy <sup>5</sup> for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart, for all of you are my partners in God's grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the tender affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup> to help you to determine what really matters, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup> having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

### Introduction: Paul and the Philippian Church

Today is the third week of Advent. Today's text is Philippians. The Epistle to the Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul. The first church founded by Apostle Paul in Europe was the Philippian Church. The Philippian Church was a lifelong companion of Apostle Paul's missionary work. The Philippian Church actively participated in Apostle Paul's fundraising for the Jerusalem Church.

The Philippian Church maintained a very special relationship with the Apostle Paul. In verse 8 of today's text, Apostle Paul expresses his feelings for the Philippian Church by said, **'For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.'**

Apostle Paul, who was imprisoned at the time, prayed for the Philippian Church in verses 9-11 of today's text. There are three main contents of Apostle Paul's prayer for the Philippian Church.

### Body: Apostle Paul's prayer

**First**, in verse 9 of today's text, Apostle Paul prayed, **'And this is my prayer that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight'**. Apostle Paul prayed that the Philippians would be enriched with agape (*ἀγάπη*), the divine love, rather than the Greek word *philos*, which refers to friendship, or *eros*, which refers to artistic desire. And for this, he prayed that the Philippian church would be enriched in Agape love through **'knowledge and full insight.'** This verse means that we must know who God is so that we can love correctly and abundantly.

Sometimes people misunderstand blind faith and religious aspirations as true faith. This happens due to the absence of knowledge and full insight about God. This kind of faith does not enrich love, but rather diminishes and distorts it. This causes rejection and hatred towards neighbors who have different thoughts and beliefs than themselves.

Therefore, Apostle Paul emphasizes that we should not focus solely on the emotion of love, but rather love through rational and common-sense thoughts. Do you agree with these thoughts of Apostle Paul?



**Second**, Apostle Paul prayed in verse 10 of today's text, **'to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless'**. In this verse, Paul said, **'to determine what is best.'**

We try to get something better out of our daily lives. However, it is difficult to determine what is best for us. I can't tell you specifically what determine is the best for your life. This is because each person's living situation is different. However, what is clear is that this can only be discerned when love is enriched with **'knowledge and full insight.'**

Apostle Paul mentioned something very important in verse 10 of today's text. Paul said, **'to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless.'** In this verse, **'the day of Christ'** refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The church is a community of believers in the death on the cross, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Jesus who came to this earth through the body of Mary.

However, the world we live in demands that we live a perfectly legal life. Therefore, the world we live in judges the success and failure of life through the achievements we have achieved. Therefore, in this world it is difficult for us to experience the free life that the Gospel offers. This is because even Christians believe that a free life is guaranteed only if one achieves results. How can we find hope in a world like this?

**Third**, in verse 11 of today's text, Apostle Paul prayed, **'May we be filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.'**

The word **'righteousness'** in the Bible is a translation of the Greek word **'dikaiosuné' (δικαιοσύνη)**. What is the **'righteousness'** that Apostle Paul speaks of in this verse? In this passage, Apostle Paul is not talking about **'justice'** and **'just life'** that cause controversy between right and wrong among people in the world. The **'righteousness'** that Apostle Paul speaks of is given to us in our relationship with God.

Apostle Paul explains in detail what this is in Romans 3-5. Apostle Paul said in Romans 3:20; **Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.** The acts of law mentioned in this verse are what we commonly refer to as righteous acts. However, everyone in this world cannot act completely justly without exception.

However, the righteousness of God that Apostle Paul talks about extends without discrimination to all who believe in Jesus Christ. This means God's justice, not the justice that people think is right or wrong. Regarding God's justice, Apostle Paul says in Romans 3:24, **'and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.'**

The **'righteousness'** spoken of in the Bible does not mean being good, kind, or just on an ethical level. This is essentially liberation from sin. So, what is sin? It is worry and a desire to elevate oneself.

The simplest way to explain being liberated from sin is that you can live a rich life even if you are not recognized by others or do not meet the world's standards. This is forgiveness of sin and liberation from sin.

What is the reason why people do not accept these promises of the Bible? That's because people are accustomed to the world's opinions. How can someone who thinks poverty is a curse understand the Bible's message that the poor are blessed? Also, how can a person who always listens to people who are told that they are pretty, nice, cool, or the best, be able to enjoy peace in life?

In today's text, Apostle Paul is not talking about religious concepts, but about things that have happened in our lives through the righteousness of Jesus. Paul tells us that since our lives are free from sin, we should bear the abundant fruit of righteousness. Also, Apostle Paul tells us to live more freely, more peacefully, and more joyfully. But is this possible in our lives?



## **Conclusion: Through Jesus Christ**

Please remember the expression in verse 11: **‘Through Jesus Christ’** (διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ). Christians believe that ‘Jesus Christ’ is a necessary and sufficient condition for an abundant life. If we acknowledge this, we will live as Christians. If we cannot admit this, we will live as non-Christians or only superficial Christians. I believe that the necessary and sufficient condition for my life is ‘Jesus Christ.’ What about you?

Today is the third Sunday of Advent. The season of Advent is a season to remember Jesus, who came as light to this world as the Son of God, and to wait for Jesus to return to the world as the perfecter of life. Through Jesus, in Jesus, and with Jesus, my life and yours will be enriched with freedom, peace, and love, the fruits of righteousness. **Amen.**

