

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS - Feb. 27-28, 2021

Title: The Prayer that Changed a City

Text: Philippians 1:9-11

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (ESV)

Target: The church has always been the hope of the world. Our internal health, our togetherness, will determine our external effectiveness

I. Choose Love by cultivating a growing Love:

- A. Choose God's kind of love: *“that your love may abound more and more...”*
- B. Choose God's kind of approach: *“that your love may abound more and more...”*

Key Thought:

The prayer that changed a city, shows the progression and benefits of a growing love:

- A growing love leads us to understand and experience truth...
- which enables us to live and love with wisdom...
- thus, creating an appetite for excellence...

Question #1:

Read 1 John 4:7-21 together as a group. This passage says that God *is* love and that love is *from* God. In light of these truths, discuss *who* God is and *what* He's done for us in His love. Take a few minutes to meditate on God's love for you, and how that convicts you to love others. The passage says that His love is *perfected* in us. Describe a time that you saw someone love you or others so well, that God's love was evident in them, and you truly tasted the love of God because of them.

II. Choose what is best by developing excellent character:

- A. A desire for excellence is born out of a growing love: *“with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent...”*
- B. Excellent character builds a sincere, authentic, unhypocritical reputation: *“with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless...”*

Key Thought:

- Choosing what is best involves an exhaustive dedication to the things which are essential and align with our purpose

Question #2:

Recently in our services, Pastor Ed has been talking a lot about persecution and suffering in Romans 12. In Romans 5:3-5 Paul tells the Romans that “we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Discuss a time in your life in which a difficult trial produced endurance that led to character. How did you see yours or someone else’s character produce hope in someone’s life? What lesson did you learn from seeing that?

III. Live like Jesus by looking forward to seeing Jesus:

- A. **When we anticipate seeing Jesus we treat each other as citizens of heaven:** *“so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”*
- B. **When we anticipate seeing Jesus our faith is evidence of the gospel:** *“so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”*
- C. **When we anticipate seeing Jesus, we daily experience the sufficiency of Jesus:** *“so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”*

Question #3

Turn in your Bible to Matthew 24:42-44. What does this passage reveal about the return of Christ? What point was Jesus trying to get across? Take some time to imagine how your life might look different, if *everyday*, you eagerly prayed for the return of Jesus. Discuss with your group how you would live your life differently, and explain what you are going to do to help yourself get into that mindset.

Key Thought:

“The *fruits of righteousness* are the evidences and effects of our sanctification, the duties of holiness springing from a renewed heart, the *root of the matter in us*. These fruits are by *Jesus Christ*, by his strength and grace, for *without him we can do nothing...* We are *strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 2:1) and *strengthened with might by his Spirit* (Eph. 3:16), and they are *unto the glory and praise of God.*”

Matthew Henry (1662-1714), author and pastor

Recap:

The prayer that changed a city, shows the progression of a growing love:

1. A growing love leads us to know and live truth, while increasing in wisdom.
2. Growing in knowledge and wisdom creates an appetite for excellence.
3. A desire for excellence enables us to live a sincere, authentic and unhypocritical life.
4. **Love leads to knowledge and wisdom leads to excellence leads to an authentic life** that is increasingly demonstrating a fruitfulness that is **loving acts** of kindness and service.