

Sermon Notes and Discussion Questions

Second Sunday of Advent

Sermon Title: When Love Abounds – Philippians 1:3-11

Sunday, Dec. 9, 2018

Pastor Howard T. Washington

Paul is sharing with a church family where love abounds. Paul visited Philippi on his 2nd missionary journey after receiving a remarkable vision where a “man from Macedonia” pleaded with him to come over and help them (Acts 16:9).

Members of this church included: Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, whose heart was opened by the Lord (Acts 16:11-15). Among them was also a slave girl whose demons were cast out (Acts 16:16-24). The jailer who was about to take his life after Paul and Silas’ praise led to an earthquake. (Acts 16:16-31). The jailer believed Jesus and was saved. This letter is sent about 12 years after he founded the church. This is the second of his prison letters.

The reasons for writing the letter are: 1) to report on his circumstances 2) to express appreciation for their concern for him and the gift they had sent to him by Epaphroditus; 3) to assure them that Epaphroditus, who became ill while with Paul, had ministered satisfactorily to him and was now well enough to return to them; 4) to urge them to fulfill various duties; 5) Paul warns them about the danger of false teachers.

He begins the letter with a profound prayer of thanksgiving. He is saying how much he loves them. Love abounds in this church. Love abounds in the relationship between him and the church.

Sermon in a Sentence: When love abounds our relationships are significantly impacted even as we await Christ’s return.

Love is everything. The absence of love destroys fellowship. Just because you eat and have coffee together does not mean you have fellowship within. Love must abound in the church as they supported Paul in ministry. There was agape love in the relationship between Paul and the church.

Key Points:

- 1. When love abounds fellowship is an outgrowth of partnership. (V. 3-5).**
 - a. You were working with me from the beginning to get the gospel message out. Because we were partners in ministry, we developed fellowship. When working together in ministry, we get connected. If we really become disciples, then fellowship is the outgrowth in ministry.
 - b. Partnership in prison between Paul and the church at Philippi. When we celebrate together and cry together it creates fellowship. The church would send Paul things that he needed.
 - c. There is fellowship when our spiritual gifts complement one another.

- 2. When love abounds confidence, affirmation and edification are present. (V.6-8)**
 - a. Those who are trying to do the work of the Lord will be affirmed and edified. The work God has started, He will complete. This is confidence. Pray for those who put the emphasis on what they have done vs. what God is doing. God has begun the work of

salvation in us. He is with us and He will see us to completion. When Jesus comes back, we will be celebrated.

- b. There will be false teachers coming to try to mess up your thinking. No matter what comes your way, the change in your heart will be permanent. In the midst of difficulties, persevere and endure. It is going to be OK. I long to be with you. He is affirming you.
 - c. Leaders, confirm and edify the people in your ministry.
3. **When love abounds the good things in life bring glory to God. (V. 9-11)**
- a. God gets all of the glory. Paul is praying that love will allow them to sink deeper into the knowledge and discernment in things that matter most.
 - b. Where is your love invested? Where is your fellowship? Where is your partnership? Where is your confidence? Paul prays they will have wisdom in the decisions they make. Make wise choices. Have real knowledge to understand the truth and set it free. Give honor and glory to God in all we do.
 - c. You can't expect to have God's direction if all your ways acknowledge something else. Paul wanted them to have spiritual insight. Take off the rose colored glasses. Focus on what God is trying to get you to see. God is going to hold up His end.
 - d. God is holding up His end—now what are you going to do in the meantime? We are to seek God's guidance and wisdom. Ask God to take the blinders off.
 - e. Living right produces evidence of the fruit of the Spirit—fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. You are doing what you are able to do with the strength of God. With God's help, we can love, be patient, show kindness, demonstrate long-suffering, etc.
 - f. We have to have the fruit of the Spirit to draw on in difficult situations. God gives us a double portion of the fruit of the Spirit.

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the evidence in the church at Philippi that love abounds?
2. Explain the difference between a "busy church" and a church that has spiritual discernment?
3. There was already fellowship between Paul and the church at Philippi. Why did Paul pray the prayer of Thanksgiving in verses 9-11?
4. What produces the fruit of righteousness described in verse 11?
5. What can we learn from the church at Philippi about the benefits of partnering in ministry?
Note: The members of this church mentioned in the sermon were from different walks of life – Lydia, the jailer and the slave girl.