STRIVING FOR EXCELLENCE

Philippians 1:9-10

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INTRODUCTION

The Philippian church seems to be the most loving congregation that Apostle Paul had to deal with.

Philippians4.15 16 *- Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.*

Since this church so loved Paul, he felt so close to them. He also loved them so seriously. ***Philippians 1:8,*** he says, *"For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. "* Paul is here giving the description of the heart of every Christian toward his brethren. If only Christians can have this type of affection toward one another, think of the joy we will have in our worship. Work for God would be a shared blessings. Efforts to tear one another apart would be a thing of the past, never to come up again.

Since Paul so loved this brethren, he wanted the best for them and so his prayer is that they strive for excellence.

In ***Philippians 1:9-11***: *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God*.

Paul prayed that these brethren would learn to approve the things that are excellent (1.10). That is, they were to strive for excellence. Excellence has to do with valuable quality. It is *"the quality of being excellent"* (Webster database).

In his prayer, Paul did not want the brethren to strive for things that are good but things that are excellent. This means good is not good enough. Excellence is what is required.

They have be the very best. Think what a difference it would make if our attitude about everything we do for the Lord is that it has to be the very best it could be.

If we are to think that our singing in worship to God must be excellent, how much effort would we put into making it great? If we are to think that our Bible lessons are to be excellently presented, how much effort will we put into preparing it?

If we are to think that our God deserves the best of our giving, how much would we plan to give? If we are to think that the gospel is the best news to be shared with people, how freely will we share it?

If we are to think that the world is looking up to us, how best will we live? Excellence has more to do with attitude. If we think excellence therefore, our attitudes will change. When our attitudes change, our perspectives or viewpoints will change.

When our perspectives change, our action will change. When our actions change, they will be obvious. The apostle Paul tells the Philippian Christians what to do as they strive for excellence. First, their love should abound more and more. The apostle Paul says, *"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment"* (***Phi 1:9*** NKJ). While the Christians have been taught to love, and while the Christian's life is a life of love, he is still enjoined to increase in his love. To attain excellence, one must grow in love.

God and he is to increase in his love for others. To increase in love for God involves total submission to God and to His word. But how do we increase in love for one another ?

- ❖ It requires listening to each other.
- ❖ It requires thinking of others.
- ❖ It requires the willingness to forgive the failures of other persons.
- ❖ It also requires looking at other people through the eyes of the Lord. But our love must be in *'knowledge and all discernment.'*

The love is not to be ignorant and it is not blind. This love sees other people as they are and love them anyway. But it does not mean accepting their sins and rebellion. To attain excellence we must increase in our love for one another.

Second, they should be sincere and blameless. Anyone striving for excellence will be sincere. In ***Philippians 1:10*** the apostle says, "*that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.*" it is everything that it appeared to be.

Excellence is impossible unless people are sincere or real to themselves. When we are real to ourselves, we will accept that sin is sin. When we are sincere to

ourselves, we will accept that the word of God and not the opinion of people that is the final say over our lives. When we are sincere to ourselves, we will not be living a hypocritical live.

Though to be sincere does not necessarily mean that a person is right but no one attains excellence who is not sincere. Barnes holds that *"One of the great needs of today is for Christians to remove their masks and be the same people wherever they are"*. People turn away from the truth when they see insincerity in the people of God. For that reason, God's people are to live a sincere live. When we are sincerely right, we will be without offense. And with that attitude, we can attain excellence.

Third, they were to be filled with the fruit of righteousness. When an attitude of excellence prevails, the result is to be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Paul told the Philippians *"being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*"

Our efforts must be to be right, to live righteously every day. When we live right, our lives will produce the fruit of righteousness. The fruit of righteousness seem to be the same with the fruit of Spirit. In ***Galatians 5:22-23*** we have: *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law*".

A life bearing the fruit of the Spirit will bring glory and praise to God. A life full with the fruit of righteousness is the one that is striving for excellence.

CONCLUSION

As we live the Christian life, may we strive for excellence. God is happy when we excel. The apostle Paul enjoined the Corinthian Christians to excel in all facets of life.

"But as you abound in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us—see that you abound in this grace also". (***2 Co 8:7*** NKJ)