

Reflection: Philippians 1:3-11

Sitting in a drab, cramped house is a balding man writing a letter. His shoulders are stooped, his hand and foot are chained. Accompanying him in those chains is a rather large, muscular fellow with body armor displaying the seal of the Roman army. The year is around A.D. 63 in the city of Rome.

The occasion that prompted this letter was a gift sent to the apostle Paul from his closest friends in the church that met in Philippi.

The tone of this prisoner's letter was not complaint, grievance, lament, or bitterness. It is a letter of joy, a treatise on hope. The beginning paragraph is a prisoner's prayer of thanksgiving.

The Prisoner's Prayer Is for His Friends. Paul calls his friends "saints" in verse 1. He had a lofty view of the members of this parish. To him each one had great spiritual worth. He knew that they were "in Christ" and that Christ was "in them." God's grace, presence, strength, and power continually surrounded them.

This young congregation of men and women were relatively new Christians at Philippi. We might not call them saints due to their lack of maturity, but Paul saw them as saints in the making. He believed in their potential to deepen and broaden their relationship with God over the passage of years. His confidence ran deep in his converts.

Today many are coming to Christ who are coming from the raw side of life. They are rough around the edges, maybe hard to understand, illiterate of Bible truths and doctrines. But Christ sees in them great potential.

There is often a crisis moment when Christ comes in and all is transformed. A new relationship is established between God and the individual.

Today God desires the same for us. His dynamic and creative power is available to work in us, perfecting us into his Holy service.

Spiritual growth occurs even in the midst of adversity and the moments of silence.

We seek a clear perception of who God is and what God is all about. We are in Advent. The Christ Child in the manger is the Jesus of history.

Lyle Flinner said, “We need to see things as they really are and discern the highest and best for all involved.”

That discernment comes only through divine love, a love that is directed both to Jesus and to the people of the earth.

It is divine truth seen through human eyes filled with a godly vision.

May live out this truth, in our giving...

May we live out this truth, with our action...

Through our giving and action, we are his presence in a world of need, we are hope to those who have lost hope.

Let us pray...

Loving God,

**out of the embrace of mercy and righteousness,
you desire joy and dignity for all your people.**

O Holy One of Israel

make straight the paths that lead to you,

and smooth the rough ways,

that through you guiding and transforming spirit

we might bring forth your love,

your compassion,

and your hope

for all humanity. Amen.