

**Philippians 1:3-11**

**Paul's Prayer for the Philippians**

*3 I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your sharing 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 among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, 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 compassion 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 is best, so that on 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.*

Letters are fast becoming a thing of the past. Even those annual Christmas letters to distant relatives or old college roommates are becoming scarce. And who needs to write a letter when our life story, complete with photos, is available to all on social media? A quick text allows us to exchange information with friends and FaceTime calls keep us in touch with children and grandchildren. Yet, there is something to be said about the old-fashioned letter that can be pulled out over and over, letting us read again of special times and expressions of love from the past. My Mom kept all the letters my dad sent her while he was serving in the army during WWII. I'm sure she read those letters many times while he was away. Reading those letters decades later provided my brother and I a glimpse into that time and the love our parents shared. This letter to the Philippians from Paul was also probably read over and over. Indeed, it was saved through the centuries for us to read today. How great it would be to receive a letter that opens like this. In wonderful, joyful words it expresses Paul's love for this community and his gratitude for their friendship. It's filled with words of encouragement and wisdom. The Philippians must have felt blanketed by Paul's prayers. The love of Jesus reaches out through Paul to all who read this. Paul also writes of his confidence that the work of redemption started in us will be brought to completion. We need not be discouraged by anything. This redemptive work started with the sacrifice Jesus made for us. If our faith is placed in Christ, we will stand pure and blameless on Judgement Day. What better news is there! That's news we need to read over and over!

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Prayer: Dear Lord, thank you for the letters of Paul preserved in the Holy Scriptures. Thank you for his words of love, encouragement and wisdom, sharing the good news of our salvation. May we be encouraged through these letters to also share this good news. Mostly, during this Advent season we thank you for sending Jesus to save us.

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