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| [Philippians 1:1-1](http://www.sermoncentral.com/bible/NIV/Philippians-1.asp?passage=Philippians+1%3A1%2D1%3A11)1  | Invest, Invest !! | Pinelands – 9am - 07/01/2024Thornton – 10:30am – 07/01/2024  |

**SO…** We are one week into the new year… **2024.**

Ahead of us…We are faced with a year full of…

 ***POSSIBILITY* and *OPPORTUNITY.***

12 months (- 1 Week), 51 weeks. 359 days.

8616 hours. 516, 960 min 31,017,600 seconds

***What will you do with all this time?***

I came across this poem entitled **“The New Year”**

***I am the new year.***

***I am an unspoiled page in your book of time.
I am your next chance at the art of living.
I am your opportunity to practice what you have learned***

 ***about life during the last twelve months.****All that you sought and didn’t find is hidden in me,*

*waiting for you to search it but with more*

 *determination.*

*All the good that you tried for and didn’t achieve is mine*

*to grant when you have fewer conflicting desires.*

*All that you dreamed but didn’t dare to do,*

*all that you hoped but did not will,*

*all the faith that you claimed but did not have –*

 *these slumber lightly,*

*waiting to be awakened by the touch*

*of a strong purpose.*

***I am your opportunity to renew your allegiance…***

***to Him who said,*** ***"Behold, I make all things new."***

This is typically the time of year when people make resolutions.

In the dictionary **‘resolution’** is defined as…

***“a course of action decided upon; a fixed purpose.”***
We **‘resolve’** to do things differently.

To lose weight, To exercise more.

To be a better person. To dispense with old bad habits

To begin some new good habits.

Many will start **2024** with good intentions…

 ***BUT…*** **The question is…**

***What investment are we prepared to make in…***

***ourselves and in others this year?***

Paul’s letter to the **Philippians** was written while he was in prison.

**Yet** even there he ***still investing his life for his friends*** in Philippi

and continues praying for them.

As we look at the first eleven verses of chapter 1,

we see that Paul has invested himself in prayer.

*While he is not free to go to others,*

***he is still praying for them.***

And his investment in prayer pays huge dividends.

**I. PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING *(vs. 3-5)***

**Paul writes… Phil 1:3-5…**

***“I thank my God for you every time I think of you; and***

 ***every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy because of the***

 ***way in which you have helped me in the work of the***

 ***gospel from the very first day until now.”***

**Paul** keeps them in prayer, rejoicing in the fact that they…

received the good news of **Christ** and continue to live in it.

He invested himself in their lives by sharing **Christ** with them,

**BUT…** he didn’t stop there.

**Paul continued to pray for them.**

With joy he remembered them in prayer.

***Perhaps we need that reminder.***

It is wonderful to pray for someone to receive Christ,

**BUT…** once they do, we need to continue to pray for them.

Having taken the first step in their life in **Christ…**

*doesn’t mean they have arrived.*

It means they have begun a journey and need prayer daily.

 And praying for other Christians is a joy!

**Christ will continue his work in us**, ***but sometimes…***

 ***it is the prayers of others*** for us that keep us walking with **Christ** *We need others* **praying** *and thanking God for us.*

**Regardless** of where, or what circumstances people are in,

Whether… going through hard times or rejoicing in God’s blessings,

We have a common bond in Christ.

**Paul wrote… in 1 Cor 12:26…**

***“If one part suffers, every part suffers with it;***

 ***if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.”***

**Praying for one another** *strengthens all of us.*

**Praying for one another** *binds us together in Christ.*

**Invest yourself** in the lives of others by ***praying for them.***
**II. PRAY FOR A GROWING LOVE *(vs. 9-10a)***
Paul specifically prayed for the Philippian Christians

 ***“I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more,***

 ***together with true knowledge and perfect judgment,***

 ***so that you will be able to choose what is best.”* (Phil 1:9-10)**

***Isn’t that a wonderful prayer?***

Can you imagine what would happen if…

*each of us prayed daily for others in this congregation,*

*for their love to overflow, to flourish and blossom.*

**And** **what would happen if each of us** **became even more loving?**

There is a **story** about **Michelangelo**,*(the great sculptor and painter)*

he was pushing a heavy rock up a small incline to his work area

so that he could do some sculpting.

A neighbour watched him…for over an hour… got the rock in place. **Neighbour he asked,**

***“Michel, why do you labour so hard over that ugly,***

***heavy piece of rock?”***

**Michelangelo said,**

***“Because there is an angel inside that wants to come out.”***

**PRAY** that love will keep on growing more and more…

in the heart and life of another, so that…

***“the angel inside can come out.”***

**PRAY** that others will be set free to love more freely.

**Pray** that love will grow and flourish.

Most Aquarium fish… have an interesting Characteristic

*They grow to a size proportionate to the aquarium*

*In which they live.*

***That can also happen to Christians.***

We become content in our Surroundings…

 ***AND…*** **Stop Growing**

***We must continue to grow in love for others.***

We must learn to… As Eugene Petersen wrote… **Phil 1:9ff..**

***“So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish***

***and that you will not only love much but love well.***

***Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head***

***and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and***

 ***intelligent, not sentimental gush.”***

**PRAY** for a Growing **LOVE** and Knowledge of God ***in OTHERS***

**III. PRAY FOR CHRISTIAN MATURITY *(vs. 10b-11a)***
God delights in answering such prayers. **(Phil 1:6)**

***“And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you,***

***will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.”***

When we are growing in **Christ-like love**, then…

WE are becoming who and what ***God wants us to be…***

God’s desire is that we be found… **(Phil 1:10-11)**

***“free from all impurity and blame…* and that**

***Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only***

***Jesus Christ can produce, for the glory and praise of God.”***

We all need people praying for us, so that we can…

**Grow in Christ-likeness** and live a life pleasing to God.

**Paul reminds us** that…

None of us is able to love God and others adequately by our own efforts.

***But through the prayers of others, we can grow in love.***

**Invest yourself in this New Year in prayer…**

so that others may grow in Christ-like love

and thus be found pure and blameless when Christ returns.

**SO…** **Why don’t we pray as Paul did?**

**There is a story…**

Of a man who traveled to a certain city one cold morning.

As he arrived at his hotel, he noticed…

that the clerks, the guests - ***everyone*** - **were barefoot.**

In the coffee shop, he noticed a fellow at a nearby table and asked,

 **“Why aren’t you wearing shoes?**

 **Don’t you know about shoes?”**

 ***“Of course, I know about shoes,”*** the patron replied.

***“Then why don’t you wear them?”*** The visitor asked.

***“Ah, that is the question,”*** the patron returned...

***“Why don’t I wear shoes?”***

After breakfast, the visitor walked out of the hotel and into the snow. Again, every person he saw was barefoot.

Curious, he asked a passerby,

***“Why doesn’t anyone here wear shoes?***

***Don’t you know that they protect the feet from cold?”***

The passerby said,

***“We know about shoes. See that building? It’s a shoe***

 ***factory. We are so proud of the company that we***

 ***gather there every week to hear the man in charge***

***tell us how wonderful shoes are.’***

***“Then why don’t you wear shoes?”*** the visitor persisted.

***“Ah, that is the question,”*** the passerby replied.

***“Why don’t we wear shoes?”***

**WHEN IT COMES TO PRAYER,**

**many Christians** are like the people in that city.

They ***KNOW*** about prayer,

They ***BELIEVE*** in in prayer, and its power,

They ***FREQUENTLY HEAR SERMONS*** on Prayer…

**BUT…** **They do not PRAY**

However, prayer is essential in the life of a Christian,

**BUT…** too often missing.

**Judy Diehl… wrote…**

***“Prayer is a “piece” of the Christian life that fascinates us,***

 ***yet it is easy to ignore. It is something we publicly claim***

 ***to seek but secretly are afraid to find.***

 ***We want to pray, and yet find that prayer is easy,***

 ***disturbingly easy, to avoid.***

***We know prayer is necessary, but we can’t explain***

***logically how it works.***

***We want transformation in our lives, but we fear change.”***

**IF YOU…** want **2024,** to be a Different Year

**IF YOU’RE…** looking for a **challenge that will be…**

**truly be meaningful,**

**THEN…** **INVEST yourself in *PRAYER* this year.**
**Pray** with thanksgiving for other believers.
**Pray** that God’s love will overflow more and more in them.
**Pray** that they will grow in Christ-like love.

**PRAYER** **is the best investment you can make…**

**this** **NEW YEAR.**

**Philippians 1:1-11**

From Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus - To all God's people in Philippi who are in union with Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and helpers:

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

**Paul's Prayer for His Readers**

I thank my God for you every time I think of you; and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now. And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus. You are always in my heart! And so it is only right for me to feel as I do about you. For you have all shared with me in this privilege that God has given me, both now that I am in prison and also while I was free to defend the gospel and establish it firmly. God is my witness that I tell the truth when I say that my deep feeling for you all comes from the heart of Christ Jesus himself.

I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, so that you will be able to choose what is best. Then you will be free from all impurity and blame on the Day of Christ. Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only Jesus Christ can produce, for the glory and praise of God.