

Upholding one another

I remember being at a campsite where the campsite owners asked us to do a practical riddle. There were 3 short brick pillars each about a foot high arranged in an equilateral triangle. They then gave us 3 planks of equal length and told us to arrange them on the 3 brick pillars so that they form a solid structure by themselves without needing to be held up by anyone. The problem was that the planks were too short to reach from one pillar to another. After we had given up they arranged them in a way that the planks criss-crossed in the middle forming a solid structure that someone could stand on without it collapsing. The planks needed each other to all be upheld. So it is with us. We need to uphold each other in life and the church. To form a strong structure that none of us can be by ourselves.

Philippians 1: 1 – 11

Paul is writing this letter to the saints in Philippi. Timothy is with Paul when he is writing the letter. The Philippian believers were very dear to Paul and Paul's affection for them comes through very strongly in the entire letter.

1) Upholding one another in prayer

- We ought to thank God for one another
 - To do so we need to think of each other in a positive light
 - Think about how God's grace is working in them
 - Think about the blessings they are to us
 - Think about the fruit that they are bearing in their lives, the church and the world
 - We cannot think negatively about someone and thank God for them at the same time.
- We ought to pray for one another with joy
 - Pray in a way that we really want them to benefit from our prayers
 - We rejoice in partnership with us in the Gospel. This could be two-fold:
 - The believers have joined in the life of the Gospel
 - The believers have joined in the ministry of the Gospel

2) Upholding one another in encouragement

- If we are thanking God for each other and praying for them then encouraging them will be easy
- We pray for each other because we understand that each person is still a work in progress
- We encourage each other in times of weakness and doubt to keep pressing on because we are convinced that God has started a work of grace in their lives and will carry it on to completion in Christ Jesus.
- God is the one who will keep us from falling
 - Jude 24 - 25 To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy-- to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.
- God is the one who holds us in His hand and no one can snatch us out of it

- John 10: 28 – 30 I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰ I and the Father are one
- This is a matter of eternal security.
 - We don't find eternal security in ourselves or in our own good works but in God who has grace to save us and to keep us.
- Does this mean that we can live and do what we like because we are secure in God's hands? Absolutely not.
 - Paul moves on from encouragement to exhortation.

3) Upholding one another in exhortation

- Paul puts his exhortation of the believers in the form of a prayer.
 - This is because he understands that as much as we have a responsibility to walk in God's ways we cannot do it without God.
- Paul has a three-fold exhortation for the believers here
 - That their love may abound in knowledge and discernment
 - Love for God and for one another
 - Discern the way to carry out that love
 - Sometimes love is demonstrated with affection and other times with discipline
 - That they may be pure and blameless
 - Free from impurity and living a life that no one can point a finger at saying that we are doing wrong
 - Being filled with the fruit of righteousness
 - We are made righteous by faith but we live righteous lives in practice
 - 1 John 3: 7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.
 - We do right works when we walk in obedience to God