

Philippians 1:9-11

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 5/6/2007

How can we live a life that glorifies God?

Prayer

Father, what wonderful privilege it is to come together as a body before You and to look into Your Word. And it is our prayer and our desire that Your Word would convict us, it would reprove us, it would correct us, that it would train us for every good work that You have pre-ordained. Father we praise You for an opportunity to look at Your Word, and we pray that You would open our hearts and minds to understand. And Father I pray that we would not be forgetful hearers, but by Your Spirit and power, that we would be effectual doers. May You be glorified greatly today through the proclamation of Your Word, and it is in Your Son's name we pray. Amen.

Sermon

When you hear about a husband or a wife who says they love their spouse, and yet they spend time with others of the other gender, maybe even spending bad time, I'm not going to say much about that because of the kids in here. Obviously the husband who says he loves his wife and spends time with another woman does not love his wife. No matter what he says, his actions prove differently. In John 14:15, Jesus says if you love Me, you will keep my commandments. Now He doesn't say you'll keep the Law, the word *nomos*, He talks about my commandments or commands, you'll keep what I say, you'll do what I say. Jesus told and exhorted and rebuked the Pharisees in Luke 6:46 saying why do you call me Lord, Lord and not do what I say? There are many, many believers, or so called believers, or church or so called churches that say they love Jesus. Many of the songs that are sung are all about loving Jesus, and yet we observe from the outside, consistent habitual disobedience. I would parce(?) it to you today that they don't love Jesus.

For instance, the pastor who is commanded and charged before heaven and earth to preach the Word who does not do that is not obeying Christ. I'm talking about on a consistent habitual level which Jesus would say if you love Me you will keep My commandments. There are those who blatantly disobey God's Word whether in church or as believers. And either they are not saved, and do not have the capacity to love and obey, or they have lost their first love, as sin has darkened and hardened their hearts.

Now today we're going to see that true love brings about glory to God, and I believe in our passage today we're going to see how we can live a life that glorifies God. So I'd ask you if you'd turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians 1. We're continuing our look through the book of Philippians. Now I'm just going to go through the context today, but we know that the apostle Paul is the author of Philippians, that he and Timothy send their greetings but Paul is the one writing this letter. That Paul is most likely in prison in Rome, under house arrest. It is somewhere between 60-61 A.D. through 63 A.D. That he is chained and imprisoned to a Roman guard probably 24/7. And that this is one of the four prison epistles

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that he wrote while in chains, Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon. And most likely it was written around 62 A.D.

Now we know from Acts 16 about ten years earlier the Philippian church was founded as the apostle Paul shared the Gospel with Lydia. And we see that as she came to faith and her household came to faith, then as Paul cast out a demon from a slave girl, he was thrown in prison. Paul and Silas were there praising God. And in that God caused an earthquake and freed them, and the Philippian jailer about to commit suicide said “sirs, what must I do to be saved?” And with his obviously repentant heart they said believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.

We see the beginning of the Philippian church, and this Philippian church was very, very close to the apostle Paul. And Paul was close to them. Later on in the book we see that they were the only church that helped him financially at certain times during the ministry. And we see a couple reasons why Paul wrote this letter, certainly to thank this church for this gracious gifts, but also he had heard of a disagreement between two woman, Euodia and Syntyche. Of such magnitude that he needed to address that issue. He also warns in chapter 3 of false teachers; beware of the dogs, beware of the evil-doers, beware of the false circumcision. And he also encourages them to rejoice in Christ, to be united in Him, to look out for not only their personal interests, but for others, to have the mind that Christ had.

Now I’ve shared what Harry Ironside wrote about the book of Philippians, I think it’s a wonderful summary. He says it’s all about Christ, Christ is all. Chapter 1 – Christ is our life, chapter 2 – Christ is our example, chapter 3 – Christ is our object, and the last chapter – Christ is our strength and supply. And when we started the book we saw that he writes to the saints in Philippi, those who are set apart, those who have been declared righteous, and that he called himself and Timothy bond-slaves, *doulos*, those who have submitted their will fully to the will of their master. And we saw last week that Paul was so thankful for God’s work in them that was manifest in how they shared in the Gospel. And he was confident that that good work He began would complete until the day of Christ Jesus.

Now today we’re going to see how we can live a life that glories God, and I think the first thing we’ll see is that we need to abound more and more in true biblical love. Philippians 1:9,

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. [Philippians 1:9-11]

As we look at this verse we see, this is the actual petition, verse 9 is the actual petition, 10-11 are the desired results Paul wants to share with them when the love abounds in real knowledge and discernment. So first of all we see Paul prays for their love to abound, verse 9 “⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more...” And this is the basic content of Paul’s prayer, he says this is what I pray, that your love may abound still more and more. Now this word abound is actually a word that we’re familiar with, if you remember from 1 Thessalonians, it’s *perisseuo*, it means to be over and above, it means to excel, or abound over and above. And he adds this modifier, more and more, that

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you would excel and abound more and more. In our translations we have the word “still”, but it could be translated “yet”, this idea of excelling to a greater degree. Paul is praying for these Philippian believers that he loves to excel yet more and more, in super abundance, that their love would excel as we’ll see in these areas of real knowledge and discernment.

Now there’s a couple questions we need to answer here as we look at this text, what kind of love is this that he’s talking about? And who is it for? And how do we do it, how do we love like this? First of all, the word used is *agape*, it’s a word that’s very familiar. And the word used in our passage here *agape*, is not of a feeling or an emotion toward someone. It is the action of self-sacrifice in the context of a relationship with the living God. This relationship is earmarked as we will see by obedience to the truth. *Agape* love is a self-sacrificial love, it is God’s love manifest in His people. And it is completely and perfectly demonstrated through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, God demonstrates His *agape* love for use in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We have certainly the truth in Ephesians 5 concerning husbands and wives, which gives us insight into what God’s love is through Christ. (Ephesians 5:25), ²⁵ ***Husbands, love your wives*** (*agape* them), ***just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her***. It is a self-sacrificial love that seeks the best in the context of truth for the one love.

1st John 4, as Dennis read today, verse 8,

⁸ The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹ By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. [1st John 4:8-10]

We see love perfectly exemplified in the person of Jesus Christ.

So that’s what self-sacrificial *agape* love is, but how do we do it, how do we as believers love one another? Again we saw back in 1 Thessalonians, we know that love, *agape* love, is innate to a true believer. 1 Thessalonians 4:9,

⁹ Now as to the love of the brethren (that’s *phileo* love), ***you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love*** (*agape*) ***one another...***. ***God teaches us to love one another. 1st John 3:10, “By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious:*** (it’s obvious, you can tell) ***anyone who does not practice righteousness*** (that’s a continual habitual action) ***is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. ¹¹ For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹² not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother’s were righteous. ¹³ Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.*** (loving the brethren is innate to a true believer, we can know we’ve passed out of death to life if we have a true Godly, self-sacrificial love for the brothers and sisters in Christ) ***He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶ We know love by this, that He laid***

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down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. [1 Thessalonians 4:9-16]

True biblical agape love is self-sacrificial love demonstrated in the person of Christ. And we can know that we are truly saved by one element, that we truly are able to love His people. Love, i.e. God's love, flows from the believer who is abiding and obeying Christ. Love is certainly the fruit, the first fruit of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, all those wonderful things, the qualities of Christ manifest in a believer who is yielded to Him. The ability to love God is an evidence of a changed life. The ability to love one another is an evidence of a changed life.

Now before we move on we need to recognize there are millions, well not millions, but myriads of false teachings concerning love and its practice. And as I need to mention, and Christ mentions often, the apostle John mentions often, biblical agape love cannot be separated from obedience. And I'll mention some passages here, 2nd John verse 4, John writes,

⁴ I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. ⁵ And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. ⁶ And this is love, (it's going to say, here it is) that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it. [2nd John 4-6]

Love can't be separated by walking in the commandments, by not obeying what Christ says I mean.

1st John 5:1,

¹ Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. ² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. [1st John 5:1-2]

When we love Christ and do what He says, we will manifest love for one another, and by this we are children of God. If someone says I love God and they don't do what He says, they don't love Him. They're either not saved or they have lost their first love. When we obey our Lord, the fruit of that obedience is a true love, and it can't be separated from that. I want to ask you, have you had a problem obeying the Lord, have you had a problem doing what He says? It may be an evidence that you're not truly saved. Maybe an evidence that you don't know the Lord, or maybe that your heart has become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Now we need to ask the question here also, who is this love for? There's two prevailing interpretations. First all that the love is to abound for the brethren, but secondly to abound towards God. Which is the right interpretation? And I think as we look at it, it's both. As we love God, we will love the brethren, I think it's that simple. As we love God with a true obedient heart, we will love His people, for that is what

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He has commanded us to do from the beginning. And here in our passage we see that Paul says in verse 9, and this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.

Now as we look at our passage we're going to see that the sphere in which love is to abound is in two areas that Paul shares. One is in real knowledge and one is in all discernment. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in, what sphere, real knowledge he says first of all. And it's interesting because when we think of love we sometimes don't think of true knowledge. Certainly Paul would share with the Corinthians that knowledge puffs up, that knowledge by itself without love is worthless. But what is this real knowledge? We see this real or true knowledge is *epignosis*, it speaks of a full or true knowledge. It is a full, intimate knowledge directed towards an object or person, gained by experience. And true biblical love cannot exist apart from real knowledge.

We see, and I pray this that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge. Well what's this word real knowledge? The word as I've shared is *epignosis*, it speaks of a true or full knowledge. It's a real knowledge, and Paul is praying that their love which they have will abound more and more in one area, this real knowledge. It speaks of a full or true, intimate knowledge. *Epignosis* speaks of a knowledge that is gained through experience, but ultimately gained in fullness and truth. One pastor writes, Wade Burleson,

Love for Christ requires proper knowledge of Him. Pure emotional commitments in revivals, rededications, and renewals will soon fade. Love for Christ will abound when His people learn the great eternal truths of Scripture. Those lacking in knowledge are most frequently thrown off balance in the Christian life.

And Kenneth Weust, a Greek scholar and believer writes,

The full knowledge that these Philippians needed to gain by experience was a better understanding of God's Word as translated into their experience focused on the person of Jesus Christ.

You cannot truly love your spouse unless you know your spouse. We cannot truly love God unless we know the Lord. Now where is it that we find the revelation of Christ? It is in His Word alone, and biblical love cannot abound, it cannot exist apart from the true intimate knowledge of the person of Jesus Christ. We cannot love God apart from the revelation and knowledge of Him in scripture. And again, I'm not saying that we have knowledge by itself which would puff up, we have knowledge in the context of a true relationship. And here we see Paul praying that their love, which already exists would abound more and more in the area of real knowledge.

What's the second area that he prays for? And this I pray that your love may abound more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. Not only does he pray that their love which already exists would abound, for the Lord obviously, and His people in the context of real knowledge. He prays that it would abound, super-abound, more and more, in all discernment. This word discernment is an interesting word; it speaks of a moral action of recognizing certain distinctions, making a decision concerning

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behavior. It speaks of perception and insight. So what's Paul saying here? And I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. Simply, biblical love does not only contain true knowledge of Christ, it also is discerning. True biblical love does not slop over every side. Biblical love is not uncontained. So often we think of love as just indiscriminately helping anyone and everyone. And true biblical love, he prays, will abound in all discernment.

J. Vernon McGee writes about when he was first a pastor. He says he found in the beginning of his ministry that certain people moved around and preyed on new preachers. And there was a man, who he said came forward and talked about salvation and he felt complimented, and he shared the Gospel with him, and the guy prayed and tears and all sorts of things. And then after he was done, he said he made the mistake of asking him if he needed anything, and the guy said I could use some money for this, and some money for that. And he shares later on that he found out this particular man was going around from one pastor to another, claiming to be a believer in Christ so he could get money off of them, and he said specifically as he did an article in the paper that preachers are the biggest saps around. And the point was that true biblical love is discerning, it's discerning, if it's God's love working in His people, by His Word manifest, there's going to be an element and discernment. And Paul prays that it would abound in all discernment.

Also Chuck _____ writes, and I love how he taught years past, so focused on truth, these days he's not so solid anymore, it's just sad. But he wrote this in the past as he shared in this passage, he says,

When love floods indiscriminately, we love everything, even the wrong things. Paul said it well. It is knowledge--real knowledge--and discernment--keen discernment--that keeps love within its banks. We need to "keep our love within proper limits".

And I would add otherwise it is not biblical love.

Ultimately, if it's not within the limits of knowledge, of Christ's true knowledge, it's not biblical. Shakespeare said love is blind, but folks, true biblical love is not blind. Blind love is not God's love. And Paul prays that their love would abound more and more in these two areas, real knowledge and all discernment, discernment that encompasses every aspect. So we ask the question, how is it that we believers, we know how we abound in real knowledge right, through studying the Word of God concerning Christ, focusing on Him. Well, how do we abound in discernment? The writer of Hebrews shares this truth in Hebrews 5, and you can hold in your place and turn to Hebrews 5 with me. We'll look at verse 12 as He's about to share about Melchizedek, he can't do it, and he needs to stop and rebuke these people. He says in verse 12, chapter 5,

¹² For though by this time you ought to be teachers, (time sufficient is past, you've been a believer long enough, you should be teaching people the Word of God) **you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. ¹³ For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. ¹⁴ But solid food**

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is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. [Hebrews 5:12-14]

When you are in the Word of God, when you are diligently practicing your study, you are in the Word of God, over and over again, your senses are trained to discern good and evil. Solomon shares to his son in Proverbs 2:1, “

¹ My son, if you will receive my sayings, (and he’s speaking about the word that he is giving) And treasure my commandments within you, (this is the Word of God) ² Make your ear attentive to wisdom, Incline your heart to understanding; ³ For if you cry for discernment, Lift your voice for understanding; ⁴ If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures; ⁵ Then you will discern the fear of the LORD, (that’s in the context of seeking His Word) And discover the knowledge of God. ⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. ⁷ He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, ⁸ Guarding the paths of justice, And He preserves the way of His godly ones. ⁹ Then you will discern righteousness and justice And equity and every good course. ¹⁰ For wisdom will enter your heart, And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; ¹¹ Discretion will guard you, Understanding will watch over you. [Proverbs 2:1-10]

When God imparts His Word to the heart of his children, we see that His children become discerning. And Paul is praying that they would be discerning. And folks, the church has thrown discernment out the window, it’s just a symptom of not being in the Word of God, and not knowing the Word of God. I want to ask you, do you have a proper view of biblical love that includes real knowledge and all discernment. Do you rightly see biblical love as discerning, a love that makes discerning judgments. If you are in the Word of God, and growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ you will be able to discern between good and evil. And it is my prayer that we would abound in these areas.

And folks, are you crying out and praying like Paul is for the Philippians for others in the body, that their love that exists already, it’s an evidence of being saved, would abound in all real knowledge and all discernment? So often we just pray for our brothers and sisters for the events that they are going through in their lives temporarily, so-and-so’s sick, so-and-so’s got this problem, so-and-so needs this. And we need to pray for those things, but are we praying beyond that? That so-and-so would abound in their love in the areas of real knowledge of Christ and all discernment. That’s what Paul prays for. And that’s the core, I believe, of how we can live a life that glorifies God. First of all, that our love would grow in true knowledge and all discernment.

Well how else can we live a life that glorifies God? I think secondly we’re going to need to recognize what Paul shares here, the results of a true abounding love, here as a genuine life, a sincere life that glorifies Christ. Verse 9 again,

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, (that’s the prayer, and here he goes) ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹

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having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. [Philippians 1:9-11]

He says this super-abounding love in the areas of real knowledge and discernment, he's praying that, so that they would approve the things that are excellent. And I believe we're going to see that true love leads to the right choices in our day-to-day conduct, the things we deal with every single day concerning work, concerning family, concerning every aspect of life, that this super-abounding love in real knowledge of Christ and discernment will result in this. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent. For the purpose of, this love is found in these areas, so that you may approve. And this word approve, we've heard of it before, it might say discern in your translations, *dokimazo*. Well what is that? It is the act of testing something for the purpose of approving it. It was used to speak of testing metal coins to assess their value. It speaks of proving something as true or worthy by testing it. Giving something approval after testing it.

And there's another word here, one word that's translated the things that are excellent here. And that word, *diaphero*, literally means to carry two ways. Well what does that mean? Or to carry different ways, or differing. And literally in our context he's talking about that you may approve the differing things. It's talking about discernment, that you will be able to make choices between the differing things, to approve and test what is right, to make the right choices, to ultimately approve the things that are excellent. Paul's praying for their love to abound in real knowledge and discernment so that they would approve the things that are excellent.

Here we see true discernment leads directly to right choices being made. Now I don't think at this point Paul is speaking about the blatant understanding between good and evil, like that it's evil choice and that's a good choice. I believe he's talking about making the right choice, the most excellent choice. And so often a good choice is the enemy of a right choice, an excellent choice. We as believers are not often pitted between good and evil in our choices, we have a bunch of good choices to make. And he is saying here, so that you may approve the things that are excellent. And I believe as we grow in our love for Christ through the real knowledge of Him and all discernment, given to us through His Word by His Holy Spirit we are able to approve the things that are excellent. Have you ever noticed how some believers don't approve the things that are excellent? And when I say that, we can look at our own lives, that we make choices so often that are not biblically right. He's praying that they would abound in this true love so that they would. Are you having trouble discerning your way in the Christian life? Are you being tossed here and there? Do you prove the things that are excellent, do you examine and test and prove them for the purpose of making the right choice? When you approve the things that are excellent, the things of Christ, God, as we will see, is praised and glorified.

Now as we continue, I believe this abounding love for Christ results in an upright, fruitful walk. Again, verse 9, and this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. We see that phrase, in order to be, this is a purpose or reason. Making these right

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choices, approving the things that are excellent that comes from a love that is growing for Christ in real knowledge and discernment is going to bring about behavior that is right and then a walk that is sincere, blameless and fruitful.

What does he mean by this word sincere? It's translated genuine, it's an interesting word. In the Greek it's two words put together, sun, as in the sun, sunlight, and judge. And in this culture when people would buy pottery, the bad guys who sold pottery would put wax in the cracks and they would try to sell it off as a pot that was in good shape. And what they would do is the buyer would take the pot, hold it up to the sun, and if they could see light through there, they would not buy it, they would know. Sun and judge, speaks of sincerity, speaks of this idea of being genuine. It speaks of being un-mixed. It came to be translated as without wax. There's no wax. And folks when your love, true love for Christ is abounding in real knowledge of Him, which I hope it is, when it is abounding in all discernment, you're going to approve the right things, you're going to walk the right way, and you are going to be sincere, you're going to be genuine. You're not going to be a hypocrite. You look at hypocritical believers, well before this point, they haven't been abounding in their real knowledge of Christ and all discernment. If you're doing this, the result is you will be the genuine article. If you're going to be genuine inside and out, you're not going to be a different person here and a different person at home. When the light is shined upon your life, it's going to be the same, there's not going to be any cracks.

When love for Christ, that comes from knowledge of Him through His Word manifest in right choices, thus our lives will manifest a characteristic of genuineness. Are you the genuine article? Are you the same person here as you are at home? Are you a hypocrite? When the light of Christ's Word shines on your life, are there cracks in your vase? Are you trying to portray yourself as something else? When you're making the right choices based on a love for Christ, abounding in the knowledge of Him, you're going to be the genuine article, the sincere, true, genuine article.

Now as we see here, right choices results in blameless character. Verse 9, and this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. Now in scripture there's a couple words spoken of for blameless. Most of the word that's used often translated is "without spot or blemish." It's speaking of an external blamelessness. You look at someone's life, and they're blameless as you see from the outside. This word is a different word. It actually literally means "not cut against". Well what does that mean? It speaks of not stumbling or giving an offense. It's actually translated in 1 Corinthians 10 as give no offense; Acts 24:16, a clear conscience. And it most likely refers to a genuine believer who does not by their lives actions, put a stumbling block in the way of someone else, and thus their consciences are clean. The believer who is approving the things that are excellent, discerning truth, growing in the knowledge of Christ, is sincere, genuine and not stumbling other people.

The saint is not a stumbling block for others, and his or her conscience knows it. The believers, who's love for Christ is abounding in real knowledge and discernment through His Word, thus approving the excellent things, will be genuine and will not stumble others. And ultimately we'll have a clear conscience. True believers who are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ are the real deal.

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They don't stumble others. And by the way, the Lord Jesus does not take kindly to those who stumble His children. In Matthew 18 He shares how valuable they are. He says in Matthew 18:3,

³ Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. (He's talking about becoming like a child, innocent and accepting the truth, receiving it, not being skeptical, but just believing what they here)
⁴ "Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ "And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me; (speaking about those who believe) ⁶ but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it is better for him that a heavy millstone be hung around his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea. [Matthew 18:3-6]

Folks, do you want to stumble people? Do you want your life, you claim to be a Christian, to stumble people, to stumble other believers? It's a terrible thing, and our passage is saying, today, it's not that we seek not to stumble people, it's that we seek to abound in our love and real knowledge and discernment, and that will produce an ability to make those right choices which will be evidenced in the fact that we are sincere, genuine, and then do not stumble people. And Paul's praying for them to grow and abound in that discernment, that they would not stumble until the day of Christ. And we talked about that last week, the day in which Christ completes His work in His body, the day in which our bodies are redeemed. So we see the believer whose love for Christ and others is abounding in true knowledge and discernment is now sincere, not stumbling others. And lastly, we see they are fruitful.

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⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. [Philippians 1:9-11]

This is a difficult portion to translate and interpret. Is he talking here, this fruit of righteousness, is he saying it is the fruit from righteousness? The fruit from a righteous standing, or is it righteous fruit? Well he says here, having been filled, and that is really in parallel with the idea of being sincere and blameless. And we also see the source of this fruit is, middle of verse 11, comes through Jesus Christ. It doesn't come from Him, it comes through Him.

And I believe the idea of this fruit of righteousness, or righteous fruit comes through Jesus Christ, indicates that this is righteous behavior, righteous behavior. It is none other than the fruit produced in the life of a believer abiding in Christ, growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, His Word abiding in them. And Jesus says this very thing in John 15, if you turn there with me and hold your place in Philippians, to John 15.

John 15:1, very familiar passage, Jesus says,

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¹ I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit. (He's speaking to the disciples) ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. (That doesn't sound too good) ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. [John 15:1-7]

This fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ, it is when the believer abides in Christ, growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, yielded to Christ, abiding in Him, and His Word in us, that the fruit of that is His righteous life manifest in the believer. Now in case you're confused on what this fruit looks like, we often categorize it, you know, getting people in church, or whatever it might be, that's not the type of fruit that he's speaking of here. Ephesians 5:8,

⁸ for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; (speaking of believers) walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), ¹⁰ trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. [Ephesians 5:8-10]

And certainly we know the fruit of the Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. The fruit that is produced in the yielded life of a believer who loves the Lord and is abounding in true knowledge of Him and all discernment is the very life of Christ manifest in that believer. And Christ's life, when manifest in a believer will exhibit genuineness, it will not stumble, and it will be fruitful. I want to ask you, are you genuine? Are you one who stumbles other people with your decisions and actions? Are you fruitful? Does your life manifest love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control? I'll tell you right now, some people here are not faithful, and that's a stumbling block to others. And some people are faithful, and that's to the praise and glory of God. What is your life like? Is your life manifesting a yieldedness to Christ? Are you discerning the excellent things, walking in a worthy manner? If you're a believer and you're not doing this, your eyes have been pulled off Christ, you've lost your first love. You love yourself and your own life.

Well we see here in our passage that this righteous fruit results in praise and glory to God. Again we'll read the passage,

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, (that's the prayer, that's the request, here's the result) ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, (that's making right choices) in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of

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righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, (and this last portion) to the glory and praise of God. [Philippians 1:9-11]

Oh believer, when we're growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ, when we're approving the excellent things, exhibiting a sincerity, a blamelessness, the fruit of a life yielded to Christ, then it is that life that brings praise and glory to God.

How do we bring praise and glory to God? Paul prays for it, it's the first part, I pray that you would abound, that your love would abound in real knowledge and all discernment. When all is said and done, does your life, does my life, do our lives bring praise and glory to God? When people look at you, do they praise God for Christ's work in your life? For some of us it's not happening, but God is a gracious God, today you can come before Him and say Lord God, I've just been focused on myself, I'm sorry. And You're a gracious God. And He says if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And we can step forward, not looking back, knowing that we are forgiven.

I believe in this short passage we see that Paul prays for their love, for Christ in others, to continue to abound in real knowledge and discernment. For the purpose that this life would bring ultimately glory to God. When I started today, I talked about those who say they love God. They say I love God, I love the Lord. We love you Lord. We sings songs about that, but yet there are areas of disobedience to the Word of God. Jesus says, if you love Me, you will keep My commandments, you'll do what I say. Are you growing in the knowledge of Christ? Are you abounding in your self-sacrificial love for Him as you grow in your understanding of Him through the Word? I pray that we are, pray as a body that as we grow in the Lord, we're growing in our love for Him and our love for one-another. Examine yourself, and I need to examine myself. Are we genuine? Are we blameless in that sense? Are we fruitful? If we're not, we've lost our first love, plain and simple, our eyes have been pulled off Christ, and we need to get back to focusing on Christ.

Now maybe some of you have never loved the Lord because you're not saved. You've never self-sacrificially thought of anything concerning God or anyone else. What you need to do is repent of your sins and trust in Christ. And I exhort you before it's too late, do not harden your hearts, but trust in the Lord, believe in Him. Now maybe some of us are believers and we're not genuine, we know it, we're not genuine, we're different people around at different times. What you see is not what you get, we need to confess that. We need to confess, it's an evidence, it's a symptom that we've lost our first love. Some of you are not fruitful, we need to confess, we haven't been abiding in Christ. But then some of you are like the Philippians, you are loving. You are growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and He says, I pray that you abound more and more in this. And that's my prayer that we abound more and more in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word. We thank You that it is not only convicting Lord God, it is encouraging. Father I pray for those here who don't know You, that they would just confess to You their sin, they would repent and believe in Your Son. And I pray for those of us here who do know You, I pray that You

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would just help us see ourselves rightly, help us examine ourselves. Where are we at in relationship to Your Son? Are we sincere? Are we giving an offense or not? Are we fruitful? And I pray Lord God if we fall short, that we would just confess to You, and would know that You forgive us. And that we would rejoice in that forgiveness. And Father, I just pray that we would as a body would abound, our love would abound more and more in the real knowledge of Your Son and in all discernment. Thank You for Your Word, and we pray this now in Jesus' name. Amen.

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