

“Love-life – a Reprise”  
 Philippians 1:9-11  
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Philippians 1:9-11

“This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, <sup>10</sup> so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.”

The daily-ness of life can seem fairly mundane at times.

It’s hard to find eternal significance in changing diapers, driving kids to music lessons, or negotiating a contract to sell tires to a trucking company.

It’s hard to connect “the fruit of righteousness,” abounding love, and “the glory and praise of God,” to much of what we do each day.

- If ever there were one sentence that combined the mundane and the sublime this is it.
- If ever there were one sentence that connected day-to-day life with an eternal perspective this is it.

Paul takes the lofty concept of “the glory of God” and ties it directly to our everyday relationships.

Philippians 1:9,11 “This is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more... to the glory and praise of God.”

As I tried to demonstrate from the Bible last week, this idea of actively loving one another is not just grease in the wheels of more important tasks in life; it is our highest calling, our most important vocation.

As I quoted last week, “There is only one badge of identification” of a true Christian.

Or as Jesus said it, John 13:35 “By **this** all men will know that you are my disciples, **if you love one another.**”

The French poet, Charles Peguy, wrote: “Do not try to go to God alone. If you do, he will certainly ask the embarrassing question:

‘Where are your brothers and sisters?’” (in John Powell Unconditional Love p37)

Someone else wrote, “The greatest thing a man can do for his heavenly Father is to (love) his Father’s other children.” (anonymous

in Henry Drummond, The Greatest Thing in the World, 18)

But that love is not just an amorphous, soft, sentimental feeling in the chest.

Paul says this love is an informed, insightful, and discerning love.

I remember a man, in our church many years ago, who had Alzheimer’s disease.

He was the sweetest, kindest man.

No matter what you did or who you were, he’d smile and say, “That’s nice, I love you.”

You could say you were going to hurt his family and he’d say, “That’s nice, I love you.”

I often thought that if I ever get that disease, I hope I sound like him instead of some of the things that could come out of my mouth.

But as easy as he was to be around, **his** expressions of love are **not** what Paul had in mind.

One man wrote, “Nothing perhaps is more harmful than the easy good nature which is willing to tolerate everything; and this is often mistaken for Christian (love).” (Scott in Hawthorne, p26)

But love for Paul was not vacuous or naïve.

Paul prayed that our love would abound “in knowledge...”

What does Paul mean that this is a knowledgeable, informed love?

Because of the ways Paul uses this word “knowledge” in other texts we know that this is not just knowledge in the general sense of having a lot of information in one’s head.

This is knowledge of God.

I think **this “knowledge of God” refers to two things.**

First of all, because of the particular word Paul uses, it is again not just knowing facts about God.

The word that is here translated “knowledge” is sometimes translated “full knowledge” or “real knowledge.”

It is a knowing by experience.

I believe Paul is saying I want your love to flow out of your **experience** with God, his love for **you**.

The kind of love that God wants us to have for others is **the kind of love he has for us**.

Or as Jesus said it in John 13:34 “**As** I have loved you, **so** you must love one another.”

How does he love us?

Selflessly, sacrificially, and unmotivated by us.

I think the only way we can ever get to the place where we can love others the way Jesus did **is if we rest secure in his love**; if we have an **experienced**/knowledge of God’s love for us.

Let me explain.

While I don’t agree with all his theology, I thank the late Emil Brunner for some insight into this matter from his book entitled, **Faith, Hope and Love**.

There is much about the concept of time that I do not understand and it hurts my head to think too deeply about it.

But this much makes sense to me:

I experience life in three dimensions of time – the future, the present and the past.

I said that differently than we normally do; we usually say past, present and future as if we were moving through time.

But if you think of yourself as stationary, the future is coming toward you inexorably; the present is with you for only a fleeting second as it moves swiftly to become the past.

Conceptually the “present” for us is almost non-existent because it comes from the future so quickly and passes into the past so fast.

But in truth we are greatly affected by the future and the past; in fact so affected them that we find it difficult to live in the present.

Because the future is so uncertain, we live in anxiety about it.

And because we have failed so often in the past we live in guilt and remorse about it.

That combination of remorse over the past and anxiety about the future loom so large in our current experience that we miss the present.

The exaggeration of that is called depression – our minds and hearts are caught in the web of the future and the past.

This inability to live free in the present is seen most in our relationships with others.

We were created by God to reflect his love, to live in relationship, to be springs of love, to give, and to fill others.

But we are burdened by the past and anxious about the future so that we end up primarily selfishly trying to protect ourselves.

How does Christ remedy this?

He alters our past by taking away our guilt and shame by real forgiveness based on real justice; he bore the guilt of my sin in his own body on the cross.

Faith in the Christ who has died and risen again for us frees us from the past.

Not only has Christ changed our past but he also guarantees our future.

There is no guessing necessary any longer; the anxiety should be gone.

He is our future.

The words of the song sound trite but they are true: “I don’t know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future.”

Christian Hope, certainty of the future, is the result of a relationship with God in Christ. (See Emil Brunner, Faith, Hope and Love)

Chris Garrelts, of our church, came to me last Sunday and spoke of this same concept; this concept of being free to love in the present.

He said in essence, our past is forgiven by the one whose forgiveness counts most and our future is secured by that same almighty loving God.

I am free to live not to overcome my past or to secure my future but free to live in the present to love as he loves.

And thus in Christ we are finally free to be what God created us to be – like him, in his image, and thus most fully human.

Dallas Willard wrote, “Jesus brings us the assurance that our universe is a perfectly safe place for us to be.” ([Divine Conspiriacy, 66](#))

And therefore it is safe to abandon our own selfish interests and truly love others.

So when Paul prays that he wants our love to abound more and more, he wants an inner disposition of the soul to grow.

He wants us to be people from whom love is the first action and reaction, people who don’t think and act first out of protection or pride but out of love.

Our love for others is knowledgeable; that is, it is informed and experienced by God’s love for us.

I said earlier that this “knowledge” is knowledge of God and refers to two things.

The first is an experiential knowledge of God’s love for us.

The second is a knowledge of what real love for each other looks like.

The Bible is replete with practical instruction on the subject:

- Serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13
- Bear with one another in love. Ephesians 4:2
- Carry each other’s burdens. Galatians 6:2
- Encourage one another and build one another up. 1 Thessalonians 5:11

- Submit to one another. Ephesians 5:21
- Forgive one another. Ephesians 4:32
- Be honest with one another. Colossians 3:9
- Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. 1 Peter 4:9
- Teach and counsel one another. Colossians 3:16
- Pray for each other. James 5:16

In 1 Corinthians 13 God refracts love as light through a prism:

Love is:

Patient

Kind

Generous

Humble

Courteous

Unselfish

Good tempered

Guileless

Sincere

We have no excuse for not knowing what love looks like; the Bible tells us.

Paul says I want your love to be that kind of love:

Knowledgeable love built on your own experience of God's love for you and God's more than adequate description of what love actually acts like.

But that's not all: Paul writes, I want your love to "abound more and more in knowledge **and depth of insight**."

To me this phrase moves into the mystical, but marvelously so.

The situations of life seem infinitely varied.

No two situations call for the same response.

Every person we meet is unique; every experience is "brand new" and never to be repeated.

I can't take words and actions of the past and apply them to my relationship with you today like some

rubber stamp turning out exactly the same impression time after time.

If I did that I'd end up like my previously mentioned Alzheimer friend; "That's nice. I love you."

The word translated, "depth of insight" is used only here in the NT but in other literature it refers to "moral perception" –the ability to know the right action in a given situation.

It is moral "tact" – the ability to know what to do this time.

I said that for me this tends to sound mystical because I believe this is "supra-natural".

This is not just human sensitivity enhanced but it is sensitivity to the Spirit of God.

It is a willing openness to the Spirit's prompting us in our love for others.

It is a prayer that asks God to give us eyes to see what eyes can't see, to see into a person's real need, to understand what will truly minister our love and God's grace to them.

I refer to my opening illustration: "Depth of insight" was Teri's sensitivity to the Spirit to know there was a need.

Here in Paul's prayer, his description of this love gets even better. He prays that our "love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight **so that we may discern what is best...**"

That knowledge and depth of insight combine to give us discernment – the ability to choose the best option from among the many that are possible.

- I can go to a hospital or nursing home and truly care about the person I'm visiting.
- I can enter into their experience with real empathy.
- I can pray for them.

But when I watch my wife Barbara in those situations, her discernment is uncanny – she enters in at a deeper level and knows just what to say and do, in ways I don't even think about.

Now I'd like to chalk that up to her having the gift of mercy, and I do think that heightens her discernment in those situations, but Paul is not praying for us to have the gift of mercy; he is praying for all of us to love each other, and to love with discernment.

He's calling us to be so sensitive to the Spirit of God and so willing to follow his lead that we love in just the right ways in each encounter, each opportunity.

And so Paul prays, Philippians 1:9-11 "That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best **and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ...**

No, Paul is not just praying that they would be perfect.

He is praying that in their love they would have pure motives, that they would be authentic in their love, and that they would be blameless, that is not causing others to stumble.

There is certainly more to be said about this but I want to move on to the next phrase: "**filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--**to the glory and praise of God."

When we love in this knowledgeable, insightful, discerning way, it results in the fruit of righteousness – all kinds of good things happen.

"Righteousness" here is right living – loving others the way God has called us to.

The results or fruit of that are almost unlimited.

When Paul described the "fruit of the Spirit", a term certainly akin to this one, he describes the results as "love, joy, peace,



patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” (Galatians 5:22)

What does that actually look like?

- It’s Becky Wilson bringing blankets and pillows for when my daughter or others faint and need warm covering here at church.
- It’s Chris Brock who knows a friend has been sick and takes the time to call her in the evening to see how she is doing and truly offers to help.
- It’s D Thompson pursuing a woman in our church who has been discouraged – pursuing and praying and not letting her go into isolation.
- It’s Tom Bayless who repeatedly visits a dying man in his hospice room to have any opportunity to share Jesus with him.
- It’s Dan Thompson who every week finds the time to visit an older man in the nursing home, to just be with him and let him know he has not been forgotten and is loved.
- It’s an entire adult Sunday School class raising money to help a fellow member through a difficult financial time.
- It’s Don Gwinner meeting a young man week after week for over a year praying with him, studying the Scriptures with him and talking with him through major decisions of life.
- It’s Steve Loomis who keeps a very needy employee on the payroll even though it is not financially or organizationally prudent.

The “fruit of righteousness” is varied and virtually unlimited.

Is this love, super or supra-natural? Yes it is!

This is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)

This is the result of being in Christ: (John 15:4 “No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”)

Without a relationship with Jesus, this kind of love is impossible.

**This kind of love is a creation of Jesus** as surely as the sun and moon are.

Philippians 2:13 “it is **God who works in you** to will and to act according to his good purpose.”

Lawrence of Arabia was showing some of his Arab friends through Paris following WWI.

He showed them the Louvre, The Arch of Triumph, Napoleon’s Tomb, the Champs Elysees.

But they were only interested in the faucets in the bathroom of their hotel room.

They spent a lot of time turning them on and off, amazed they could get all the water they wanted by simply turning the faucet handle.

When leaving Paris, he discovered them with wrenches attempting to take the faucets with them.

Asked why, they said if they had them they could have all the water they want when they return home.

Lawrence had to explain about snow in the Alps and water lines connected to the faucets.

Without connection to the source, the faucets would do no good.

This love for one another to which Paul calls us is only possible through knowledge, depth of insight and discernment – all of which come from God himself.

Last week I gave a rather emotional appeal for us to love one another.

This week the appeal is less emotional but equally important; are we **willing** to love one another?

- Freed from anxiety about the future and guilt of the past, are we willing to love one another with the kind of love with which God loves us,
- with the kind of love that depends on and is sensitive to the Holy Spirit for insight and discernment in each situation;
- and with the kind of love that results in true good for the ones we love?

Are you willing to pray Paul's prayer for yourself and for the rest of us?

Philippians 1:9-11

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