

Christian Growth

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Preacher: Rev RJ Campbell

- [0 : 00] Welcome to our services today and we pray that the Lord would bless this word to us as we come to meditate upon it together.
- Let us join together in prayer. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, our Heavenly Father, we give thanks unto thee that we can come today into thy presence and that we can offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving unto thee for thy goodness and for thy kindness to us.
- And as we come together in this act of worship, we would seek thy grace to enable us to humble ourselves and to take that place that belongs to us at thine own foodstool.
- As we come to confess our sins before thee and acknowledge our sinnership, we give thanks that thou art the God who delighteth in mercy.
- We ask that thou would give to each one of us today the here year and the mine to give attention to thine own word, lest we let it drift away.
- [1 : 27] Bless, we pray thee, our homes and our families. Be gracious to those who are elderly and lonely today in their own homes and in care homes.
- Bless, bless those who care for them. Remember those who are ill on the bed of affliction. Draw near to them, granting them healing, if that is in accordance to thine own will.
- And if it be otherwise, we seek, O Lord, that thou would prepare them in their hearts and in their minds and in their souls. O Lord, we are so often reminded that we are sojourners in this world.
- Reminded that we are passing through this world, that we are passing through the realm of time into the realm of eternity. That we are passing from time to our long home.
- And we seek, O Lord, that thou would impress upon us the urgency of making sure that we have been reconciled to our God.
- [2 : 40] To make sure that we have peace with God. And we pray, O Lord, to that end that thou would enlighten our people through thy spirit.
- To teach them that the only way of reconciliation with our God is through his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We pray, O Lord, that thou would remember those who mourn over the loss of loved ones. We seek that thou would be pleased to be their great comforter today.
- Bless, we pray thee, all our key workers at this time. We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless them and uphold them. Bless the preaching of thy word.
- Accompany the gospel with the power and demonstration of thy Holy Spirit in convicting and converting and in the upbuilding of thine own church.
- [3 : 46] We give thanks to thee at this time for those who sacrificed their lives to give us the freedoms that we so much enjoy in our land today.
- Those who fell in action over wars and who never enjoyed the freedom for which they fought and died. We give thanks to thee, O Lord, today for the sacrifice of thy Son who gave his own life so that sinners would be set free from the bondage and from the slavery of sin.

And as thy word proclaims to us, if the Son sets us free, we are free indeed. We give thanks that we can today enjoy the benefits which he has purchased for us.

when peace in worldly terms are so fragile and insecure. Yet we give thanks that the peace that thy Son has purchased for his people, peace with God, is secure.

And we pray, O Lord, that we can have that knowledge and experience of that peace in our souls today.

[5 : 22] Remember, we pray thee with compassion those who are careless and indifferent to the claims of thine own word. O Lord, we pray that thou through thy Holy Spirit would stir them up in their hearts, that thou, O Lord, would open their eyes and their understanding, that they may see that they are in a very slippery place.

O Lord, we pray that through thy Spirit thou would draw them to thyself, that they may come to know that peace that passeth all understanding, that they may experience thy salvation, that they may come to rejoice in thy salvation.

O Lord, that thou would come and revive thy work in the midst of the years, that thou would come and bring days of revival into thy church and days of awakening among those who are still dead in trespasses and in sin.

O Lord, bring us to days of repentance. Bring us to days when we would sorrow over our sin, when we would humble ourselves, take our place in sackcloth and ashes, humbling ourselves into the very dust, acknowledging, O Lord, that thou art the sovereign God, acknowledging that we have sinned against thee, acknowledging, O Lord, that there is salvation in no other but in the Lord Jesus Christ.

O Lord, we pray that thou would continue with us now as we come to meditate upon thy word, that thy Spirit would open our understanding, that thy Spirit would guide and lead us as we come to meditate upon it.

[7 : 37] Continue with us, we pray thee, and forgive us for all our sins in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the New Testament.

In the epistle of Paul, the apostle to the Philippians, and chapter 1. Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mind for you all making requests with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

For God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God.

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather into the fathom of the gospel, so that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places, and many of the brethren in the Lord walks in confidence by my bonds and much more bold to speak the word without fear.

[9 : 56] Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife and some also of good will. The one preached Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds, but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

What then? Notwithstanding every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached and therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and my hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour. Yet what shall I choose? I want not.

For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better. Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith, that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

[11 : 29] Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

And in nothing terrified by your adversities, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me are now here to be in me.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. Now seeking the help of the Lord and his blessing upon our meditation, let us turn to verse 9.

Philippians chapter 1 verse 9. And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God.

Verse 9 to 11. in Acts chapter 16 we learn of how Paul came and set up the church at Philippi.

[13 : 14] Paul has a particular sense of attachment and affection to the church at Philippi. From the time of the reception of the gospel until now they have continued to believe the gospel and to support the spreading of the gospel and they have continued to meet with the needs of Paul more than any other church.

Even now while he is imprisoned in Rome they have sent to him a gift by one of their brethren by the name of Ephabroditus. And Paul was full of gratitude and thankfulness to God and for the church at Philippi.

So he writes this letter back to them. He values their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until the present time.

It is important to appreciate the breadth of the Philippine's involvement in this fellowship in the gospel.

their sufferings for their faith in Christ and their witness of their faith in Christ in difficult circumstances. All this is included in this fellowship in the gospel.

[14 : 41] Paul tells them that every time that he prays for them that he makes his request with joy. he prayed for them with confidence for he not only valued their fellowship in the gospel in the present but he was also confident regarding their future.

He was assured that God who began this work in them will bring it to perfection in their glorification in the day of Jesus Christ. Paul's confidence confidence was based upon the one who had begun this work in them being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

This good work which had been begun in the Philippians and continued by God and Paul was assured that it would be brought to perfection in the day of Jesus Christ.

This good work of salvation the work of grace in the soul of an individual and we can have confidence that where God has begun that work that he will continue and bring that work to perfection.

salvation God never begins a work and gives it up halfway he will complete what he has begun the good work that God began in the believers at Philippi was the beginning of a fellowship in the gospel it was the formation of a community of believers who had certain things in common and where salvation has begun it will be perfected in the day of Jesus Christ.

[16 : 43] Jesus will bring all his people to the point of glorification. Paul having spoken of the value of their fellowship in the gospel and his confidence regarding them he now begins to unveil to them the content of the request that he makes for them with joy and this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment that ye may approve things that are excellent that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God in other words what he is doing here is he is praying for their Christian growth we must remember that regeneration and conversion are the beginning of a new life naturally when a baby is born you expect that baby to follow the natural process of growth from a baby to childhood and to adulthood well the same principle is true when a person is born again you expect spiritual growth

Paul viewed here love not as a static possession but as a dynamic process true love is not something you possess true love constantly grows and increases Paul prays that their love would abound and not only abound but abound more and more what Paul is doing here is he is emphasizing the growing potential for better expressions of love Paul does not mention any object out which their love is to be directed and there is a sense in which there is no need for Paul to specify the object to which their love is to be directed the Bible speaks of love and the sense first of all love to God secondly love to other believers and thirdly love to those outside the sphere of

God's grace but what we have to remember is that all these are tied up together because they all flow from the one love and that is the love of God what happens when a person is born again the spirit of God comes to indwell in that person and the spirit immediately plants this principle of love in the heart so that a person comes to love God love other believers and love the world that is outside you see this is the great difference between human love and divine love human love is exclusive but divine love is inclusive for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life love

Paul Paul here is not saying that they lack love but as a people who possesses love he speaks of it as your love they were already in possession of it but the need to make it grow the believers at Philippi from the very beginning had showed that love was at the very essence of their new life and their new nature that was given to them when they were converted when you think of the Roman jailer who earlier fastened the feet of Paul in the stocks when he was converted he began to wash his wounds the believers at Philippi became so generous that they sent gifts to help Paul time and time again love was their new nature in Christ and when Paul speaks of their love to abound more and more he speaks rather of the virtue and quality of their love that which is to permeate their whole being and character and that which will mark every attitude and action which they will take let's for a moment remind ourselves of what

Paul writes to the Corinthians in his first letter in chapter 13 where he brings before us the quality of love there he says love is patient and kind love does not envy or boast it is not arrogant or rude it does not insist on its own way it is not irritable or resentful it does not rejoice at wrong doing but rejoices with the truth love bears all things believes all things hopes all things endures all things love never ends now we all come far short of that quality of love only one person in human nature ever attained to that quality of love and that person was the Lord Jesus Christ nevertheless the message to the Philippians and to me and you are that we are to strive towards that quality of love in the same chapter

[23 : 08] Paul ends by saying and now abideth faith hope and love these three but the greatest of these is love and well may you ask well in what sense is love greater than faith and hope well there are those who say that love is greater to faith and hope because that love is going to continue forever while faith and hope belongs to the present state only but the word abideth means that it continues and now abideth faith hope and love these three but the greatest of these is love I think that the true interpretation for us is to be found in the use that Paul makes of the word greater in the following chapter chapter 14 and at verse 5

Paul writes I would that ye all speak with tongues but rather that ye prophesied for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues except he interpret that the church may receive edification but rather that ye prophesied for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues what Paul is saying is that he that prophesieth is more useful than he that speaks with tongues he is using the word greater there to mean the more useful and bring that thought to the words of Paul what he is saying is and now abideth faith hope and love but the more useful is love I like the way that

Charles Hodge puts it he says faith saves ourselves but love benefits others Paul prays that their love would abode more and more that it would pour over that it would overflow in knowledge in judgment or discernment here he is pointing out to them the way in which love can increase it has to be a love that is grounded in knowledge I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment this knowledge is a knowledge of God himself which is essential of course for the people of God if you do not know the Lord how can you love him and the fact is that if you love someone you want to know all about them so if you love

God you will want to know all about God you will search the scriptures to find out more about him you will immerse yourself in the word of God remember Paul's prayer for the church at Ephesus that they may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge that he might be filled with all the fullness of God this knowledge is not merely to have a knowledge about God but it is that knowledge that comes from having a personal relationship with God and as our knowledge of God grows so should our love to

God our love to other believers and our love to the world as we said this knowledge comes from having a personal relationship with God and we can only have that personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ Jesus said to Philip he that hath seen me hath seen the Father we get this knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ later on in this very letter Paul says but what things were gained to me those I counted lost for Christ yet doubtless and I count all things but lost for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord I don't want to go ahead of ourselves in our study but in chapter 2 the purpose of Paul in writing about the humiliation and exaltation of

[28 : 22] Christ is to lead the Philippians into the knowledge of Christ so that they may have the same love for one another hear what he says fulfill ye my joy that ye be like minded having the same love being of one accord of one mind let nothing be done through strife or vain glory but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves look not every man on his own things but every man also on the things of others let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus he prays that their love will not only increase in knowledge because of their personal relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ but that it would also grow in judgment or discernment what does

Paul mean by judgment or discernment he means that they may have the spiritual ability to apply the knowledge that they have gained to everyday situation the word is connected with the thought of insight the word judgment or discernment it is connected with the thought of insight to be able to see through things to be able to judge or discern situations to discern people to discern or judge motives and Paul here asks the word all he says all judgment to stress the need for wisdom to do the right thing to speak the right word in everyday situation without that insight without that discernment without that judgment love does not know how to express itself with actions and words that are appropriate to each situation of life knowing

God through the Lord Jesus Christ and understanding people being able to discern people and situations are all necessary for love to abound more and more in Matthew chapter 10 Jesus warns his disciples behold I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves be ye there for wise as serpents and harmless as doves but be aware of men for they will deliver you to the councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake for a testimony against them and the Gentiles now notice here he does not send his disciples as followers towards wolves who are off in the distance but he sends his followers into the very midst of wolves behold

I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves he sends his people into a hostile environment a hostile crowd like a pack of wolves surround them and how are we to survive well Jesus says be ye therefore wise as serpents and harmless as doves serpents know that they are not loved and as Genesis 3 1 tells us a serpent was craftier than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made they were clever therefore when they see danger they will hide themselves they will avoid danger and we are called upon to be as wise as serpents it points to the need for careful thought when confronted with difficult situations and like the serpents we must use our heads and avoid unnecessary danger and this requires an insight this requires to be able to see through things this requires judgment and discernment sheep are generally viewed as stupid but we as followers of Jesus

Christ are a sheep but that does not mean that we are to be stupid we are to see through things our love is to grow and discernment and judgment but he also says harmless as doves we are to be as innocent as doves we are to think things through and be cautious in everyday situation be there for wise as serpents and harmless as doves now the purpose of this judgment or discernment was that ye may approve things that are excellent that is as you come face to face with certain situations that you would be able to judge what would be best or excellent in that given situation in other words

[34 : 03] Christian love must be discriminated we are to discern what is best in any given situation we must approve in our own life with spiritual discernment what is good or excellent for ourselves for our own spiritual growth but we must also with spiritual discernment know what is good or excellent for the good of others church it's the word used by Paul in his letter to the Romans in chapter 12 when he says and be not conformed to this world but ye be transformed by the renewing of your mind that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God if we love

God then we will want to know what his will is for us and for our love to abound for our Christian growth we need this knowledge of God and discernment so that we may approve things that are excellent that we may approve that which is good and acceptable and perfect will of God that we will be able to approve what is best that is that we will be able to make a proper assessment about what is absolute essential regarding our life our behaviour in Christ in accordance with the perfect will of God later on towards the end of this letter Paul exhorts he says brethren what our things are true whatsoever things are honest whatsoever things are just whatsoever things are pure whatsoever things are lovely whatsoever things are of good report if there be any virtue and if there be any praise think on these things see

Paul wants them to have the discernment to sort out the more essential issues from the less significant ones that this I pray that your love may abound get more and more knowledge and in all judgment that give me approve things that are excellent that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ to be genuine fine in ancient times the biggest industry in the world was the pottery business and pottery varied in quality the cheapest pottery was thick and solid and did not require much skill to make the finest pottery was thin and was very fragile both before and after firing and very often it would crack in the oven now cracked pottery should have been thrown away but dishonest dealers were in the habit of filling in the cracks with a hard wax that would blend in with the colour of the pottery this made the cracks practically undetectable in the marketplace especially if they were painted or glazed over but when the pottery was held up to the light especially to the sun the wax became detectable it was not the genuine article and here

Paul's prayer for them is that they may be a people of sincerity a genuine people a genuine people a people without wax that's where the word actually comes from the Latin words without wax Paul is saying in other words that the flaws in the lives of believers must not be covered up with wax our lives are not perfect in this life we will always have flaws but we must not disguise them artificially we must not wax over them we must be sincere the pottery vessel that we are is still in the making and at last and Paul was confident of this at last we will be the genuine examples of

God's fine workmanship Paul prays that he may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ to the church of Corinth Paul says give none offence neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles nor to the church of God this is what Paul has in mind here as well that our love may pour over in the knowledge of God so as to have the discernment to approve the things that are best that we may be genuine and honest not waxing things over and without offence till the day of Christ we are not merely to approve with spiritual discernment those things that are best for ourselves or our own spiritual growth but we must also be sensitive to the feelings of others in other words we must not throw a stumbling block into another person's path

[40 : 25] Paul says to the church at Corinth 1st Corinthians chapter 10 all things are lawful for me but all things are not expedient all things are lawful for me but all things edify not this is concerning the eating of sacrifices offered to idols which was in itself a matter of indifference but the use of things indifferent is to be limited by two principles first a regard to others and secondly a regard to ourselves all things are not expedient to others but if any man say unto you this is offered in sacrifice unto idols eat not for his sake that showed it and for conscience sake that I though it is right to eat and though you know it to be right yet to avoid wounding or disturbing the conscience of the weaker

Christian it is your duty to abstain not cause offence that he may be sincere honest and without offence to the day of Christ that we would not cause offence to others we must remember that not all things are not even edifying to ourselves but we are to approve of spiritual discernment things that are excellent to our own edification and that causes no offence to others that will not cause others to stumble and so he says been filled filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by

Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God what does he mean by fruits of righteousness well the word righteousness can mean our legal standing before God by God's judicial action our our it can speak of our justification we are given the position of righteousness a right legal standing before God but righteousness can also have an ethical meaning that is it can mean a right moral behaviour and we know that a right relationship with God produces the fruit of moral character I think he's speaking here of godly behaviour when Paul prays that their love may abound yet more and more this is the goal that he has in mind that they would be led to godly behaviour the fruits of righteousness is the result and demonstration of having a right relationship with

God of our justification which is the source of this fruit now let me say that again the fruits of righteousness is the result and demonstration of having a right relationship with God if we have a right relationship with God if we have been brought into a right relationship with God then we ought and should produce the fruits of righteousness we should lead a godly life notice he says being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ he is the one who by his spirit has planted this love in our heart and it is unto the glory and praise of

God this is something that doesn't belong to us naturally as we are born by nature this is something that comes through our being born again through our regeneration through our rebirth love as the spirit of Christ comes to indwell in us and as it implants this principle of love we are to abound in that love more and more in our knowledge of God through the Lord Jesus Christ and in all discernment what is good for us what is edifying for us what is there to make us grow and not only for ourselves but also for others that we may approve those things that are best that we may be honest that we would not cause any stumbling block before others that we would be without offence till the day of

[46 : 19] Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ into the glory and praise of God if you have the love that wants to grow and to be rooted in the knowledge of God a love that seeks discernment to approve what is excellent for yourself what is edifying for yourself and causing no offence to others then you have what is genuine what will produce godly behaviour and as we said this does not come naturally we don't produce godly behaviour naturally it all comes by Jesus Christ it is as Paul often brings before it it is by the grace of our Lord

Jesus Christ and it is to the praise and glory of God God as we demonstrate godly behaviour in this world it is not for our own glory it is not in order to advance ourselves it is not in order that people will look at us and say how good a person that person is how good a person we are it is to the praise and glory of God it is that we will manifest God's grace in our behaviour it is that we will be as lights that shine in the midst of the darkness of this world that is what Paul here is praying making his request with joy to God for the church at

Philippi that they might be able to be as lights with a godly behaviour and that so that it would be to the praise and glory of God not to the glory of Paul not to the glory of the individual person in the church of Philippi but that it would be to the praise and glory of God what does man's chief end is it not to glorify God and to enjoy him forever and surely that is the motive surely that is our prayer that we would be enabled by the grace of God to demonstrate that grace in our lives to the praise and glory of God may the Lord bless our thoughts to us let us pray eternal and ever blessed

Lord we come before thee at this hour on this day confessing oh Lord how far short we become of what we ought to be and what we would desire to be because we are still in this body of sin we still so often fall into the temptations of life but blessed be thy name oh Lord that thou knowest the desires of our heart and we pray oh Lord that thou would give us the grace and the strength to enable us to strive forward that our love may abound yet more and more in the knowledge of Christ that thou would grant to us that spirit of discernment that we may indeed approve those things that are best those things that are excellent for ourselves for our

Christian growth and those things that are best for others that we may be honest that we may be sincere that we may be without offence that we would not cause others to stumble till the day of Jesus Christ we ask oh Lord that thou would continue with us for the remainder of this day and may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen