

Message #5**Philippians 1:9-11**

Years ago, I read a story about a missionary who moved to a Brazilian Indian village in order to reach it for Jesus Christ. When this missionary moved into the village, he was referred to by the Indians as “the white man.” This term was not complimentary because white men in the past had exploited these Indians, killing them, burning their homes and stealing their land.

As time went by the missionary and his wife learned the language and began to minister as best as they could. They shared the Gospel and tried to help the people. So after a while the Indians upgraded the status to “the respectable white man.”

Over a period of time, they upgraded his status again to “the white Indian.” He kept working and ministering and he kept at his work of faithfully teaching them the Scriptures and doing his best to care for the people.

One day a little Indian boy stepped on something that cut his foot. When he came to the missionary’s home, his foot was dirty and bloody. The missionary gently sat the boy down and he stooped down to first wash the boy’s foot. Some of the tribesmen saw this and said, “Whoever saw a white man washing an Indian’s foot?”

It was at that point that the Indians upgraded the name of the missionary to “God’s man.” By his faithful, loving work and ministry, that missionary had gone from the derogatory status of “white man” to an elevated status of “God’s man.”

When God’s grace saves someone, He saves them in their rough, crude condition. But all of the N.T. teaches that God does not want to leave the person in that same condition. His desire is to transform that person and develop that person so that he/she will bring glory and praise to Him.

One of the areas in which He wants to develop a person is in the area of love. He wants a believer to develop in His kind of love. He wants a believer to develop in “agape” love. When God begins a church, He takes a bunch of crude, rough people from all walks of life and backgrounds and sins and He puts them together and He expects them to develop and mature so that the church becomes a loving family that ends up bringing glory and praise to God.

Now when we think of “agape” love, we must not think of some irrational, uncontrolled, indiscriminate emotion. Agape love is the highest kind of love one may have. It is very controlled and very calculated. It is the kind of love that always seeks to do the Biblical best for another person. There are emotions involved, but they are not the driving force of the love.

This is the kind of love Paul wanted in the Philippian church. In fact, this was the kind of love he prayed would “abound” in the Philippian church. We may recall that in our study of the doctrine of prayer we discover there were at least eight different kinds of prayer. The particular word that Paul uses here is the word that emphasizes the fact that prayer is a sacred action in which one actually moves to God and His presence (*The Doctrine of Biblical Prayer*, p. 25).

Paul went into the presence of God and actually prayed for these things for the Philippians. The point of these verses is this:

PAUL PRAYED THAT THE CHURCH WOULD ALWAYS ABOUND IN A LOVE BASED ON A DEEP, DISCERNING KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT.

Now these verses are given to a church, but a church is comprised of individuals. If an individual purposes to develop in this kind of love, then God will see to it that he/she will have great development.

Now there are two specific areas of development in which agape love needs to develop. As you will see, agape love is not sloppy, sentimental love. It is not emotional or irrational love. Agape love develops.

One other thing is worth mentioning. Paul does not give an object of the love. He does not say I want you to abound in love for God. He does not say I want you to abound in love for each other. He does not say I want you to abound in love for the lost. He simply says, I pray that you will abound in love, which will affect all of those things.

When we are abounding in this Biblical love, we will abound in our love for God, our love for each other and our love for the lost. Now Paul prayed that this love would abound more and more in two areas, which are totally the opposite of what the world thinks about love.

The world's idea of love is totally tolerate everything and just love people. Don't judge and don't discriminate; just tolerate. In fact, it is interesting that he doesn't pray "I pray that you will develop in your feelings." Paul never prayed for anything like that:

Area of Development #1 - Agape love will abound more and more in deep knowledge. 1:9a

Those words "abound more and more" emphasize developing at the ultimate, exceeding level that is above all (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, pp. 276-277). The Greek could not be more intense. God wants a development in these areas that is way over the top. He wants continual development in these areas to a superior level (*Ibid.*, p. 357). God wants continuous growth in all of these areas all of the time. By virtue of the fact that he wants this to abound, we know it is something they already partially had. He does not pray you lack this love; he prays you will abound in this love.

The first area that he mentions is in knowledge. To abound in Biblical love we need knowledge. The word "knowledge" is one that refers to knowledge upon knowledge. This is deep knowledge.

Dr. Marvin Vincent, a New York Greek grammarian of the 1800's, called this a development in knowledge that is advanced and John Eadie, a Scottish Greek grammarian of the 1800's, called this knowledge that is accurate.

See most people believe we just need to love and we don't need to know. God says you need to know so you can develop love. **A failure to grow deep in knowledge will lead to a failure in our ability to love the way God wants us to love.**

Paul wanted these believers at this church to grow deep in advanced, accurate, Biblical knowledge. So developing in the kind of love God wants in His church means one must develop in a deep and advanced level of knowledge in the Word of God. Otherwise, the love will not be what God wants in His church. **One who truly loves God will be after a deep knowledge of God's Word.**

This is so foreign to the philosophy of many people and churches. Their view is, we need to be more loving and we don't want to get too deep in our study of God's Word. From God's perspective, growing in deep knowledge is the loving thing for a church to do. The greater our knowledge of God's Word, the more we will develop in God's kind of love. God's love is not shallow or fickle.

We have people in this church who worked for power companies that supply electricity to thousands of people. If you talk to those who work for those companies they will tell you there are things about electricity they do not know. We are talking about people who have worked with it for years.

Thomas Edison once said, "We do not know one millionth part of one percent about anything. We do not know what water is. We don't know what light is. We don't know what electricity is. We do not know what gravity is. We do not know anything about magnetism. We have a lot of hypothesis, but that is all."

We need that perspective of God and His Word. We need to realize our need to grow more and more and deeper and deeper. The Philippian church had been in existence for at least 12 years. It was one of the best churches on the face of the earth. It was one of the most spiritual churches and one of the most praised churches.

But they still had a lot to learn. There was still more knowledge needed. They had not arrived. Paul prayed they would grow more and more in deep knowledge of God and His Word.

Area of Development #2 - Agape love will abound more and more in all discernment. **1:9b**

This concept is so foreign to the world's concept of love that says we need to be more tolerant. God says My love is more discerning.

The word "discernment" is one that refers to real perception and insight. This word has to do with real and true perception that will not be carried off or carried away into any area that is not true or sound (*Ibid.* p. 13). God wants us having, as J. B. Lightfoot said, "depth of insight" (*Philippians*, p. 98). **God does not want His church shallow or simple.**

Dr. John Eadie called this the “power of perception.” It is important to see that Paul prefaces the noun discernment with the adjective “all.”

What that means is that Paul prayed that this church would have discernment in everything. Paul prayed that these believers would have such discerning minds that they could think through everything.

God wants us to have discerning minds. The deeper our knowledge of God and His Word the more discerning our minds will be.

Now if the love is developing in these two areas, real knowledge and all discernment, there will be four amazing results:

(Result #1) - The believer will approve things that are excellent. 1:10a

That word “approve” is one that means to test something, try something and prove it. A good way to understand this word is to “approve something by carefully testing it.” It is a proving test of something (*Ibid.*, p. 120). We are talking here about making judgments in life.

What Paul is praying is that the believer will develop to such a level in his knowledge of God’s Word that on all matters in life, he is able to test them in light of Scripture and is able to make the right decision in view of it. **Some take the position we are not supposed to judge. Paul says I am praying you will judge everything.**

Now this is not only talking about being able to judge good-versus-bad or things righteous-versus-things sinful. This is talking about being able to judge the best from the good in every context. What is being described here is such a wisdom that one is able to analyze the best and most God-honoring thing to say, do and think out of all of the “competing possibilities.”

J. Dwight Pentecost wrote something powerful on this point: “To every man alike God grants a gift of twenty-four hours in any one day, not a moment more or less. What a man accomplishes in that twenty-four-hours period is determined by the discipline that the man exercises in the use of time; one will exercise discipline and accomplish much, another will be undisciplined and accomplish little. One is proving things that excel, and the other is involved in things of lesser worth. That may apply to every realm of life. A man whose life is disciplined by the Spirit of God and the Word of God does not give himself to something of secondary importance. Recognizing that he does not have time for both the good and the best, he approves the things superior. This discipline that enables a man to approve the superior things comes through saturation with the Word of God. It is the discipline of the Spirit of God exercised in a man’s life” (*The Joy of Living*, p. 25).

(Result #2) - The believer will be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. 1:10b

There will be a “day of Christ” for all of us. There will be a day when we will face Jesus Christ.

That is a very sober and intimidating thought. Now one may think it is no big deal if I don't get serious about God's Word. It is no big deal if I don't know books of the Bible or doctrine. When we get before Jesus Christ, it will be a big deal.

Now the word "sincere" means to be pure in the sense of no mixed substances (*Ibid.*, p.131). The word "blameless" is one that means to be blameless in the sense of not causing one to stumble (*Ibid.*, p. 56).

Paul wanted the Philippians to be so grounded in the Word of God that they would be pure and blameless unto the day of Jesus Christ. Paul wanted the Philippians to finish winners and as they would grow deep in the knowledge of the Word of God and the doctrines of God, they would become a pure reflection of God's grace and would not cause someone to stumble.

(Result #3) - The believer will be filled with the fruit of righteousness. 1:11a

This fruit may only be produced by one who has believed on Jesus Christ and by one who is pursuing a deep knowledge of God and His Word. Some people take the position, we don't want deep teaching, we just want practical living. Without deep teaching, there will be no practical living and there will be no bearing fruit.

God wants us to be fruitful and in order to be fruitful we must grow in deep knowledge.

The noun "fruit" is singular, not plural. So I think this refers to the fruit of the Spirit. So developing the fruit of the Spirit requires that one develops in deep knowledge of the things of God.

Now this development was to occur unto the day of Christ. So Paul wanted these believers to continue to develop until they would face Jesus Christ.

(Result #4) - The believer will have a life to the glory and praise of God. 1:11b

This is the goal. The goal is to develop in the deep ways of God so that our lives develop to the praise and the glory of God. The goal of all of this is that our character is that which truly does reflect the glory of God.

Now to reach these results, we must develop in the deep ways of God. We must be after deep knowledge of God and His Word.

It is this focus that God's Spirit will use to develop individual lives and also the life of the church.

Agape love is not just some sentimental feeling. It is a focused mind and a sanctified life. That is what Paul wanted for the Philippians.

Now to have a life that glorifies God, one must be a believer in Jesus Christ. One of the most discerning things one may do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved.