

**Paul's Prayer for Abounding Love
Philippians 1:9-11
Part 3**

Before you became a Christian, before you became a follower of Christ, before you accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior, what was your goal? You might respond, "My goal was to become a doctor, a lawyer, a pilot, a business owner." You might respond, "I just wanted to get married and have children." You might respond, "I wanted to make a positive contribution to my fellow man." You might respond, "My goal was simply to retire in the Antelope Valley." All these goals are wonderful goals. And certainly they continue to be wonderful goals even after we become a Christian. But after we become a Christian, another goal is added which should surpass all our other previous goals and this goal should become the driving force of our lives. And what is that goal? Our primary goal as professing Christians should be to live our lives consistent with our profession in order to be assured that we in fact are saved. (Matt. 7:21-23).

We should not take our salvation for granted. The Scriptures continually give us warning after warning not to do this. Just because we made a profession, or just because we have been actively involved in certain Christian activities for a few years does not in anyway assure us that we are in fact saved. Listen to **Matthew 7:21-23**, "**Not everyone who says to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, will enter the Kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. (22) Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' (23) And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.**" If we truly believe that we know Jesus and have a relationship with Him by grace through faith, it will affect the way we live. Not just for a day, not just for a week, but throughout our lives.

If our lives are characterized by the pursuit of holiness, then we can be assured that we are saved. This assurance is clearly seen in Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the Philippians in **Phil. 1:3-8**, "**I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, (4) always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, (5) in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. (6) For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**" But why was he so confident? Why was he so assured that one day they would stand with Him before Christ, well-received and embraced rather than being turned away with the words "I never knew you, depart from me you workers of iniquity?" He goes on to explain this in **VV. 7-8**, "**(7) For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. (8) For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.**" Paul was assured that they would be standing with Him in the presence of Christ, warmly received and embraced because when he looked at the Philippians, he saw a group of people who were striving to live a life pleasing to the Lord. He saw a group of people who were by the way they were living, giving powerful testimony to the fact that they were saved, and that they truly were the sons of God.

But would he continue to be assured of their salvation? He does not take this future assurance for granted. He therefore transitions from offering up prayers of thanksgiving based on what he had seen to offering prayers for the Philippians in **Phil. 1:9-11** in respect to what he hoped to see. In his prayer for the Philippians, Paul prays for one thing, “that their love would abound more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.” Look at **V. 9**, “**And this I pray, that your love** (God’s divine love which you possess in the person of Christ) **may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.**” (In other words, that your abounding love would flow out from a deepening relationship with God and an increasing ability to apply God’s word to specific situations).

But why did Paul pray what he prayed for? There are two reasons specifically stated. The first reason we considered last week. Let us look at **V. 10**, “so that you may approve the things that are excellent,” Paul prayed what he prayed so that they might be able to approve the things that are excellent, or in other words they would be able to see the very best way to express the love of God.

Hopefully being able to see the very best way to express the love of God would lead them to good things. And this is exactly Paul’s expectation. Look again at **V. 10**, “**in order to be sincere and blameless until the Day of Christ.**” Why did Paul pray what he prayed? First of all he prayed what he prayed so that they might be able to approve the things that are excellent. And secondly, Paul prayed what he prayed in order that they might be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. Yes, the Philippians had done well, but he wants them to do even better. Why? Paul wanted to continue to be assured that they in fact would be received and warmly embraced on the day of Christ Jesus.

PAUL PRAYED WHAT HE PRAYED IN ORDER THAT THEY MIGHT BE SINCERE AND BLAMELESS UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST.

If we are truly born again, the Spirit of God will be at work in us to complete the work which He has begun. This is clear from **Phil. 1:6**. What did Paul say in **Phil. 1:6**? “**For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.**” How long will He be at work to complete the work that He has begun? “**Until the day of Christ Jesus.**”

What is the day of Christ Jesus? The day of Christ Jesus relates wholly to the reward and blessing of church saints at His coming, which is commonly referred to as the rapture. (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16).

If this is true, “What should we see in our lives as we grow older?” We should see a growing Christlikeness. Should we see this growing Christlikeness between the ages 15-35? Yes. Between the ages of 35-65? Yes. Between the ages of 65-95? Yes. We should be able to see this growing Christlikeness throughout our lives. We should be able to see this growing Christlikeness until the very end of our lives. Was this Paul’s expectation for the Philippians and the answer is, absolutely. Paul was assured that the Philippians were saved. But Paul was not satisfied. To be assured of their salvation at the time when he wrote this epistle, he wanted to

continue to be assured. And the only way for him to continue to be assured was for him to continue to see the advancing work of the Spirit of God in their lives. So he prays that their love would abound more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that it would lead them to approve those things that are excellent, so that this would lead them to be living a life he describes as “sincere and blameless.”

What does Paul mean when he prays that they would be sincere until the Day of Christ? The word “sincere” (EILIKRINES) means unmixed, without alloy. It is interesting to note that this word could have been derived from the Greek words for “sun” (HELIOS) and “test” (KRINO). If this is so, then the word “sincere” could mean testing something by sunlight.

In biblical times, the making of pottery was a big business. Unfortunately for the potter, sometimes when the pot was being fired or baked, it would crack. Of course an honest potter would throw the pot away. However a dishonest potter would sometimes put wax in the crack and paint over it. Because of this practice, it became commonplace for people to test the pottery for cracks by holding it up to the light in order to see if there were any cracks. If a crack had been filled with wax it would be evident.

Paul emphasizes the importance of a sincere love in **Rom. 12:9** when he says, **“Let love be without hypocrisy.”** Paul and his missionary team have been so faithful in the pursuit of this kind of love, he is able to say in **2 Cor. 1:12** these words, **“For our proud confidence is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in holiness and godly sincerity (same word), not in fleshly wisdom but in the grace of God, we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially toward you.”** He reemphasizes this confidence **2 Cor. 2:17**, **“For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God.”**

We need to examine the various aspects of our lives in light of those excellent things that become apparent to us as our love abounds in real knowledge and all discernment. In honestly doing this examination, holding up our lives to these excellent things, it is not a matter of whether we will find cracks. We will find cracks. It is just a matter of how many different cracks we will find and when will we find them.

This of course is a lot of work. But the Christian life is not without effort. That is why we find such phrases as running to win, fighting the good fight, pressing on toward the mark.

Certainly we are not going to go through this process of approving or testing all the various aspects of our lives unless we feel that it is worthwhile. We must believe that there is a payoff if we are going to buffet ourselves in this way. What is the payoff? Is it having a better marriage? This may or may not happen. Is it having a better family? This may or may not happen. Is it being successful in our career? This may or may not happen. This is not what the approving, running, pressing, and fighting is all about. It is all about getting to the finish line and not being turned away. It is about being received and warmly embraced by Christ. This is the goal. This is what our lives are to be about. This is why we will strive to hold up every area of our lives to the sun in order to find the cracks.

Why am I so concerned? In a general sense I am concerned because this is the role of a shepherd. My desire and the desire of the elders of Valley Bible Church is that we will all cross the finish line together and we will not be missing a single individual who calls Valley Bible their church home. This is the general reason why I am concerned. The second reason why I am concerned is because I see professing believers who are very lackadaisical about the way they are living their lives. It appears as if they think that the race is over in respect to the issue of their salvation and that they can simply live their lives anyway they please and they will be fine.

Let me give you an example of this lackadaisical approach to their Christian walk. Let us consider how certain professing believers are handling their finances. The reason why I have picked this area is because I do not believe that in America there is a more troublesome area for so-called Christians than the area of their personal finances.

If our love is abounding more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, I believe that it would not take us very long to see the importance that Christ places on giving. I don't believe that it would take us very long to see that giving is truly one of those excellent things. What did Jesus say, "It is more blessed to give than receive." Clearly this is an excellent thing. But hopefully, as our love abounds more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, we will come to see that it is not just any kind of giving that is the excellent thing. Rather the excellent thing is generous, sacrificial and cheerful giving. Giving done in this way is truly an excellent thing.

But I know the probabilities are high that there are families here that are making gross incomes of over \$50,000 who are giving very little or nothing. They have a crack in their pot. And they have filled it with wax and have proceeded to paint over it. They do this by justifying their lack of giving as a lack of ability. They say to themselves "I want to give but my cupboards are bare." Then they go merrily along their way making sure that their cupboards are bare by unrestrained consumption.

They have a huge crack in their lives, so large you can drive a semi through it, but they do not see it because the truth is that their love is **not** abounding more and more. Because their love is **not** abounding more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, they are **unable** to approve the things that are excellent. And because they are unable to approve the things that are excellent, they **cannot** hold up their lives to the light of the Son. Not the light of the sun spelled "s-u-n" but rather the light of the "son" spelled "s-o-n." And because they are unable to hold up their lives to the light of the son, they will continue to be a cracked pot.

But Paul adds another word. He prays what he prays "**in order that we may be sincere and blameless**" until the day of Christ. The word "blameless" (APROSKOPOS) I believe is best understood in the passive sense meaning "without stumbling." It is referring to a person who is careful to avoid tripping over obstacles that may be placed in his way. Obviously the person who is able to see clearly enough so that they don't stumble will be the person who will be sincere. These two words are very closely related to the same idea.

When we look at this prayer request and we ask why Paul prayed this request we can answer very quickly. He prayed the prayer that he prayed for the Philippians, first of all, so that they might approve the things that are excellent. Secondly, he prays the prayer that he prays in order that the Philippians would be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ Jesus.

Those who live a sincere and blameless life until the day of Christ are pictured as a tree ready to be harvested. Let us read the last part of **V. 11, “having been filled with the fruit of righteousness.”** This is what our lives are all about. It is all about being prepared for the harvest. Does this mean that our salvation is through the performance of good works? No! Salvation is all about having a personal relationship with Christ. But those who have a personal relationship with Christ will live a life filled with the fruit of righteousness until the day of Christ Jesus. Let us read the rest of **V. 11, “having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ.”** Where did the fruit of righteousness come from? The fruit of righteousness, this sincere and blameless life, comes as an outflow of our life in Christ. It comes as an outflow of Christ’s love abounding more and more in real knowledge and all discernment in and through them.

CONCLUSION

The Lord of the harvest could return at any moment. Are you ready? If you are, good. Praise God! But will you be ready tomorrow? Are your brother and sisters in Christ ready for the harvest? If they are, praise God! But what about tomorrow? Recognizing that assurance is a day to day proposition. Let us pray for ourselves and for one another. What should we pray? Let us pray this prayer: May our love abound more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that we may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.