

Philippians is the most loving, and encouraging, of all of Paul's letters to the churches. Paul was in trouble, jailed for preaching the gospel. The church at Philippi heard about his situation, and out of their love, and concern, sent a love offering, so that his needs might be met. The outpouring of their love for him overwhelmed Paul, so he wrote to say thank you, and to encourage them in their walk with the Lord.

In this letter there is no admonishment, only an encouragement for two of the women in the church to settle their differences. The rest of the letter is all about loving the Lord Jesus Christ, and loving brothers, and sisters, in the faith. Paul begins the letter by letting them know how much the people mean to him, and with an assurance that he prays for them all of the time. Consider the content of his prayer, found in Philippians 1:9-11.

“And this is my prayer: 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, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. (NIV 1984)”

At the top of Paul's prayer he asks God that the Philippians love may abound more and more. As believers grow in faith, our love for Christ also matures, and by extension we learn to love other believers more and more. We live for Christ, not ourselves, and we willingly put the needs of our brothers and sisters ahead of our own. Paul demonstrated his love for the Philippians when he poured his life into theirs, and they demonstrated their love for Paul through their regular support of his ministry.

The Greek word, here translated as abound, carries the picture of a cup overflowing, or a stream rising out of its banks to cover a broad area. The idea is that our love for one another is to flood out of us and cover the whole family of God. This love is not just a sentimental or emotional love, it is a love that is based upon knowledge, and insight. It is a spiritual knowledge of Christ that is intimate, and personal. The fountainhead of this knowledge is the word of God, and the application of the spiritual principles learned from its study. When we apply the principles of God's word to our lives, and relationships, the result is that we love the Lord, and each other more deeply.

Possession of this love, knowledge, and insight, blesses our lives in distinct ways. It enables us to discern what is best, and it helps us to be pure and blameless in God's sight, until the day of Christ. Discernment means that we are able to test and approve what is right. Through discernment we are able to rise to God's standards for the Christian life. Discernment allows us to live our lives in the center of God's will. It helps to keep us from making mistakes, and protects our testimonies, so that we might be of greater service to our Lord.

Through discernment we are able to be pure, and blameless. The Greek word picture, associated with the English word pure, is to be like metal refined by fire. The refiner heats raw gold ore to the point of melting and then removes the dross. All of the impurities that infected our lives when we were in sin no longer have a bearing. Through love, and the knowledge of God's word, God gives us victory over sin, so that in His sight, we remain blameless.

Blameless means that God holds nothing in our account against us. We are blameless in our relationship with Christ, and blameless in our relationship with others. Blameless also means that we don't cause anyone else to stumble. We simply live in the love of Christ; right up until the day we meet Him face to face.

The result of living in Christ is that we will be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Righteousness is being in a right standing with God. When our lives are in a right standing with God, we also live in the blessings of His grace, and that bears fruit in our lives. Galatians 5:22 says that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. These are the qualities that God brings to our lives, regardless of our circumstances. These characteristics set the Christian apart from the lost world.

This fruit of the Spirit comes out of a right relationship with Jesus Christ. Our faith, our hope, our lives are to be fully involved in, and tied to, our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. We live in Him, through Him, and for Him. The bible says that in faith we become His physical body. His Spirit lives in us so that we become His arms, legs, feet, and mouthpiece in this dark world.

Everything we do, say, or think, is to be to the glory and praise of God. As Christ's life is lived out in the life of the believer, the fruit produced does not magnify self; the fruit is to magnify the living God, in all things. This was Paul's prayer for the Philippians. It is my prayer for myself, and it is my prayer for all of you as well.