



A Knowing and Discerning Love - Devotion

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

Sermon Quote: Paul begins his prayer for these partners in the gospel...with a petition concerning their love. In 1 Timothy 1:5 Paul makes this wonderful statement, the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and good conscience. This is what theology and doctrinal instruction should do; it ought to increase our love. Paul prays specifically that their love will be increasingly characterized by two qualities, knowledge and discernment. "Todd Pruitt"

In Paul's letter to the church in Philippi we find the tenor of the message much different from that of Galatians or 1 Corinthians. There is no major doctrinal issue to be corrected, no egregious sin that needed to be confronted. Here was a church Paul considered his gospel partners, a church facing difficult situations, and a church who willingly supplied the resources to meet his needs. What he desires for these Christians is that their love would grow more and more. This should come as no surprise, for when Jesus was asked about the greatest commandment he quotes the *Shema* as the beginning of his answer. He says, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. He then ties loving God with loving your neighbor and declares that all the law hangs on these two commands. So then, according to Jesus, it is impossible for us to separate how we love others from the moorings of our love of God as learned from the Scriptures.

Yet when we examine our lives we see how quickly our love grows cold. We find ourselves having a hard time loving those who are difficult and challenging. We see a love that is sentimental in nature and abandons us as quickly as it comes. Isn't this because our love is tied to circumstances instead of gospel truth? Paul's desire was for their love to abound from the knowledge of God, a love that is rooted and grounded in a deep robust theological understanding of who God is and how he loves. Paul tells us in Romans 5:8 that the demonstration of God's love is seen at the cross. It is love that sent his son to die for rebel sinners. It is a love that sacrifices first while we were dead in sin. The more we know God from his word, the more we will be compelled to reflect the nature, heart and character of our great God. Our lack of love for others should drive us back to the Scriptures; it should compel us to know God as he reveals himself through the Word. Are our expressions of love for our brothers and sisters growing because we know God in deeper and richer ways? Let us become men and women who lose themselves in the greatness of God. Let us be that tree that sinks its roots deep into the stream of living water, God's word. May we become people who find their greatest joy in knowing God and loving as God loves.

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