

Guest Preacher - Rev. Callum Macleod (Retired)

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Preacher: Rev Callum Macleod

[0:00] Turn now to Paul's air to Philippians and chapter 1, and we can read at verse number 9. Philippians 1 at verse number 9.

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.

I guess if we are going to listen to anything with any kind of seriousness as the children of God, two things need to be present.

The first is that the person speaks with the authority of God, and that's, of course, how this letter begins. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, Paul is speaking and writing with the authority of God.

And what adds power and force to that, if the person who speaks by the authority of God actually cares for those to whom he is writing or speaking.

[1:18] And that's exactly what we see in the Apostle Paul. Not only does he speak with the authority of God, but he understands the people in the church in Philippi, and he loves them with all of his heart.

We see that down through these verses. Because I hold you in my heart, and because he is yearning for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus, there is the connection of the fact that he was instrumental in planting this church when he was called by God over to Macedonia to help build the church there.

And because of that connection, he holds them in his heart evermore. And his love for them is such, not only that he teaches them, but also that he prays for them.

And it is important to notice these two things, that this Apostle Paul, the servant of Christ, that he has the servant heart because he wants to teach, and he also wants to pray for them.

And these things must always come together, that our teaching is supported by prayer, and that our prayer leads us to teaching.

[2:36] And then we begin to understand the Word of God. And Paul's purpose through these verses, and I guess through the whole of the letter, his purpose is that these people will move forward in their faith, and that they will do so living a life that is worthy of their calling.

And when we read through the letter, we understand that they faced challenges. And it wasn't just the challenge of being a colony of Rome, where Caesar is Lord, and for them Jesus is Lord.

It wasn't just that challenge. It was also the challenge of the disunity developing amongst themselves, and we see that in chapter 2. There was the challenge of the world around them. There was the challenge of the threat to the unity of the church, and there was also the false teaching that speaks about circumcision, which in itself was interfering with the teaching of the Word of God.

And Paul wants to address all of these things, and in capturing their attention, and leading into speaking about these, he prays for them.

[3:52] And that's what we have in these verses, verses 9 to 11. And I want to look at this prayer of Paul this evening, and to reflect on a prayer for life as the citizens of heaven.

And the first thing we see is that there is a prayer for development. At the very beginning of the prayer, that's what we see. There is the sense of that your love may abound more and more.

The love of God, their love for God, and their love for the Lord Jesus Christ. John tells us that God is love.

John tells us that here we see the love of God, that God sent his Son into the world to be the propitiation for our sins. And God shows his love to us and for us, in that Christ died for us while we

were yet sinners.

And the initial basic question for ourselves together this evening, is do we know that love of God in Jesus Christ? Paul is speaking to those, and he believes as far as they are concerned, that they already know the love of God, that they have come to understand the grace and the salvation of God.

[5 : 21] And it is that grace and salvation of God that gives to them to live the kind of life they are seeking to live in Philippi. Philippi. Do you know the love of God?

Have you been led by the Spirit of God into understanding the love of God and being so overwhelmed by it that life forevermore is going to be different?

Not that you feel that you are obliged to do so, but you feel that because of such a great love for you that you love in return as much as you possibly can.

The prayer is with regard to love. And when we think of love in the practical sense, it includes, of course, the fact that we are called to love one another.

The church of Jesus Christ is made up of those who love the Lord with all of their hearts and who love one another. And Jesus speaks of there being no greater love than this, that a man would lay down his life for his friends.

[6 : 31] And he's saying to them in John chapter 15, the sense of, this is what I have done for you. And commanding them to then go and love one another.

Here we see the people of God, they love the Lord Jesus Christ with all of their hearts and they love one another because of Christ's love for them. That's the basic starting point.

If I'm the child of God, this is what describes me and defines me. If that is not the case, then there is something seriously wrong. There is something missing and something that needs to be addressed. But Paul is speaking to those who have love for God, who have love for one another. And his prayer for them is, that your love may abound more and more.

He wants them as those who are citizens of heaven, the love that they already have. He wants it to be present in their lives in a kind of super abundant way.

[7 : 35] He wants love to be overflowing in their lives more and more. As we pour more and more into a vessel and we watch it overflowing. So God, Paul, wants them to be so filled with love that it overflows daily from their lives.

It's a powerful, dynamic force. It's not simply something that's settled there like a mechanical or an electrical power. This is something that is powerfully dynamic, that works in their own personal lives, in their relationship with God, and in their relationship with other people.

He wants their love to develop and to grow. That's how his own love for them works. He yearns for them in the gospel.

He wants them to love him, to love the Lord with all of their hearts. And that's Paul's prayer for them and is God's message for ourselves together this evening.

That your love for the Lord Jesus, my love for the Lord Jesus, will be powerful and overflowing. that it won't be a trickle or a stream that runs under the heat of the sun and struggling to survive.

[9 : 02] But that is that forceful river that comes tumbling down from the throne of God as the river runs down from the mountain after a time of rainfall.

It's a powerful force. And we may ask ourselves, you may ask yourself, I may ask myself, how much is the love of God that powerful force in life?

How much do we perhaps wonder at times, do we love the Lord at all? When our hearts may feel like a desert where there is no water to be found, how much do we sense this power?

This is a prayer for one another that your heart, that my heart, that together our love will superabound and be extravagant in the sense that it flows powerfully to all around.

But Paul, in praying for their love to be extravagant in that way, he wants to define the areas in which their love is so going to grow.

[10 : 18] And that's what we read on in that verse, that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and with all discernment. A saying that we're familiar with is that love is blind.

In Paul's view, love is the exact opposite. It's through love that we learn about the Lord Jesus.

It's on the journey of loving him that we grow in our understanding of him. And Paul is directing the development, the growth of their love along the lines of knowledge and of discernment.

that they may grow to understand more fully intellectually what the love of God in Christ means, that their knowledge base will expand.

And the more the knowledge base of the love of God for them expands, the more their experience will be changed and the more they will grow in the knowledge and in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11:23] And for you and I tonight, as those who are on this journey with the church in Philippi, who are on their way to the glory of God as citizens of heaven, our love must develop in this way.

And if it is growing in this way, then we will know in our experience that there is a change going on. And it's not a change that we are responsible for ourselves, but the more we grow in knowledge of the love of God, it changes our hearts.

It changes our experience. It fills us more and more with a sense of the need to appreciate what Christ has done and the need to show our appreciation and love for him.

Our love must grow in knowledge and also must grow in all discernment, growing in understanding and using our minds to understand what God is telling us and through that to distinguish between the things that are right and wrong and to be able to, through that insight, to be able to walk with our Lord and with our Saviour in a way that is faithful, that is lived in the light of his word and through which our love itself grows more and more.

Our discernment is having the power of discriminating between one thing and another, of learning the rights and the wrongs of life, of making the choices that ensure that nothing interferes with our love for our Saviour, growing in knowledge and growing in all of discernment.

[13:28] The writer of the Hebrews speaks about the way in which those to whom he was writing, who were immature in their thinking, that they were to use their powers of discernment, that they would be trained in the things of God and so grow up into maturity and doing so by distinguishing good from evil.

I think it is fair to say, because I know my own heart, I think that it is fair to say that our love does not grow because we fail to make these decisions and these choices.

We fail to recognise the good and the evil. We fail to make that distinction and we travel along the life of faith and our relationship with the Lord and so often these distinctions are not there.

And these distinctions are not there in our personal lives. They're not there in our working lives, in our family lives, in our school lives. These distinctions so often are not there.

And when they're not there, our love grows cold. It ceases to be the dynamic expression of God's love that it should be.

[14:52] It leaves us stunted in our growth. And here is the prayer for them and that we should have for each other this evening that our love will abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment.

Secondly, there is a prayer for the right kind of decision making. There is something of that in discernment.

But Paul goes on to focus in upon their decision making and the way in which they are to live their lives. And we see that in verse number 10. So that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

They are to approve the things that are excellent. They are to prove that the genuineness of certain things, it's examining things to confirm that they are genuine and that they are the right things.

And the kind of approval is the kind of examining and pronouncing certain things as good. And perhaps we may think that's difficult for us to do that, but in our love for the Lord Jesus with the Spirit of God, then these are the things that we do.

[16:20] We are approving the things that are excellent. And perhaps we would say, well, it's everything to do with our salvation.

Is that not excellent? But he is praying for the things that are excellent, the things that differ because they are better than other things. And that's such an important distinction in our lives that we may live our lives doing ordinary things, things that are right in themselves, and things that may not at all be inconsistent with the life of faith.

But Paul is here praying for the things that are superior to that, the better things that are there in the Christian life for us to be better and for us to choose from them and so to advance ourselves by the grace of God in the Christian life.

And here, the case is not of making a difference or approving the things that are right or wrong. Paul is referring to things that are right, but reminding us that there are some things that are better than other things.

And when you are going to choose the things that are excellent, the things that you choose may not be the things that I will choose because in your personal experience, there are things that you need specifically in order to advance your faith and in order to increase your love.

[18:02] They are specific to the kind of person you are, to the kind of heart that you have, to the kind of character that you are. There are specific things for you and Paul is praying and God is asking us to pray for one another that we may recognize the things that are above everything else that we need more than anything else.

And it is an answer to prayer. It is God that gives that to us and that's what Paul is praying for, that we may understand ourselves, that we may understand our relationship with God and with the Lord Jesus and understand the things that interfere with that so that we may focus on the very things that will cancel out what interferes with our relationship with God.

and we need to have that kind of cancellation culture in our relationship with God so that the things that get in our way are removed by better things, by our lives being filled with the things that are superior to everything else, that we may make the best possible choices to ensure our development as those who are the children of God.

And Paul is praying that for them, not just for life in Philippi and the days in which they are living, but as we read this prayer and as we read all that Paul says in his letters, he always has a goal, he always has a focus.

He's not obsessed with today and with present things. He is obsessed with where the people of God are going and where he is going himself and because of that obsession he wants them to be different now.

[20:04] And that's the perspective that he gives to us here at the end of verse 10. And so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

The Old Testament speaks repeatedly about the day of the Lord. In that day, God is going to do wonderful things. Paul borrows that idea, brings it into the New Testament and speaks of the day of the Lord, the day of the return of the Lord Jesus, when everything will come to a conclusion, when God will judge the whole of mankind, when God will usher his people into his kingdom and when he will send away those who are not his people at all.

The citizens who are in exile in the world will come home and they will dwell in the new heavens and the new earth. And Paul is praying for them in the light of that day that you may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

In Paul's day they would use the sunlight to test the quality of what we would call today China or porcelain or the vessels that were made.

They would hold them up against the light of the sun to see if there were any cracks or any flaws. And if there was, then that would be discarded. It was a failure.

[21:41] It was faulty. And it would be taken away. And Paul here is praying what he is praying for them. so that when the light of the glory of Jesus the Son of God shines upon the whole of humankind when he stands on the earth on the last day, so that when his light shines on them into their hearts, into the whole of their beings, that they will be pure, they will be without fault.

And they will be accepted. They will go through that process of quality assurance, and through concluding that process, that God is the one who through the light of Jesus will look at their hearts and will say, he, she, is without fault.

Here is a true citizen of heaven. Here is a true child of God. And it's that perspective that we must have for ourselves when we pray for one another and pray for each other's good, that we bear in mind that this is the day, the day of the Lord, that we need to look to, not the 12th of July in 2026, it is important, but it is doubly important in the light of the return of Jesus, the Son of God.

And you and I want to make sure that the quality assurance, the testing of us against the light of the glory of the Son of God, that day will prove that we are genuine, will prove that we are faultless, not because we are faultless here, but will prove that we are the genuine people of God.

And tonight, if we are the children of God, and we have the love of God in our hearts, then we are motivated more and more, because if we love him today, we want to ensure that when he appears, we will love him more, and he will love us in return, and God the Father will welcome us into his kingdom, we need to keep that in view, pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

[24:20] We can say pure and without fault or without falling in that day, but we can also think of blameless in this sense, of having no shame, and what was shame in the Old Testament, what was the shame of being abandoned by God because of the people's rebellion, of the shame of being

overtaken by their enemies and defeated, of the shame of discovering that God has left them.

That's a shame that John speaks of in writing his own letters, in 1 John chapter 2, that he speaks of the way in which we are not to shrink him with shame at his coming.

It will be a shame and a cause for fear and terror if we stand before him and we discover that God is not our God, that Jesus is not our Savior and that we are left to the great enemy of his judgment and lost upon him forever, cast out from his presence.

We want to be pure. We want to pass the test. We want to ensure that whatever happens, we won't be ashamed when we see him.

He loved us greatly. We love him in return. Our love develops and grows. It does so that at last we will be welcomed by him and not sent away.

[26:22] And finally, the citizens of God's kingdom, they are distinct in one particular way. There is a distinction and the distinction is that they are filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory of the praise of God.

Filled with whatever it is as we read on. But the sense of filling, the idea is taken from manning a ship and being filled as having the ship fully manned.

There is a place for everyone in the crew and there is a member of the crew in his place. The ship is fully manned. There is nothing missing.

And so he's praying for them that in that day and as they progress towards that day, that they themselves will be filled in the same way that there is space in their hearts for everything and that in that day there will be nothing missing.

No empty places in their hearts. filled with the fruit of righteousness. In creation, in Genesis 1, we read that all the trees were created and that each one bore fruit according to its kind.

[28:04] And Jesus carries that idea into the New Testament. we don't get grapes from thorns, etc., etc. We know it. It's natural.

And for the children of God, there is a fruit that belongs to them because of who they are. And Jesus speaks in John 15 of him being the true vine and them being the branches.

branches. And he speaks of every branch of me that bears fruit. What kind of fruit? The fruit of the true vine who is Jesus. And what is the fruit going to look like?

It's going to look like Jesus himself because he is a true vine. There is a fruit that you and I must bear as the children of God as we journey on through life.

it is the fruit of righteousness. Putting it simply, it's the fruit of a life that's conformed to the life of the children of God and to the life of the kingdom of God.

[29:13] It's righteousness in the sense of being conformed to the norm. And we need to make a distinction here between the uses of righteousness that we have in the New Testament.

And there is the sense of righteousness which is a right standing before God. It's a state and a standing. It's a declaration by God.

It's a legal matter and we are taken from being condemned sinners to be declared righteous, justified by God. That will never change.

That will never grow or increase. Neither will it diminish. It remains the same forever. But there is also righteousness in the sense of the life that we are going to live that corresponds to the status that we have as the children of God and that shows to the world as well as to ourselves that we are the children of God.

And the proof text for that is Romans chapter 8 where Paul speaks about there will be no condemnation and where Paul speaks about God setting us free and giving us the freedom from the condemnation of the law so that he says the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled by us who walk not according to the flesh but according to the spirit.

[30:54] This righteousness is about our walk in the world. It's about a walk that's consistent with the word of God. It's about a righteousness that speaks of the holiness of the character of God that shows that your life and mind is being transformed day by day to be like the Lord Jesus to be like the character of God himself as we have that in the word.

Filled with the fruit of righteousness. It's hugely demanding. We are called to be holy because God is holy.

We are called to follow God and the Lord Jesus diligently and to serve him willingly and wholeheartedly sincere in all that we do. We are called upon to bear this fruit.

Paul expands and of course in Galatians 5 where he speaks of the fruit of the spirit as love and joy and peace and so on if we are the children of God tonight.

It's not a question of whether we will bear fruit or not. it's a question of how much fruit we will bear because the child of God cannot be fruitless but the child of God may be in such a place that the child of God should be bearing more fruit.

[32 : 26] And that's the challenge for us tonight as we close. To understand where we are going, to have this prayer for each other and to pray for one another and to examine our own hearts as we do so and to ask God to help us to recognize if there is anything in our hearts that stops us from bearing this fruit that God will show it to us.

That he will help us to take it away, to remove it so that we can grow. And praying for one another that the same would happen to all those whom we love in the Lord, that God will show them that there is something that is causing the growth to be stunted and the fruit to be less than it should be. That God in his love will show. And Jesus promises in John 15 that that's exactly what God will do. He will lift up the branches that are falling down.

He will cleanse the branches so that they will bear more fruit. And tonight for us, that's our prayer as we close because it's all about the things that come through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

The fruit comes from him. Without me you can do nothing. It's the vine that produces its fruit through the branches and the branches that depend on the vine for their life and for their fruit bearing.

[34 : 03] we close tonight carrying that image with us and praying that God will help us all to bear more fruit and to press on with increasing love for our Lord, our God and our Saviour and to live the life of devotion to him, devotion to one another and always keeping in mind the horizon of where we are going together and the light and glory that will shine on us in that day to show who we truly are and to test us in their hearts.

May God therefore bless his word to us. Let us pray. Most gracious God, we do rejoice in you as the God that does indeed begin a good work in the hearts of your children.

We are thankful to you that you do the things that we would never choose to do ourselves and neither would we be able to do them even if we did. We are thankful to you that salvation is by grace alone, by the Spirit of God alone and we pray that you will bless us in our hearts tonight appreciating that and helping us to ask ourselves about a relationship with you and to love for your name.

Help us also in doing so to learn from your word and to develop and to mature in our faith, to walk in the paths of your truth, to be faithful to you, to wait with expectation for the day of the revelation of your glory and your Son when he returns to stand on this earth.

Help us to live life in that way we do pray. Bless your word and go before us. We pray these things for Jesus sake. Amen. The closing psalm is psalm number 92 at verse number 12.

[35 : 59] It's a psalm that speaks of bearing fruit and flourishing as the people of God. Psalm 92 at verse 12. It's on page 353. But like the palm three flourishing shall be the righteous one righteous one shall like to the cedar grow that is in Lebanon.

We sing from verse 12 to the end of the psalm to God's praise. But like the palm three flourishing It shall be the righteous one It shall lighter the cedar grow but is level found Those that within the house of God Are planted by His grace They shall grow up and flourish

In our God's holy place And in all His strength The fruit still forth shall bring They shall be fat and full cross And they will be rich in To show that the brightness The Lord He is our all to hear

And He from all And my justice Is all together free The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all now and forevermore Amen
Amen