
TEMPERED LOVE

I am so excited for today's study! I love the meat of God's word and how depth of study can result in understanding the processes and procedures that take place in our lives when we choose to rely on God. It brings me peace because I trust God's character and His word and believe that if I follow His guidelines, the results are certain. It's not guess and check. It's a sure thing! God is a sure thing and that will never change! Here are our verses for today. Philippians 1:9-11 says,

"And this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you 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."

Paul prays for the Philippian believers throughout this book! We are only in verse nine and this is the third time Paul says he is praying for them. What is he praying for this time? Paul's purpose in praying for them is so their "love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment." Paul wants their love to abound. The Greek word for love is 'agape' meaning self-sacrificial love that manifests itself in giving and continues to do so regardless of the response. Paul wants self-sacrificial love to be continuously displayed openly and abundantly. He also wants it done more and more. This means that the Philippians already love one another self sacrificially, but Paul wants it to continue with greater frequency.

Name a few ways God loves you unconditionally (self-sacrificially regardless of the response).

He also wants love to continue in the sphere of real knowledge and all discernment according to verse nine. The word for knowledge in the Greek is 'epignosis' meaning fully applied knowledge. Paul is praying that the love of the Philippian believers operates in the sphere of fully applied knowledge. What does this look like?

As we talked about yesterday, truly loving someone takes looking at them through God's eyes. We see today that truly loving someone also requires applied knowledge. We must understand the needs of an individual in order to do what is best for them, in order to give regardless of their response. For those who are parents we understand that loving our child doesn't mean giving them everything they want. It means doing what is best. Sometimes we say no. Don't touch the hot stove. We have knowledge that the stove is hot and it's in the best interest of our children if they keep their hands away from it. Often times, God acts as our parent, our father, and leads us through the circumstances of life. He leads us to what is good, but He allows us to choose what is wrong. He disciplines us and always leads us back to Him.

Have you experienced a season of life where you continuously tried to accomplish something, but couldn't do what you were trying to do? Was it frustrating? Did God show you later why you weren't able to accomplish your goals? Write your thoughts here.

We must also love all believers unconditionally, knowing what they truly need and applying that knowledge to their circumstances. For example, do we understand, through the knowledge from God's word, that it is best for unmarried couples to remain pure before marriage? Do we understand through God's word that a teen should not party and drink with

their friends? Do we understand God's word enough to love others self sacrificially by instructing them in righteousness? These are Paul's instructions to the Philippians and they are our instructions, too.

Paul then says that the love of the Philippian believers must be accomplished in the sphere of all discernment, meaning accurate perception. Our love for others must be in the sphere of fully applied knowledge and accurate perception. Are we aware of "godly counsel" versus "earthly counsel?" It is our duty to not only read the word, but accurately understand it. And the only way we can do this is through the Holy Spirit. James tells us to stop being deceived. (James 1:16) It is Satan's mission to deceive believers, to get them to stop relying on truth and start relying on falsehood. But, Paul tells us that we must love with knowledge and accuracy. With an inaccurate perception of reality we might tell our children it's okay to touch the stove. It's not hot. In reality, the burner is hot. We were operating under an inaccurate perception of reality. The word of God is the ONLY location that accurate perception comes from. There is one truth and that is God's truth. The only way to truly, unconditionally love someone is through the lens of God's word.

Read Isaiah 55:7-9 and 2 Timothy 3:1-7

Write about a time in your life where you were deceived. Did the absolute truth of God's word help you see the truth? If so, how?

I love the procedures of God's word and here's why! Paul doesn't stop at how we are to love. He goes on to tell us why we should love in that way. He says it is for the purpose of continually approving, through the process of testing, things that are excellent. By loving self sacrificially in the sphere of knowledge and accurate perception, Paul says that the believers are able to approve things that are excellent. If we have knowledge of His word and are

accurately able to perceive it, God promises that we will be able to discern things which are excellent. I don't know about you, but that is something I desire to accomplish!

Paul goes on to say, not only will we approve things that are excellent, we will have the potential to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ Jesus. The word 'sincere' from the Greek means unalloyed, pure, unadulterated and unmixed. The word 'blameless' from the Greek means 'unoffending.' So the result of our self-sacrificial love in the sphere of knowledge and accurate perception will result in our ability to approve things which are excellent AND we will be pure morally and ethically and therefore we will not be a stumbling block to others. This has the potential of happening until the day of Christ! Talk about a process!

In verse 11 Paul says that the final result of self-sacrificial love is being filled with the fruit of righteousness. Because of our self-sacrificial love, our approval of things that are excellent, the potential of our purity morally and ethically, we, as a matter of principle, have been filled with the fruit of righteousness. The Greek text clarifies that if those procedures are evident in our life and accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit, the result is the production of righteous fruit. That fruit is the direct result of walking according to God's plan. We are able to do so when we implement the procedure outlined in verses 9-10. Let's look at it one more time.

When we love self sacrificially in the sphere of applied knowledge and accurate perception, we will be able to approve the things that are excellent and have the potential for moral and ethical purity until the day of Christ. When this is implemented, righteous fruit will be produced in our lives.

Isn't the clarity of God's word amazing? Take a moment to write down in your own words the process of self-sacrificial love outlined in Philippians 1:9-11.

The last part of verse 11 tells us that all of this will be accomplished through Christ Jesus and will bring glory and praise to God! What more could you ask for in your life as a Christian? It makes me want to get up and go love someone! But wait! Remember, none of this can be accomplished on our own. It is through fellowship, study of God's word and application of principles that any of this possible. And it is not for our glory or benefit, but for God's glory!

REVIEW

~Verse 9: Self sacrificial love should be in the sphere of applied knowledge and accurate perception. James 1:16, Isaiah 55:7-9, 2 Timothy 3:1-7

~Verse 10: The result is the ability to approve things which are excellent AND the potential of moral and ethical purity.

~Verse 11: The result is the production of righteous fruit in our lives through Christ Jesus to the glory and praise of God.