

## **Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

### **Essentials for Growth in Godliness, Part 2**

Scripture: Philippians 1:10-11

Code: 50-6

Let's open our Bibles this morning for the study of God's Word to Philippians, chapter 1 – Philippians, chapter 1. We're looking at verses 9 through 11, Paul's prayer for the believers. He writes, "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."

Now, in this prayer which Paul prays for the Philippian Christians, he focuses on the essentials for sound spiritual health. He's focusing on the features of true spirituality, elements of spiritual life which every Christian must pursue. Do you remember what they are? I gave them to you last time: love, excellence, integrity, good works, and glory. In fact, in some ways, you could sum up the Christian life in those five terms: love, excellence, integrity, good works and glory. Now, we began our study last time by looking at verse 9 and considering the first of these five essentials, namely love. Verse 9 says, "This I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment."

We pointed out last time that all of Christian living begins with love. Everything in our Christian experience must be built on a foundation of love. In fact, the whole text of verses 9 to 11 is sequential. Love leads to excellence, which leads to integrity, which leads to good works, which leads to the praise and glory of God. So love is the great foundation of Christian living. It is the most surpassing virtue of the Christian life, and really the distinctive of our faith. The late Dr. Donald Barnhouse, who was a great Bible teacher and expositor on the east coast, tells about a Japanese girl who worked at the airline desk in the lobby of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. On one occasion, when he happened to be in that hotel at the airline desk, he spoke to this girl, who was fluent in Chinese, Japanese and English by necessity, and was obviously from a very cultured background, and in his open and unique way, he simply asked her if she were a Christian.

She replied, "No, I'm a Buddhist." And after being questioned further, she said she had heard of Jesus Christ, and she heard about a sacred book called the Bible, but she had never read it, and knew nothing at all about Jesus Christ personally. Then Dr. Barnhouse asked her a very telling question. He said to her, "Do you love Buddha?" Startled she replied, "Love? I never thought about love in connection with religion." Challenged by her pathetic reply, Dr. Barnhouse unfolded to her the beautiful reality of Christian love, in contrast to the pagan gods that are hated and feared. He told that

girl that no God in the entire world is loved except the true God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

He pointed out that in her country, statues were everywhere of the deities, and they were fierce monsters, guarding temple gates while a placating people attempted to somehow appease an otherwise angry deity. He reminded her that in her religion, they burn incense and offer sacrifices in an effort to appease the cruel, impulsive whims of these wicked deities. Buddhists do not love Buddha. And Buddha does not love Buddhists. Hindus do not love their deities, and their deities do not love them. Moslems do not particularly love Allah. And there is no great affirmation that Allah loves them.

You see, that is the great distinction of Christianity, that its sum and substance at the heart is love. God loves us, we love God, and in that context we love each other and are loved by each other. That is the rich distinction of Christianity. We love Him because He first loved us. Love is the greatest thing. Love is the surpassing reality of Christian experience. True godliness begins with love. In 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, which I alluded to last Lord's day, Paul writes, "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing."

Love is the *sine qua non* of Christianity. A Buddhist monk may light himself on fire, but if he has not love, that love born of God, it is useless. Nothing makes any sense. Nothing has any value unless there is love. So love is that surpassing virtue. Paul then prays that the love of the Philippians and us would abound more and more in all real knowledge and all discernment. He prays for our increasing love.

Now, we noted last time several points about that. It is divine love, indicated by the fact that he asks God for it. It comes from God, not man. It is de facto love; they already have it in abundance, and he wants them to have more and more of it. It is decisive love – the word *agap* means the love of the will, or the love of choice, not emotion. It is dynamic love, it abounds more and more, increasing and overflowing. It is deep love, in that it is rooted in deep spiritual knowledge and understanding. And it is discerning love, in that it has insight into all the situations of life and knows how it should be applied.

So this love is not an unregulated impulse. It is biblical, discerning, discriminating service rendered to others in need, even if it means sacrifice. It is not an emotion, it is a duty. It is an act of selfless sacrifice in behalf of someone else. It cannot be reduced to a sociological phenomenon. It cannot be reduced to an emotional feeling. The key to it is selflessness. The key to it is humility. The key to it is to be lost in meeting the needs of others. And the people who really love are committed to others, unselfish, gracious to meet others' needs, no matter who they are, and no matter what the need might be. Everything begins with love. So Paul prays for a heart of love.

Now, let's go on to the rest of the excellencies, the essentials of spiritual life. The second is excellence. Notice again in verse 10: "So that you may approve the things that are excellent." Now, do you notice the sequence there? This feature deals with the sense of priority, and follows on the first essential, namely love. The two little words "so that" are the link, and show us there's a progression in view here. Where a person is literally dominated by the love of God, there will be a corresponding desire to seek and approve what is excellent. Why? Because that true love is controlled by the deep knowledge of the word, which enables the Christian to be completely discerning and discriminating, and that leads him to a pursuit of what is excellent. So he says, "So that," verse 10, "you may approve the things that are excellent." You can't do it without that pervasive love, that attitude of commitment that the Bible calls biblical love.

Now, the word "approve" is a very interesting and important word, *dokimaz*, it's very familiar in the New Testament. It was used in classical Greek for assaying metal to determine its properties and its purity. It was used for testing money to be sure that it wasn't counterfeit. In Luke 14:19, it is used of testing the quality of animals, namely oxen. And in Luke 12:56, it is used of sort of assessing the state of the sky, or analyzing the weather. So it has to do with testing to verify or to prove or to determine something. And what he is saying here is that my prayer for you is that you would have the capability to evaluate and determine the things that are excellent. Now, the Greek, *diapher*, means literally to differ, referring to the things that are excellent – to differ. In other words, so that you'll know the difference between things, and be able to determine what is most important. The idea, then, is to be able to set proper value on things, what is valuable, what is not valuable, what is more valuable, what is most valuable, what is worthwhile, what is vital, what is excellent, what is the thing that really matters.

Now listen carefully: it is not the ability to distinguish between good and bad. Everybody can do that. It is the ability to distinguish between good and best, and only a few seem to be able to do that. The discernment that assesses what is best, so crucial; being able to take your life and focus your time and your energy on what really matters – approving what is excellent, testing, assaying, assessing, proving, approving what is most significant. And listen: the ability to do that is what separates the simple from the profound, the weak from the powerful, and the common from the influential. Those profound, powerful, influential people are those people who have ability to focus their life on some excellent goal, and they are not dissuaded or detracted by things that are less than excellent.

Now, this is a prayer for the mind, by the way. You might even say the first one, a prayer for love, was a prayer for the heart. This is a prayer for the mind, because you cannot pursue what is excellent unless you can assess what is excellent. This is the challenge, to me, of life, is having the ability to pursue what is most noble and best. And that's just not how most people are. Most people are like the proverbial bouncing ball, they just react – they react. It's that they're a knee-jerk kind of life style. They just do whatever impulse, emotion, mood tells them, or they simply react to the environment

around them. They don't control the environment, and they don't control their response to the environment. In fact they don't think, they just react. Most people live off their moods. They don't control themselves, their selves control them. They don't think at all. They can't pursue, unhindered and undistracted, what is excellent, because they can't think and control their thought patterns to the degree that they can assess what is excellent. They react. It's tragic but most people live in reaction to everything around them – like a bouncing ball, bouncing off every wall they hit in whatever direction they have the freedom to go.

There was an interesting educational study done, I read about it this week, in which people were given new concepts. In other words, a man came in and gave these people a new concept, something they had never heard of before, and asked them to believe it. And knowing that in asking them to believe it, they would have to set aside some of the things they had previously thought were true. The results were interesting. Fifty percent of the people believed it immediately, without thinking. Thirty percent of the people didn't believe it, immediately without thinking. Fifteen percent of the people wanted to wait a little while before they made up their mind, but asked for no clarification and no further information, and then made up their mind. Five percent of the people analyzed all the details and finally came to a conclusion. And the result of the test goes something like this: it is estimated that five percent of the people think, fifteen percent of the people think they think, and eighty percent of the people would rather die than think.

That's how it is in the world. That's how it is. They don't want to think. People don't think. And they don't know how to approve what is excellent, because they can't control their mind, because their emotions control their mind, and they just react. Somebody said, "Most of society is on a caboose looking backward." Now, they're just seeing what goes by. It reminds me of the story of the pilot who came on the loudspeaker on the plane and said, "I have some good news and some bad news. The bad news is we have lost all our instrumentation and don't know where we are. The good news is we have a tail wind and are making great time." And I think that's basically how most people live life. They have no instrumentation, but they've got a tail wind, and they're making great time going through life like a blur, with absolutely no idea of what's going on. If we can combine our metaphors, like a guy sitting on the back of a caboose only seeing what's already happened, with no anticipation at all. One man said, "When I work, I work hard, and when I sit, I sit loose, and when I think, I fall asleep." Someone else said, "Man occasionally stumbles over the truth, but most of the time, he's able to pick himself up and continue on anyway." See, people live by emotion; they don't live by thinking.

But as Christians, if we're going to pursue what is excellent, we have to have mind over mood. You cannot be a victim of your emotions and your moods if you're going to pursue what is excellent. In Romans, you're familiar with that wonderful twelfth chapter, and second verse, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." You've got to renew your mind. You

have to get your thinking in order. That's why in Philippians 4, Paul says, "You've got to look at whatever is true, whatever is honorable," verse 8, "whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, and if there's any excellence and anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things." It starts with your mind. You've got to get beyond reacting to your mood and your emotion.

In Ephesians 5, Paul says, "Walk as children of light, learning what is pleasing to the Lord." And then down in verse 15, "Be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is." Think – think. First Thessalonians 5:21: "But examine everything carefully, and hold fast to what is best." You see, Christian character at its highest level is a divinely implanted and growing love, controlled by truth and wisdom that is therefore pursuing, with its discernment and discrimination, what is most excellent. And yet most people will spend their whole life reacting like a knee-jerk reaction to whatever's bouncing around, and doing whatever their mood dictates to them to do, accomplishing nothing that lasts, because they never learn to discriminate about what is the excellent thing, whereas the truly godly are characterized by love and the pursuit of excellence. Take a look at your life. Are you really approving and pursuing what is excellent? Or is it filled with trivia that matters not at all, but saps and sucks your energy?

There's a third characteristic or essential in this process, and that is integrity – integrity. Love and excellence lead to integrity, verse 10, "In order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." Now, the little phrase "in order to be" is, for you Greek students, *hina* with a subjunctive, which is a purpose clause. You are to love, so that you can pursue excellence, in order that, or for the purpose of, being a person of integrity. And again, the sequence is made very obvious. These things are all sequential. Love, controlled by biblical truth and practical insight, leads to the pursuit of excellence, which generates personal and relational integrity.

Now, look at those two words in verse 10, "In order to be sincere and blameless." They have a different meaning, a different emphasis that I want you to see. The word "sincere" is a very interesting word. It means genuine, but it has a possibility of a couple of different roots. Some think it is rooted in a word that means to sift, a grain would be put in a sieve and sifted until all the impurity was removed, and what came through would be the pure grain. And there is a possibility that this word has that root, and that it means that all the impurity of your life has been sifted out, so you're pure, genuine, 100 percent.

On the other hand, it also could have as its root two words in the Greek, one word meaning sun, the other meaning to judge, so that it literally in its root meaning has the idea of testing something by sunlight – testing something by sunlight. That, by the way, we don't know for sure if that's the root of *eilikrins*, which is the Greek term, but it is the root of sincere, which is a Latin derivative. The Latin word is *sin cerae*, and it literally means "without wax." Now, let me explain what that means. A potter

who was making a jar, or a bowl, or a plate, or a dish of some kind, would turn it on his wheel; and then when it was completed, he would take it and fire it, bake it, as you know. Frequently, because of some impurity in the clay, or some error in judgment in terms of the temperature, or whatever, it would come up with a crack. A cracked jar, or pot, or bowl, or dish, would be useless.

But because of the money invested in it, the unscrupulous potters would try to cover up the crack, and they would take a hard wax, and they would fill the crack with wax. And then they would cover it over with whatever they were using to coat or to paint the pot or the bowl. And so when any wise person went into the marketplace to buy a piece of pottery, they would typically hold the pottery up to the sunlight and rotate it to see if it was without wax, because the sunlight could shine through the crack and reveal the wax – which, of course, the first time anything heated was put in it, would melt, and it would be discovered as useless.

A life, then, needs to be held up to the sunlight to determine whether it's got any flaws that are being falsely covered over by the wax of hypocrisy. That's the idea. That may well be the root of the word "sincere." That certainly is behind the Latin concept, *sine cera*, which means without wax. And so just as in ancient times pottery was tested by holding it up to the sun, so our life needs to be tested as well, to see if it has integrity – no flaw, no crack covered over by wax. You say, "Well, what do you mean by that?" Well, just how it is in the church, folks; just how it is. Those people who would like us to believe that they are a real whole pot, or a whole bowl, or a whole dish, or a whole jar, and they are not. There are cracks in their life. There's sin in their life, flaws in their life. But they have covered those over with the wax of churchianity, of religious ceremony, of religious activity. They cover it up. You put them into the heat of something, and they'll melt and reveal the mark, reveal the crack, reveal the split. But they get along a long time without that discovery if the hostility, or the persecution, or the difficulty doesn't come.

You don't want to be a life like that. You want to be a life of integrity. You want to be without wax. You want to be sincere, pure, without flaw, real, genuine, honest, all parts touching. Like I've used the illustration of making bread – you throw everything in a pan that has to be in bread, and stick it in the oven, and you won't get bread. You left out one important thing: you have to mix it, you have to stir it so that everything touches everything else, then you get bread. And the same thing is true in life. Integrity is when every part of your life touches every other part of your life, and there's nothing in your life that's unrelated to what you believe, or what you affirm, or what you say your creed is. Everything has to touch everything else, that's integrity – that's integrity.

And he, then, is praying for personal integrity, bound up in that word "sincere." No cracks in your jar. Nothing is covered over with the wax of hypocrisy. You're not hiding some sin, some flaw, some blight in your life, that is a current flaw in your character, but you're covering it over, so that when the testing comes, you're going to melt and be shown to be a cracked pot, no pun intended. And the Word, by the way, will accomplish this; the Word is alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword and

is able to discern the deep thoughts and intents of the heart. The Word is the sun, if you will, that will discern your true character. Paul says, "Look, I want you to have a life without hypocrisy," Romans 12:9 says that. Second Corinthians 1:12, Paul talked about the confidence that he had in his own sincerity. Second Corinthians 2:17, he said we're not like others who peddle the Word of God but we preach sincerely. There was genuineness in his life.

And that's what he's calling for, personal integrity, not a flaw in your life which you've masked over, but reality, true spiritual integrity. You see, these are the ingredients of spiritual life. A dominating love, a pursuit of excellence, and a life without flaw – a life with a character that can stand inspection, a life at which people can look with scrutiny, and walk away and say, "He's real." Not perfect, but real, genuine, not a fake, not a phony, not a second, not a factory reject, real, first class. That's personal integrity.

Second word is relational integrity. In verse 10, he says you are to be sincere and blameless. That word means not causing others to stumble, and that's relational integrity – not living a life that causes others to stumble. That's very important, that's equally important. You're to live the kind of life that doesn't cause other people to stumble. You know, there are a lot of folks, if you look at them on the surface it looks like their life is inoffensive. It looks like they wouldn't cause another believer to stumble, as Paul teaches so clearly in 1 Corinthians, chapter 8, and Romans, chapter 14. He talks about the fact that we're not to cause someone to stumble or be offended. Then Romans 14, we're not to cause someone stumble or be offended. We know that. First Corinthians, chapter 10, "Whatever you do, we're to do it all for God's glory, never offending anyone else, not the Jew, the Greek, or the church of God," we're to be very cautious in how we live.

And there are some people, you look at their life and you say, "Boy, that's an inoffensive life, that's a consistent life; relationally, they're not causing anybody to stumble, their life looks pure, it looks right, it looks holy." And then in a little while you begin to watch, and some of the people they influence the most, like their children and close friends, begin to betray something that's missing. And while we can't blame parents for all the misbehavior of their children, very often if the pattern is consistent, we find out down the road that what we thought they were in the church was certainly not what they were in the home, right? Somewhere there was a flaw that was somehow waxed over when we were around. But when the reality was known, there was a very large flaw, and under scrutiny and the pressure of another environment, and away from where they wanted to wear the mask, they were really revealed to be less than perfect.

Maybe it's at work. Maybe someone in the church looks like they've got it all together, but their Christianity on the job has so many cracks in it that they're causing all kinds of people to stumble about the reality of Christianity, and may be even offending other Christians on the job. Certainly that's a common thing. Maybe as a student – maybe as far as the church knows, and the administration of your Christian school environment, you're just a perfect little child. But when you get

away from their control and their oversight, and get with your friends, the cracks begin to show up, and you might even cause those other kids to stumble because of your own sin and your own offense.

So what Paul is saying here is, “Look, I want you to have integrity, personal integrity, relational integrity. You don’t stumble, you don’t cause others to stumble. You don’t have cracks, and you don’t cause others to have cracks.” Now, that means you’ve got to have a no-compromise attitude. We’re really talking about not a compromising life; a life that is lived according to the Word of God, without any deviation, standing true to biblical conviction. We’re not going to be what Elton Trueblood years ago called “cut-flower Christians, who are shallow, frail and short-lived.” They’ve been cut off from the roots and the source of power, and they bloom a little while, and then they just crumble. We have to live by being deeply planted in the rich soil of biblical truth, so that our roots tap deep into the divine revelation, and we flourish and flourish.

Now, if you’re going to have integrity, personally, and not compromise, you’ve got to stand against the world. That’s the basic thing. Back to Romans 12 again, “Be not conformed to this world.” Back to James – he says, “Friendship with the world is enmity against God.” Back to 1 John 2:15, “Love not the world neither the things that are in the world.” You’ve got to resist the pressure of the system, because the system is what put the cracks in our life, we succumb to it. It happens so subtly. Can I give you just a little sequence of steps how it happens? This is how you sort of engulfed by the system. The world sucks you in, sucks me in, and here’s how.

First step: accommodation – accommodation. We just tolerate the world – sinister values, sin, wickedness. “What do you mean by that?” Well, we stop being shocked by it; we’re not shocked by it anymore. We just accommodate ourselves to it. We may think it’s wrong, we may say it’s wrong, but it really doesn’t shock us – that’s accommodation. The second word is legitimation. We legitimize it. How? Well we finally accept it as normal. “Oh, that’s normal – that’s just part of our culture.” The third word is assimilation. Now we’re in real danger. We personally begin to cooperate with these skewed values by saying nothing. First we recognized it, accommodation, but we weren’t shocked by it. Secondly, we recognized it, we weren’t shocked by it, and we just sort of accept it as normal, that’s legitimation. And now assimilation, we cooperate with it by never saying anything about it. It just passes off the scene, it’s not even an issue anymore; we don’t even discuss it. I mean, to put it simply, when’s the last time you heard a preacher preach against bikini bathing suits? The culture has just assimilated that.

The fourth word is participation. That’s when you go out and buy one. “What does that mean?” Well that’s personal involvement in attitudes and actions. Now you don’t mind. You’re not only not shocked by it, you not only think it’s a part of your culture, you not only don’t say anything against it, you go to the movies and watch it, or you turn on your television and watch it, or you read books about it, or whatever. You participate. The fifth word is amalgamation, and that’s where the worldly values are so



fused with your values that you can't tell the difference. Amalgamation, the worldly values are so fused with your values you can't tell the difference. And the last word is identification and there is no difference, you've identified with it.

You see, that's the process of the world sucking you in. First, you accommodate yourself to it by tolerating it, not being shocked by it. You legitimize it by accepting it as a part of culture. You assimilate it by never saying anything. You participate in it in your attitudes, even if they're at arm's length. Finally you're amalgamated with it, it's fused into your own values until you're so identified with the world you can't tell the difference. You've got to stop it at the start – way back at the beginning. When John Wesley went away to school to Oxford, his mother wrote him a letter – probably wrote him a lot of letters but I only read one. This is what she said – great wisdom she wrote to her son with these words. “Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the delight for spiritual things; whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin,” end quote. Great advice – great advice.

The world is so subtle. Compromise is so subtle that it takes us in before we even realize what is happening. You see, it's just like the old story of the frog in the pan of water. The frog sits in the pan of water, you slowly turn up the heat and it will fry before it will jump, because it's so gradual. Before it knows it, it's dead. That's the process of accommodation, legitimation, and all the rest, until finally you come to identification, and you don't anymore what worldliness is and what it isn't, right? So we don't want to succumb to that kind of pressure. We don't want to get engulfed in that kind of thing, so we've got to deal with integrity. And that's what Paul is saying, back to verse 10. You want to make sure that you're genuine in your life, and you have integrity; and that you have integrity in all your relationships, which means you don't fall prey to the compromises of society.

Now, how you going to insulate yourself against that? By having a dominating, pervasive love, controlled by the Word of God, which is able to pursue what is excellent, and maintains a personal integrity which will not compromise. Okay? Takes you right back to the beginning. You say, “Well, how long am I supposed to live like that?” Well, it says in verse 10, “until the day of Christ – until the day of Christ.” You're to have integrity until Christ comes. The day of Christ we studied in verse 6; it is phrase referring to the return of Christ for the believer. The day of the Lord is the return of Christ and the judgment of the unbeliever. The day of Christ is a special term referring to the reward and the assessment of a believer's works. So we are called upon to faithfulness until the Lord Jesus comes to reward us. The day will come when we see Christ. It says we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, 2 Corinthians 5:9 and 10, to receive the things done in the body, whether they're good or bad, to see whether our works are gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble, 1 Corinthians, chapter 3. First Corinthians, chapter 4, the day when the Lord will assess the hidden things of the heart, and reveal our motive and our intent; so until Christ comes to reward us we are faithful never to compromise – we're faithful to maintain personal and relational integrity. So love begets excellence

begets integrity.

Let's go to number four – the result next is good works, verse 11. "Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ." Now, love produces excellence, produces integrity, and integrity will always produce good works. Please notice, "Having been filled" is a perfect passive participle, and what that means is something that has happened in the past time with continuing results. And it looks at the day of Christ, which is the theme from verse 10. It is at the day of Christ – the verb then looks back and sums up the life of the person, and says, "When you stand at the day of Christ you will have been already filled with righteousness, or the fruit of righteousness." It views a completed state, or completed condition. It looks at the record of good works produced by God in a life of integrity, a life of excellence, a life of love. So you have here, then, a view of the believer who arrives at the day of Christ, and because he has loved, and because he has pursued excellence, and because he has maintained integrity, he has filled his life with good works, and he comes there having already been filled with the fruits of righteousness – which are the fruit of love, excellence and integrity.

Now, what do we mean by the fruit of righteousness? Well the fruit which righteousness produces – the fruit which righteousness produces. Because if you're living in love, and pursuing what is excellent, and you're living a life of integrity, that's a righteous life, and it will produce certain fruit – *karpos*, fruit, means good works, product, results. And that's what he has in mind. The fruit produced by the inherent divine energy in this kind of Christian life – the fruit that righteousness produces. By the way, the fruit of righteousness is an Old Testament phrase found in Proverbs 11:30 and Amos 6:12. It's also used in James 3:18 to refer to the good works that are produced by God's righteousness in the believer's life.

So his prayer is, look, a life of love, a life of excellence, a life of integrity, a life of good works. And that should be characteristic of every believer. The fruit of our life is good works. Now, the New Testament talks about fruit. In fact, there are two kinds, as I've told you many times. Romans 1:13 says, "Often I've planned to come to you and have been prevented," and here's why, "in order that I might obtain some fruit." In other words, I want to see some people come to Christ; fruit was winning someone to Christ, the fruit of his life. In the 15th chapter of Romans, and 28th verse, he says, "Therefore when I have finished this, and have put my seal on this fruit of theirs." In other words, again the result of their life was somebody else being converted, so fruit is leading someone to Christ. In 2 Corinthians 9, verse 10, it says, "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food," that's God, "will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness." In other words, righteous deeds God is going to produce in your life because of your faithfulness to Him.

In Ephesians, chapter 5, verse 9, it says, "The fruit of the light is goodness and righteousness and truth." And again, any righteous deed is fruit, but it's more than deeds, it's also attitudes. Galatians 5 says, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control.

Those are all attitudes. So God wants to produce in your life right attitude and right action – right attitude and right action. But would you please notice a very important note in this verse? It says in verse 11, “Having been filled with the fruits of righteousness” – that is, righteous deeds and righteous attitudes – “which comes through Jesus Christ.” You don’t produce your own. They come through Jesus Christ working in you, so He gets all the glory, and all the honor, and all the credit.

In John 15, “I am the true vine and My Father is the vine dresser.” Listen: “Every branch in Me that doesn’t bear fruit He takes away, every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it that it may bear more fruit.” Verse 4, “Abide in Me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do” – what – “nothing.” So the idea is that fruit is the work of God produced in the life. Not my work, but His work, the work of Christ. Ephesians 2:10 says that “We are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.”

So what are we learning here? We are to bear fruit, but that fruit is the work of Christ. Let me give you an illustration. You remember Laurence of Arabia? Laurence of Arabia on one occasion brought some Arabs back to London, put them in a beautiful hotel in London, and they were absolutely floored. They were Bedouins; the only thing they had ever lived in was a tent. And the thing that fascinated them most were faucets, because living in a desert all their life, water was at a premium. They had merely to turn a knob and all the water they wanted was there. When Laurence packed them all up to leave, and they were packing their bags, or whatever they carried, he discovered that they had taken all the faucets off of all the sinks and put them in their bags, under the unbelievably ludicrous view that if they had the faucet, they had the water.

Now, I might remind you of that somewhat familiar story just to say to you that the issue in your spiritual life is simply to recognize that you’re a faucet. Unless you’re connected to the pipeline, turning you on and off will produce absolutely nothing. The power comes from the Lord Jesus Christ, and that’s what he’s saying here. You must realize that the fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ. He produces it in you. So a life of love begets a life of excellence, which begets a life of integrity, which leads to a life of good works – good works.

And that takes us to the last word: glory. Why all of this? One great final truth, verse 11, “To the glory and praise of God.” “Herein is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit,” John 15:8. To the glory of God, everything. God has saved us. God has made us fruitful for His glory. We are to be to the praise of His glory, Ephesians 1:12, Ephesians 1:14. We are to bring Him honor, bring Him glory by our life. Now, listen, beloved, a life of love, and a life of excellence, and a life of integrity, and a life of good works brings glory to God and praise to God. By the way, glory, *doxa*, is the sum total of all of God’s perfection. Praise is the homage given to God for that perfection. So He receives the affirmation of perfection, and then the praise which is elicited by that perfection. And so the love of God poured in

our hearts, abounding in insightful knowledge of His Word, causes us to pursue excellence with spiritual integrity, which generates a life of power through Christ that produces good works, which redound to God's glory as a redeeming, transforming God worthy of eternal praise. That's the sum of it all.

Paul's prayer is my prayer for you as well. "And this I pray," Paul said, and I say, too, "And this I pray" – this I pray for you – "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." Father, this I pray for this people; and Father, may they know that if they've done spiritual inventory and they see a decline in their spiritual life that this is what they should pray for themselves.

Father, help us to know there are no formulas, there are no short cuts, there are no gimmicks, there are no easy ways. If our life doesn't check out and we don't live up to these essential virtues, then help us to know that we need to get on our knees as Paul did, and pray for the same thing daily – daily. Lord God, may my love abound more and more in all real knowledge and all discernment. May I approve the things that are excellent, be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. May I be filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes by Jesus Christ, and may I be to the glory and praise of God. Help us to pray that personally every day; every day till we begin to see the pattern of our life going the right direction. Lord, it's so simple from our end. All we have to do is cast ourselves willingly on Your resources, and You produce Your work in us. Help us to be willing to do that – for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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