

Philippians 1: 9: And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; 10: That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; 11: Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

The desire of Christ's preacher is to see those to whom he ministers bear fruit. (3 Jo 1:4; 2 Pet 3: 18) The apostle Paul said, "I desire fruit that may abound to your account." (Php 4: 7) Our text is Paul's prayer to God for the church at Philippi for that fruit.

First, Paul prayed to God "that your love may abound yet more and more." The believer loves because we are born of the Spirit of God, who is love. Therefore, those born again love God, love fellow believers and have a desire for lost sinners to be saved by God's grace. (1 Jn 3:14; 4: 7-8; 5: 1) Paul's assurance of their love for him was due to their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until the day he wrote the epistle. They were partakers of the same grace of which Paul was a partaker. True love and fellowship is in the gospel of Christ. (2 Jn 1: 1-2;9) We rejoice when brethren rejoice and mourn when they mourn because our brethren are one with us in Christ, born of the same Holy Spirit. Our desire and prayer for one another is that Christ might cause our brethren to abound more and more in love.

Secondly, Paul prayed that their love would grow "in knowledge." Love for Christ and for brethren grows in proportion as the Spirit grows us in the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Christ said, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent?" (Jn 17: 3) As we hear of Christ's faithfulness in the gospel our "new man is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." This knowledge is more than an intellectual understanding it is the unction of the Holy One. There is no cause of God's love toward his elect but in God. By nature we are more worthy to be loathed than loved. (1 Jn 4: 9-11) God's love chose us and entrusted us to Christ. Christ's love for righteousness, and for his people, is why he became our Surety, assumed our nature, was willing to take our place even while we were enemies, why Christ brought the gospel to us and formed himself in our hearts. He says to us, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (Jn 15: 12-13; Eph 3: 14-18) To grow in love is to grow in the knowledge of Christ Jesus.

Thirdly, Paul prayed that their love might abound "in all judgment, that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual senses, exercises those senses and thus grows our senses to discern both good and evil. (Heb 5: 14) One reason being in a church family is so important is that as we hear the gospel we also suffer various trials together. Christ our Head teaches his members using other members. Perhaps a brother causes us great trial. Christ uses it to remind us what we are in ourselves. We learn by experience how God is patient and longsuffering toward us. The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts and we learn to be more patient and longsuffering with our brethren, even as God, for Christ sake, is longsuffering toward us. God teaches us to trust Christ to make our brother stand, to be an encouragement, to remind him of the precious blood of Christ. Perhaps you admire how another brother always has a Christ-honoring word to cheer your heart. Christ uses that brother to teach us to be helpers of one another's joy. We learn how to love by being loved. Also, our Master teaches us by the word of God to try things that differ, to approve things that are of value, to let go of things that are not, to approve things that are excellent. Paul said, I show you "a more excellent way" which is, faith working by love. By Christ growing us in judgment Christ makes us strive to be without offense to those around us: not injurious to their property, or feelings, or reputation, to strive to never cause others to stumble, to follow after things that make for peace, that the ministry be not blamed. (Romans 14: 19-21; 15: 2-3; 2 Cor 6:3)

Lastly, notice, the child of God grows in grace the same way we begin in grace, "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." Only God can create life in a sinner. (Jn 15: 3-5; 1 Cor 3: 6-7) And only God can bring forth fruit in his child. Let us pray to God for one another for this growth in love, in knowledge and judgment, as Paul did for his brethren. (1 Cor 1:8)