

Displaying the Purpose of Prayer

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Bible Verse: Philippians 1:10-11
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Well, we certainly didn't plan it consciously this way but the song of the youth choir was a perfect setting for what we have to see from God's word today, Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be the glory, and beloved, that sets for us the testimony of Scripture. It sets before us the purpose of the Christian life. It sets before us indeed the purpose of ministry. It sets before us everything that is supreme among everything else is that God be glorified no matter what else might happen, and that purpose, that theme from the Reformation comes up clearly from Scripture and it comes up to instruct us to shape our affections, to shape what we seek after in life and even after what we seek after in prayer as we're going to see from Philippians 1.

I invite you to turn there, Philippians 1. We've come to Paul's prayer in verses 9 through 11. Philippians 1:9 through 11.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Now we have been looking at this prayer for the past couple of weeks and focusing especially on verse 9 where Paul describes for the Philippians, he gives them a report on how he has been praying for them and he tells them that central to his priority in prayer for them, look at it there in verse 9, is that their love would abound still more and more. He is praying for them to grow in love and in their expression of love for one another and for love to become the dominating theme of their character. Now he needed to pray this way for them because they had stumbled a bit along the way. As a body of believers, as a local church, they were being marked by some contention, some grumbling, some sniping at one another, they were drifting into or being tempted by false doctrine even though they had been longtime faithful partners of the Apostle Paul, and so Paul is writing to them to help them, to greet them, to thank them, also to correct them and now as he goes into the body of his letter beginning in verse 12, he introduces it, he sets the stage by telling them how he has been praying for them and he says in verse 9, "I am praying that your love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment." He

says, "Love is the priority in the church of God, in the church of Christ, love is the priority and I am asking God to increase that in your hearts and in your midst."

Now that brings us to a question that Paul immediately answers. Why does Paul pray that way and why does he pray to that end for these people at that time? Why does he pray that? Why does he pray that their love would grow? His prayer doesn't end in verse 9, he doesn't say, "I pray that your love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment. In Jesus' name. Amen." That's not how the prayer ends. Love is not an end, is not the final ultimate end in itself. There is more to it and what Paul is doing in this passage of Scripture is he is displaying the full purpose of prayer. He is displaying why we pray in addition to praying for these people.

Why does Paul pray to that end for the Philippians? Look at it with me in verses 10 and 11 which will be the two verses that we specifically focus on here this morning. Paul says, "I am praying for your love to abound and love abounds in knowledge and discernment," and then he keeps going. It's amazing, he keeps going. Verse 10, "so that, here's my purpose in praying that way for you. There's more than just working out this little horizontal kerfuffle that we have going on within the body of the Philippians, I'm praying so that, this is my purpose, 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's sentence here, this prayer is expressed in a complex sentence that is not easy to untangle. Paul quickly moves from immediate purposes to ultimate purposes without even taking a breath in between. He goes with breathtaking speed from the immediate situation in Philippi to the ultimate display of God's glory in eternity to come. It's hard to keep up with him and so what we're going to do, we're going to try to slow things down a little bit here, follow his train of thought and as we do, you are going to see the purpose of prayer unfolded before your eyes. It's probably going to, it's certainly going to lift us into a greater sense of the purpose of prayer, probably convict most of us along the way of the paltry meager way in which we pray and the self-centered means and self-centered goals that we have in prayer, but as we follow this I'm trusting the Holy Spirit to help us grow in our understanding, to grow in the application, and for us to become better people of prayer with a clearer idea of what it is that God wants us to pray for in the first place. What is it that God wants you to pray for as you are before him in prayer? What is it that he would have you pray for as you pray for other people? What is it that would be his goal and God's work even in your own heart?

We're going to see four aspects to it as we go through this prayer here today and first of all, we see that Paul is praying for a greater expression of love. A greater expression of love. Let's pick it up again in verse 9, he says, "this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment." That's where he starts and then he says, "so that," expressing the purpose of that prayer, why he is praying this way, what it is that he is hoping that God and trusting God to do in their midst as he prays for their love to grow so that, verse 10, "so that you may approve the things that are excellent." Paul's immediate purpose, the first goal, the most pressing immediate thing that he has in mind is this, he is praying that the Philippians would grow in their ability to

exercise love in a wise and purposeful manner. He's praying that they would grow in an understanding that would help them be better efficient, be more effective in their relationships with one another and in their life in the body of Christ, that they would be wise and that they would be purposeful in the way that they live their lives, specifically in this overarching theme of love. That's really important to keep in our minds here.

This word "approve" that he uses here, "that you would approve the things that are excellent," is a word that was used of testing metals or testing money to make sure that it was genuine, that it was the real article, and he is eager for the Philippians to be able to – watch this – he is praying that as they grow in love they would be able to do this, that they would be able to approve, in other words, that they would be able to distinguish the really important issues in life, that they would be able to discern these things together and then to act on the basis of those distinctions. What is it that's really important? What is it that's really a priority? What is it that we should really give our time and energy to, that we would distinguish that sacred realm from lesser things, that we would distinguish them and approve them and say, "Yes, I affirm that," and then to give themselves in their energy and their resources in that direction so that they would manifest a greater, purer, more sincere manifestation of what the love of Christ is meant to show.

Now as we have gone through Philippians and as I have pointed out many times, I won't bother going to the passages here, but this was a congregation that was starting to grumble against each other. They were starting to complain against each other. They were starting to lower their guard on the nature of true doctrine and starting to entertain Jewish influences in their church, as we'll see in chapter 3, and Paul's prayer in that context is for them, is to take them, as it were, gently with his finger under their chin, so to speak, to take their chin and to lift up their eyes, to lift up their head so that they would look beyond these petty things of grumbling and complaining and to discern what was important so that they would address the problem, so that they would repent of their sin, and so that they would be pursuing sanctification in a way that is consistent with the work of God in their lives. He says, "This is what's really important." And so he is praying in advance that they would recognize the priority of love and that love, therefore, would quench out the fires of complaint and division in the church, that whatever it is that you guys are tussling with each other over is of secondary importance to the preeminence of love in the body of Christ, so let's get these things worked out and move on in unity with one another; and to recognize also that there is a preeminent place for pure truth, for right doctrine, for clear accurate teaching in the truth and to place a premium of priority on that as well so that you would reject false teachers, turn away from them and embrace the truth and proclaim the truth that we might be faithful in proclaiming the one true Gospel and the one true Christ. That's what matters in the body of Christ, love and truth, speaking the truth in love. You see it over and over again and so these things are of central important.

So for example on the doctrine side, look over at chapter 3, verse 2 where Paul gives them a stern, stark warning against the evil teachers in their midst. He says in chapter 3, verse 2, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." Now he is saying that after having prayed here in chapter 1 that they

would approve the things that are excellent; that they would make distinctions between true doctrine and false doctrine, between true teachers and false teachers; and he's praying for the work of God in them to recognize what truth is, to affirm it in their minds and to protect it by rejecting those who would undermine it, and he warns them, "These people are dogs. They are evil workers in your midst. Step up to the plate and defend the truth and send them out lest they corrupt the work of God in your midst." This is the idea that he has in approving, that you would approve what is right, that you would distinguish true from false and then you would act upon it for the good of the church and ultimately for the glory of God.

So Paul here as he prays for them is asking God to help them advance what is excellent, to grow, to excel still more in the midst of their body, and what discerning love, remember from verse 9, look at it again with me, verse 9, "I pray, that your love would abound still more in real knowledge and all discernment," he's praying that God would give them a greater measure of discerning love to help them make good choices, to make good choices, to put aside foolish temporary divisions and to reject false doctrine, to come back to the unity that is fitting of the body of the one true Christ and to come back to the truth and the doctrine that is fitting of the one true Gospel. So there's a lot at stake here in this prayer and one of the things when you start to look at the way that Paul prays, at the way that Christ teaches us to pray in Matthew 6, for example, is the high and lofty themes that dominate the praying. Jesus said in Matthew 6, "Pray then in this way, Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done as in heaven, so also upon earth." Starting out with these God-centered lofty themes of eternal matters and the eternal glory of God being that which would inform and animate what we pray as we get on our knees before God.

Now I just ask it gently in passing: does this have any role in your praying in your Christian life or is it, "God, help me with this," and, "God, solve this problem and fix that person," and all of that and we just rush in with these temporary earthly matters without any regard to what God places priority on? Beloved, what I want you to see is that Scripture teaches us very clearly what God places the priority on. Christ made it a priority in the first half there of the Lord's Prayer, Paul is displaying the purpose of prayer as he's praying for these people saying, "You know, I'm just praying for God to help you grow in your expansion of understanding so that you would start to devote your heart and effort and devote yourself to that which really matters, that you would approve what is excellent." And we see in the midst of this somewhat fractured church at Philippi, I don't want to overstate it, but what we see is this, is that the peace – oh, this is so very important. This goes to you in the sanctity of your own home, the privacy of your own home. It goes to the way that you relate to your spouse, the way that you relate to your children, the way that you relate to your parents, is that the priority of peace and unity is of surpassing importance so that when there are fractures and divisions in the corporate body at large or within the individual family units or household units within, there is something there that needs to be addressed and dealt with. If Paul was praying for us at Truth Community Church today, he would be praying along these same lines because the priorities haven't changed. He would be praying for us that your love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you would approve the

things that are excellent because peace and unity matter within a Christian home and within a Christian marriage and within a Christian church.

These things are of great surpassing priority and lest I seem to be over-speaking and speaking beyond the text, look at Philippians 2:1 remembering now, it's very very helpful to realize as we go to these passages in the subsequent chapters, to realize that Paul has prefaced it all with a prayer like this one in chapter 1. Chapter 2, verse 1, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion," if there is any at all, here's what I want you to do, Paul says, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing," nothing, it says, "from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

Now beloved, I say this gently. You know, the longer you pastor a group of people, the more you know what's happening within people's lives and all of that, and you know that I know, and I know that you know that I know that a lot of us need to take this to heart in our most intimate personal relationships and we need to realize that there is a priority of love that trumps and overrules everything else that we've been concerned about up until this point and the things and the grudges and the bitternesses and the conflicts that some have nursed needs to be brought under the realm of this prayer and responded to, that God would be pleased and that God would be pleased to answer a prayer like that even in our own midst here 2,000 years later. There's no denying this and the beauty of it, the wonder of it is that Scripture comes to us, God comes to us through his blessed Son, he comes through the blessed helping and comforting ministry of the Holy Spirit to address these things that he might help us, that we might grow in these things not to sharply rebuke us and send us out, Paul is praying to bring them in. The whole purpose here, the immediate purpose of Paul's prayer is that there would be greater expressions of love and this is an enduring need among Christian people that hasn't changed in the 2,000 subsequent years since he first wrote this in about A.D. 61 or 62, and so he's praying for these greater expressions of love to take place.

Now he moves on, he quickly moves on to a second aspect of this prayer and having called for greater expressions of love, he goes to another level; he drills down to a deeper level and prays for a greater character of love. A greater character of love. He comes to a second, a deeper purpose in his prayer as you read on in verse 10 and, wow, is this really wonderful and even cool. Philippians 1:10, "praying about your love so that you may approve the things that are excellent, external matters, praying that you will approve those things in order to," do you see it? There's another purpose clause here. He lays out another purpose on top of the prior purpose that he said, "praying that you grow in greater expressions of love and I've got a purpose in praying that as well, so that, in order to be sincere and blameless, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." What does that mean? Well, it means this: as their moral judgment improves, as they grow in love informed by the nutritious soil, growing rooted in the nutritious soil of knowledge and discernment that we've seen, as their moral judgment improves, here's what's going

to happen, here's what happens when love grows is that relationships grow as well. Their relationships improve and the way that a Christian person under the influence of a prayer like this deals with others is changed and transformed. Changed and transformed. And you see this, look at it with me, "in order to be sincere and blameless."

Now the word "sincere" is a word that has the idea of holding something up to the sun. So, for example, I might hold up my glasses to the light and I see the smudges and the things that are obscuring my view as I hold my glasses up to the light. Sincerity is like that, it's to hold something up to examination and with the idea that it would be shown to be pure, that it would be shown to be clear, that it would be shown to be without defect, and the idea is that the examination, the sincerity for which he is praying would show the people for whom he is praying to be genuine, to be full of pure motives in their love for one another, and so he's talking about an internal dynamic, an internal righteousness that their love would develop this kind of sincerity in their life that would influence every aspect of their relationships with others.

So look at it there with me again, "I pray for your love to grow and abound," verse 10, "so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere," that there would be no hidden motives, no hidden agendas, no ulterior motives in what you're doing, and then he goes on and uses this word "blameless, that you might be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ." This is a really great word, this word "blameless." It comes from the Greek word "aproskopoi" in the plural, "aproskopoi," and it's used in another place in Scripture that will help you understand what Paul is looking to advance. In 1 Corinthians 10, look over there with me, if you will. In 1 Corinthians 10 he uses this same word although it is translated much differently at least in the New American Standard. In 1 Corinthians 10:32 we read in the English text that it says, "Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God." That three word phrase in English, "give no offense," is the same exact Greek word that is used to describe "blameless" in Philippians 1.

Now why would he pray for that and what's the point of all of this, to be blameless, to give no offense? Well, just remember what he's praying about, what his immediate purpose is here, "I'm praying that your love would grow and abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that you would approve the things that are excellent in order to be sincere and blameless," writing to a congregation that is struggling with conflict in their lives. Why is he praying that they would be blameless? He's praying because they had started sinning against each other. There was grumbling and contention that had entered into the church, entered into some relationships, probably no doubt some private relationships as well within households. Grumbling and contention had entered in and, beloved, what happens when relationships start to fracture that way? What happens when conflict comes and sometimes even gets beyond the verbal? What happens? People start to get discouraged. People react in anger. People react in bitterness or they withdraw and start to give the silent treatment. Or if they are of tender conscience and comparatively innocent in the matter, they start to think like this, "That person claims to be a Christian. He claims to be a Christian, she claims to be a Christian and look at what she's done and look at what he's done to me." And that starts to dominate their

thinking rather than the glory of God, rather than love for Christ, their minds are distracted and diverted into things which have no profitable outcome in what they're doing, no profitable outcome in life. Rather than being taken up with a contemplation of Christ, they are taken up with the earthly matters and what happens is that they are starting to trip over, they are starting to stumble over the sins of other people or perhaps looking at it from an active standpoint, they are causing other people to stumble.

You see, those kinds of sins reflect a lack of concern, they reflect a lack of love for others in the body, this kind of stumbling and conflict and grumbling and all of these things. They trip people up. They cause them to stumble over division and anger and bitterness and thereby quench the work of the Holy Spirit, dampen it down, and Paul says, "I'm praying for you to grow in a greater character of love." In other words, he's praying, he's praying this in light of the interpretive help that we get from 1 Corinthians 10:32, "I'm praying that your love would grow in such a way that you would no longer be giving an offense to one another; that the conflict and the bitterness and division would be covered in love; that there would be a genuineness of repentance that would result in change, and as a result you could move forward in unity and love and a heart united in praise to God and for love for one another, but that is going to be hindered when there is such conflict and division within the body." So he's praying that they would be sincere and blameless, "That your life could be held up and those kinds of defects would not be found in you; that your life would be blameless so that there would not be people tripping over the way that you are."

That's what he's praying for and so with those things in mind, come back to the prayer now and you start to see the unfolding purpose of his prayer. He says in verse 9, "This I pray," look at it there with me, "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," make good choices that are consistent with the purposes of God, "and as you so approve those things that you yourself would become sincere and blameless; that Christians could interact with you, that Christians could be a part of your life and you would have a sanctifying edifying influence upon them rather than one that is causing them to stumble."

That's the idea. That's the second purpose of his prayer and if you look over at Romans 13, it's quite interesting to read Paul's letters alongside each other and you see recurring themes. Here in Philippians he's been praying about the priority of love and in Romans 13:8, you see him repeating this theme. He says, "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. For this, 'You shall not commit adultery, you shall not murder, you shall not steal, you shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law." Love, to use the language of Philippians, is sincere and blameless. Love gives no offense. Where there is offense, where there is conflict, somewhere along the line love has faltered, love has been violated because love doesn't give any offense, and so Paul is praying for them, before he corrects them he is praying for them to grow in this manner of love.

Now that brings us to a third aspect of his prayer as he unfolds and displays the purposes of prayer and it just gets richer and richer as you go. You know, it's like, in one sense it's like having a really good meal and the first course or the second course and you say, "Man, that is just outstanding! That is just wonderful! It can't get any better than that, can it?" And then another dish is brought out and you taste that and it's even more delightful, even more heavenly, so to speak, and that is what we see as we go on and consider the next aspect as Paul is praying for a greater reward for love for them. A greater reward for love. We've seen greater expressions of love, a greater character of love, now we see in the third aspect of this he is praying for a greater reward for love and, wow, is this like magnificent. Paul hasn't exhausted his purposes yet in what we've said so far. We haven't even gotten to the height or the ultimate purpose of it all yet.

Look at what he says in verse 10, "So that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ Jesus." Until the day of Christ Jesus. Do you realize that as Paul is praying this way he is looking completely beyond the present circumstances that provide the immediate occasion of his letter. He's addressing that, oh, for sure, but never far from his mind is the ultimate outcome of all things when believers are one day going to stand before Christ and give an account for the lives. "Until the day of Christ," can be translated as it is in the English Standard Version, "for the day of Christ." Paul is looking forward here to the future completion of the sanctification process. He's looking forward to that ultimate day that awaits every true Christian when you and I, every true Christian, will stand before Christ and give an account to him for the lives that we have lived. Believers will give an account of their lives to Christ and we've talked about this in the past. It's good for us to remember it again.

In 2 Corinthians 5:10, you can jot this down, we won't turn there, 2 Corinthians 5:10, Paul in writing to Christians says, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." Now that day when we stand before Christ is a day for us to be rewarded as Christians. We're not going to have our sins brought up against us again in that day. That's why Christ died. He shed his blood to take away our sins so that God would no longer take our sins into account as he deals with us, and so this is not a time where our sins are going to be reviewed and chastised again, this is a time of recompense, it's a time of reward, and what Paul is saying here, look at verse 10 with me in Philippians again, and it kind of bleeds over into verse 11, he says, "I'm praying that you would approve the things that are excellent, be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ so that as your life continues on, there would be this growth in love that would stand an examination by Christ and that Christ would be pleased with you and would reward you on that great day that is coming for us all." When Christ examines their lives, Paul wants him to find amongst these Philippian believers that they are presenting to him lives that they had lived with pure motives, with blameless service that did not cause others to stumble. Look at it there in verse 11. He said, "having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ." He says, "I'm praying that God would so work in you, that God would so accomplish the outworking of the sanctifying

work of the Holy Spirit that your lives would be so full of good fruit from Christ, so full of love, so full of blameless energy and devotion, that when the day of Christ comes, He would find you and He would honor you and He would reward you more abundantly than if I had not prayed that way for you here in this time." He's praying that they would overflow with fruit that Christ could praise and reward at the final day. Wow. We're going to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, he is going to reward us, and what Paul is praying is that, "I want you to be so full of righteousness, so full of the fruit of love and righteousness on that day that there would be an abundant reward from Christ for you. I want your reward to be greater," and that's why he says, that's why he implies here, "That's why I'm writing to correct you on your division and on your false doctrine. I'm writing to correct you so that that ultimate day of standing before Christ where your position before Christ would not be compromised, would not be diminished by the great reward that He would give you." Paul, like any good minister of the Gospel, is concerned for the eternal well-being of those under his leadership and he says that this is a fruit of righteousness which, look at it there in verse 11, it "comes through Jesus Christ." Christ himself is the source of this. He produces this kind of love in us. It is the fruit of our union with Jesus Christ.

Look at John, the Gospel of John 15. John 15 in verse 4, it says, these are the words of Christ to his disciples and he writes and he says to them, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of 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 nothing." In like manner, Galatians 5:22 says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." Paul is praying for a work of Christ in them, praying that Christ would work in them. Remember, he's praying, right? He's praying so who is he talking to? He's talking to God, he's asking God to do something in them, asking God to work through Christ to produce this kind of fruitful love in their lives that otherwise would not occur. And why is he praying that for them? Because he loves them and because he wants their final day, their day of reward to go well for them, for that to be maximized, and he understands that conflict and false teaching undermine that and diminish it and restrict it. Paul says, "I want all of that stuff cleared away so that there would be a sincere blameless love in you and among one another so that when you stand before Christ, you could stand before him with all of your sin repented of and with what is left being the fruit of loving fruitful relationships amongst yourselves, and that when that happens Christ will praise and honor you." We can't produce this on our own, we depend on Christ, and so Paul is praying for God to produce what we can't do by ourselves, "For apart from Me you can do nothing."

Now beloved, coming back to some of the things that I was alluding to earlier, what I want you to see is the proper way for us to think about our relationships with one another, however you want, whatever the Spirit of God brings to your mind as I say that, the proper way for us to think about our relationships with one another is this: fruitful, loving, godly relationships will result in reward from our Christ as he honors us for serving him in the context that he has given to us. That's a lofty positive motivation for us to pursue love in our lives, is that there is an ultimate outcome, there is an ultimate

accounting for these things, and what that means for you, what that means for me is this, it means that there is nothing in the way of personal conflict that is so important to so insist on our way, to so insist that, "It's got to be this way and I don't care who departs from me, I don't care how long or how deep the conflict goes, I will have my way," what I want you to see is there is nothing that is so important in this temporary life to justify that clinging, hateful, rebellious attitude and thereby sacrifice reward at the day of Christ. You're not going to care one bit about the conflict of today when the day of Christ comes, and so as a result of that, you drop the conflict, you repent of whatever part you play in it, you seek to be reconciled to whatever extent that you possibly can be because you're motivated by sincerity, you're motivated by this blameless desire to give no offense to anyone so that the love of Christ would have a free and complete transparent working out through your life, and when the time comes, you would stand before Christ and he says, "That's what I was looking for. Well done, My good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Master." Nothing else is going to matter at that time and that's why Paul is praying. You know, we all understand that we get so caught up in the day to day things of life that we lose an eternal perspective on these things so Paul is praying for the Spirit of God to stir them up, to wake them up, to bring them to repentance, to change them because he wants that day of Christ to go well for them.

Look over at 1 John 3 in this regard and I'll just leave it here on this particular point anyway. You see the consistent teaching of Scripture on these matters across different biblical books, across different decades when they were written. 1 John 3:1, look at it with me. The Apostle John says, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be." Notice the future tense. "We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." The great hope, the glorious hope is that one day we are going to see Christ. We will see him face-to-face. We will see him in his resurrection glory and when we do as believers in Christ, we will be transformed so that somehow we are conformed to his image and that's glorious. That's all that matters. Nothing else matters in comparison to that. It does not matter who the next President of the United States is in comparison to this. It doesn't matter when we live or when we die in comparison to this. This transcends everything. This is why we exist as Christians. God has saved us, is sanctifying us, preparing us for that great final day when we see Christ, we are made like him and we enter into the full display of his kingdom. That's what matters, beloved.

Now John doesn't stop there, though, look at verse 3. He says, "And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him," what hope? The hope of seeing Christ. The certain expectation. "I am going to see my Lord face-to-face one day. I will have a personal audience with my King and I'll see Him face-to-face." If you have that hope now, the argument is here in verse 3, "everyone who has this hope fixed on Him," does what? Look at it with me, "purifies himself," addresses the sin and the conflict in his life, repents, purifies himself in anticipation of that great day. The great hope of seeing Christ in the future, we bring that into the present and it sanctifies us and it changes the way that we live and the way that we love in anticipation of being in front of him one day. That is how a Christian

motivations and Christian affections are shaped in the believing heart. We look forward to these things and we realize, "Ah, I've got changes to make in light of that. There's a purifying process that needs to take place in my life." And it makes true believers willing to repent, willing to change, willing to suffer even being wronged for the sake of the greater outcome of that day.

And Paul is praying, go back now to Philippians 1, Paul is praying that your love would grow, that you'd approve the things that are excellent, that you'd be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ, having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ. It's amazing that a man prayed this way. It's amazing to think that there was such a work of the Spirit of God in the life of the Apostle Paul that he recognized these things and placed a premium upon them, that he recognized these transcendent things. And as I've said to you in the past and I will say again, remember this, as Paul is writing out this prayer, as Paul is writing out this prayer he is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He is writing the very words that God wanted him to write at this point and this is what God's perspective on prayer in the Christian life is being mediated through the pen of the Apostle Paul.

So we see where this all takes us and so Paul says, "I pray that you would be filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen." Right? Is that what it says? He's not quite done yet, is he? There's a fourth and final aspect of it. Even the growth in love, even the reward of Christ does not exhaust his purpose in this prayer. There is a greater ultimate purpose in his prayer that transcends all of that, that in a sense, in a sense leaves this world behind, leaves the Philippian church behind, leaves everything else behind because as the sun rises and drowns out the glorious nature of the nighttime stars with its more surpassing light, Paul comes to a fourth and final ultimate purpose in his prayer, he's praying this way, point 4, for the greater exaltation of God. The greater exaltation of God, and in this closing clause, Paul displays what is really the ultimate final purpose in prayer.

Look at it there at the end of verse 11. He's prayed all of these wonderful things and he says, "to the glory and praise of God." Beloved, what is the ultimate reason that we pray? What is the ultimate purpose of prayer? What's the final purpose of prayer? Man, this is really convicting in light of how earth-centered and earthbound and selfish our requests so often are. The final ultimate purpose of prayer is the very thing of which our youth choir was singing a short time ago, Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be the glory. The purpose of prayer is ultimately the glory of God. As Paul tacks on a final purpose statement here in verse 11, he gathers all of verses 9 through 11 up, it's like he's just put his arm around it all, that your love would grow, that you'd be sincere and blameless to the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of all righteousness which comes from Christ, and then he takes all of that, stretches his arms around all of it and then offers it up and says this is ultimately for the glory and praise of God for which I pray. And here's the flow of thought for you to follow in it. He has just been talking about the day of Christ when Christ rewards those followers of his. Christians – watch this – Christians who bear abundant fruit of love and righteousness in their lives are going to be greatly and graciously rewarded by Christ in the end, and do you know what's going to happen when

that takes place? When that takes place on that great day and we stand before Christ and we've been rewarded in our meager inadequate life for him prior to that time and we see that he's given us this generous reward, this gracious reward, do you know what Christians are going to do? Do you know what you and I are going to do when that happens? We are going to respond with exuberant praise. We are going to respond with exuberant gratitude that God saved us when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, that he so worked in our lives to produce this fruit and now he is rewarding us for the fruit that he himself produced in us; we are going to step back and in some manner with loosened tongues step back in some manner with loosened tongues and say, "God, You are so great, You are so good, You are so gracious." We are going to sing and shout and exclaim and proclaim directly to him in his presence, "You are a good God. You are a great God and I give thanks to You. Look at how You have rewarded me," whatever that reward looks like. "You have rewarded me so generously and I thank and worship You as a result." When you see just how good and just how great Christ really is and how good and great he has been to you in that great day when the veil is removed and we're seeing him freed from sin and we have a greater vision of who he is and we are seeing him face-to-face, you're going to gladly fall on your face and honor him and praise him. "Lord, I love You. I'm so grateful. You're so wonderful and look how good You've been. All glory to You. If it had been up to me, none of this would have happened." And we take the crown, as it were, I'm speaking metaphorically, we take the crown off our head and we fling it like a frisbee at his feet that it would spin and land, and the honor that that crown represents would land exclusively in his realm for his praise and for his glory.

That's what Paul is ultimately praying for, that that day would be filled with Christians who are more abundantly rewarded and therefore more abundantly grateful and therefore more abundantly praising to the greater glory and praise of God, and beloved, what I want you to see here is that the glory of God, the honor of God, the praise of God, his intrinsic worth and what his people ascribe to him as they recognize his intrinsic worth and express it from their hearts to his honor and praise, what I want you to see and I'll close in a little bit of time here, is that the glory of God ties everything together. If you miss the glory of God, you have missed the whole point of the revelation of the 66 books of the Bible, you have missed the whole point of your salvation if you don't somehow see this and grasp it, and that's really easy to show.

God's glory dominates the theme of Philippians. Look at Philippians 2:11, looking forward to that great day of the exaltation of Christ. Chapter 2, verse 11, "every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Chapter 4, verse 20, "Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen." Philippians starts with the glory of God, in the middle is the glory of God, it ends with the glory of God. You can't understand the book of Philippians without the glory of God being at the center of your understanding. As we see here in Philippians 1, the glory of God is the great theme of prayer. It's the great theme of Philippians, it's the great theme of prayer. What did Jesus teach us that the first words out of our mouth as a matter of principle would be in prayer? "Our Father, which art in heaven," what? Say it, "Hallowed be Your name. Praise be to Your name. Praise be to Your great and holy character." The glory of God is the theme of prayer. Beloved, the glory of God is the theme of daily Christian living. It's

the theme of daily Christian living. 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to," what? "The glory of God." The glory of God. The glory of God. The glory of God.

And if you'll turn back to Ephesians 1, it is the glory of God in the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit that dominates the whole purpose of salvation. Ephesians 1:5, "He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will," verse 6, "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Verse 12, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." Verse 14, the Holy Spirit is given to us "as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." How often do we have to say it before we realize that the totality of salvation is ultimately not about us, it's about the glory of God. In day to day life, in the culminating presence, in the culminating presence of Christ throughout all of eternity, we are going to be consumed with the glory of God.

So beloved, what Paul has done here, don't miss this as we close, what Paul has done here as he is writing to this church that has stumbled a bit and he starts at the point of their spiritual need, that they need to grow in love, and with that prayer starting at that point of spiritual need, he quickly and swiftly runs through that and then lifts all of us up to behold the glory of God and to see that that is the answer to everything else, that that is the motivating purpose that ties it all together. And in doing this, Paul has shown us not only the reason to pray, he's not only shown us the reason to live, he has shown us the reason that Christ saved us in the first place. Do you see it? Soli Deo Gloria, to God alone be the glory.

Let's pray.

Father, with Paul we would pray for ourselves and we would pray for each other, that our love would abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment so that we would 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, our dear Father, our gracious glorious God, all of these things we pray to Your glory and to Your praise. May it ever be so. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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