

**Introduction:** As we dig around in The Bible to discover what it says about God and His creation (with His help) we can get to know Him in all His glory, majesty and splendor; and, we can also get answers to some of the most profound questions of human life. Among these questions are: How did people get here? Are we here by an accident of evolution? Were we created for a reason, for a purpose? And, if we are here for a reason, what is the proper purpose for our lives, more specifically my life? \*\*\* This week I only scratched the surface of what The Bible has to say about God's Glory. But I saw enough to know that His Glory is one of His greatest attributes. And, God's Glory touches on so many of the questions so many of us have about life. Here are some discovered truths: God is glorious and majestic, and He has crowned people (His last and greatest creation) with glory (*Psalm 8*). People are to declare God's Glory to others and attribute Glory to Him in worship because He is the highest king who will judge all people in righteousness and truth (*Psalm 96*). Through the prophet Isaiah, Yahweh gives The Word that He will be miraculously glorified in His people, before He comes in fire to judge, gathering the nations to see His Glory, setting a sign for nations that have not seen His Glory AND some people from the nations will be His priests (Isaiah 66)! \*\*\* His Glory is fully shown (manifested) in His Son: The Savior King-Priest. Through Him, and His work on earth (now in heaven) people can have spiritual birth into a living hope (with grief in all kinds of trials) that will result in praise, glory and honor when The Savior returns. The Savior who suffered death before God glorified Him (*1 Peter 1:3-23*). Here are seven more passages for you to study. (*Ephesians 1:3-14, 15-23; Philippians 2:5-10; 4:10-20; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; 1 Peter 5:1-11; Jude, verses 20-25*) \*\*\* Paul's intercessory prayer for Christians in Philippi requests four things for them to one result through Jesus Christ to God's Glory. Notice no one can be who he or she was created to be, or do what he or she was created to do, without being IN Christ Jesus. But all who are IN Him are given all they need to bring glory to God (and share in His glory).

**I. Paul prays their love will be growing in knowledge. (Verse 9)**

A. I am praying this: That your love may abound more and more. (Verse 9a)

**Paul:** Philippi was the first church the apostle Paul planted in Macedonia. He then went on to Thessalonica and Berea, before going south to Achaia and Athens. (*Acts 16-17*)

**LOVE:** Love actively seeks what benefits the one loved. This is God's LOVE for people reflecting His character and His actions. Elsewhere, Paul listed fifteen qualities of God's LOVE. (*1 Corinthians 13:4-8a*) God even loves His enemies (*Romans 5:6-8*). In the fourth century, John Chrysostom said about this petition: 'There is no measure to love. One who loves and is loved in return does not wish that love to stop but to increase'. When he wrote the churches of Thessalonica, Paul prayed The Lord would make their love overflow for each other and everyone else (*1 Thessalonians 3:12*). Then in his second letter, he said the love of everyone for each other was increasing (*2 Thessalonians 1:3*). Here is an example of answered prayer in The New Testament!

**Never complacent:** Although the Christians in Philippi have God's LOVE, they need more of His LOVE.

B. Also, that your love grow in knowledge and perception. (Verse 9b)

**Knowledge:** They need to have precise and correct knowledge leading to the obedience of faith.

**Perception:** They need to have moral discernment to decide between right and wrong actions. Solomon told his sons that this kind of discernment is gained by listening, memory, searching and crying out to Yahweh, and the benefit is to understand the fear of Yahweh and find God's knowledge. (*Proverbs 2:1-5*) Further, Yahweh gives wisdom and protects those who walk in integrity, and He will guard the way of those He is making holy, then they will understand righteousness and equity to be guarded and kept. (*Proverbs 2:6-11*)

**Moral qualities:** In modern day America knowledge and perception are thought of as qualities primarily of the intellect. However, in God's Word both of these qualities have a strong moral aspect affecting behavior – what people actually DO. So those without correct knowledge and perception will act immorally, and risk being cast away by Jesus Christ when He returns to judge. Paul's intercessory prayer is about living for Christ NOW in light of His coming to judge all who ever lived. What we do NOW will make a huge difference in the future judgment when Christ returns. (*2 Corinthians 5:1-10*) We must live, and act, more and more in God's LOVE so that when Christ returns we will be welcomed into His eternal Kingdom.

**II. They will approve what is excellent, doing righteous deeds through Jesus Christ to God's Glory. (Verses 10-11)**

A. To the result you approve excellent things, being sincere and blameless to Day of Christ. (Verse 10)

1. With the result that you all are approving the things being excellent. (Verse 10a)

**Having examined:** Their approval comes after they carefully examine everything.

**Discern excellence:** They are to discern what is excellent. Jews were to determine this excellence based on the Torah (*Romans 2:18*). In His teaching, Jesus taught the crowds that were listening to Him that they were more excellent and valuable than the birds of the air. He wanted them to fully trust in their heavenly Father's LOVE, care and provision for them. (*Matthew 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-34*)

**The LOVE of God gives perception to know what is excellent.**

2. By doing all this they are kept sincere and blameless to The Day of Christ. (Verse 10b)

**Sincere:** Peter wrote to scattered and persecuted Christians so they would awaken their sincere minds to the words of the prophets (before Bethlehem) and apostles (after Pentecost) as they get themselves ready for the second coming of Christ. This was so that, rather than falling away, they would grow in grace and the knowledge of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ: To Him be The Glory! (*2 Peter 3*)

**Blameless:** When Paul appeared before the Roman governor Felix in Caesarea, he responded to the accusations of the Jews by saying that even as a follower of what was being called 'The Way' he was always striving to keep his conscience blameless. (*Acts 24:1-23*)

**That day:** In his last words written to Timothy, his true son in The Faith (*1 Timothy 1:2*), Paul said, 'Christ Jesus ... will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up His Kingdom'. (*2 Timothy 4:1*)

B. Having been filled with fruit of righteous through Jesus Christ to The Glory and Praise of God. (*Verse 11*)

1. Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness. (*Verse 11a*)

**What we need:** Solomon tells us the fruit of righteousness is a tree of life (*Proverbs 11:30*), which was lost when our first parents were expelled from Eden (*Genesis 3:22-24*). The one who does what is righteous may dwell in Yahweh's sanctuary and live on his holy hill (*Psalms 15:1-2*). And Paul commanded Timothy to pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness (*1 Timothy 6:11*, RSV). Chrysostom also said, 'He prays that they might have an upright life ... filled with the fruits of righteousness. He is not speaking here of [righteousness] that tries despairingly to grow without Christ'. The early church fathers were well-aware that the churches in Philippi (in fact all churches) must guard against considering they have arrived as disciples of Christ, and continually strive to be more like Christ: Both in their character and their actions.

**God's character:** Yahweh is holy and righteous and loves the righteous. (*Psalms 11*) Through Jeremiah, Yahweh said He would raise up in David's line a righteous Branch whose name would be: 'Yahweh, our righteousness'. (*Jeremiah 23:5-7*) The Lord is righteous and judges righteously. (*Revelation 16:5-7*)

2. The through Jesus Christ (righteousness). (*Verse 11b*)

**Source of righteousness:** Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth, south of Philippi, that God had made Christ Jesus their righteousness, '[God] is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. (*1 Corinthians 1:28-31*, RSV)

**Just DO it:** May we all desire to strive to take on more and more of God's character IN Christ, especially His righteousness by doing righteous deeds IN Christ Jesus.

*Those experiencing God's LOVE will live and act in His righteousness*

3. To The Glory and Praise of God. (*Verse 11c*)

**Theodoret:** In the early fifth century, Theodoret of Cyr wrote about this conclusion to the prayer: 'Enjoy this gift [of the fruit of righteousness]! Keep your faith uncontaminated! Present the fruit of righteousness to God, so that God will be celebrated by all'. Two comments: First, all of us who are in Christ are urged to go on to unity in The Faith, and the measure of the maturity of the fullness of Christ (*Ephesians 4:1-13*). Then, as we live to The Glory of God, others may come into His Kingdom by the righteous witness of our lives.

**Bottom Line:** God created people to bring Him Glory and Praise. Paul began his prayer that they would be filled with God's LOVE. Human love that reflects God's LOVE is the only righteousness that counts because it brings glory and praise to God. Paul wrote to the churches in Galatia: 'For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, it makes no difference to God whether we are circumcised or not circumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love' (*Galatians 5:6*, NLT). This is why we must all be filled with God's LOVE. His LOVE allows us to know and do what is excellent.

***The LOVE of God gives perception to know what is excellent***

**Christ's priorities:** Gordon Fee points out that in his prayer, Paul models what pastors, leaders and parents need to DO. Knowing Christ's priorities, they must not let those under their care cease striving for increased Christ-likeness in both character and deeds: who we ARE and what we DO. Before the church-planting apostle writes about where the Christians in Philippi need to continue to grow, he talks to God in prayer about what they need, and then he tells them what he prayed for them. In essence, he prayed that they would continue to abound more and more in God's LOVE because everything else they need that is excellent will flow from having more of God's LOVE in them.

***The LOVE of God gives perception to know what is excellent*** (and also to DO what is excellent!)

**Conclusion:** The church planting apostle prays for the church in Philippi that first their love will abound more and more in correct knowledge and perception. This will result in their approving excellent things to stay sincere and blameless to The Day of Christ. Further, they have been filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ to The glory of God.

***The LOVE of God gives perception to know what is excellent***