

Living for Christ:

Realizing the Fruits of Righteousness

Scripture Passage

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which [are] by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.” (Philippians 1:9-11 NKJV)

Biblical Thesis

The fruits of righteousness are realized through a growing love for God and others.

Commentary

The fruits of righteousness are realized through a growing love for God and others. We may discern this by evaluating Paul’s prayer for the Philippians. Here he prays that their love would abound more and more.

However, his prayer is not a general or vague request, but it has two specific goals. 1. That the Philippians might grow in knowledge. 2. That they might grow in discernment.

Concerning Paul’s Request for Knowledge

When you see knowledge mentioned in Scripture, it is often mentioned with wisdom. “Wise [people] store up knowledge . . .” (Proverbs 10:14 NKJV). Knowledge itself is not wisdom. A man may have a good deal of information, and not know how to respond to it or use it. In fact, knowledge may be a detriment in some cases for it may puff a man up as it did the Corinthians. “Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies” (1 Corinthians 8:1 NKJV).

Still, Paul asks God to give the people the facts because facts are important. The more information we have to compare the better our discernment is likely to be. It is extremely important for a believer to give himself to learning the Bible.

Concerning Paul’s Request for Discernment

However, knowledge is not enough. Paul also prayed that the people would have discernment. Discernment is the ability to use the facts properly. Today, we are characterized by having many facts and little discernment.

One of the great difficulties facing a pastor is to correct the things church members propagate when they take facts out of context. They have the information, but they are sometimes not able to discern how to use it properly. The results of this situation can be some very tenuous moments where the pastor is forced to walk a tightrope between being hurtful and truthful. Remember, knowledge puffs up,

and to correct such a person may provoke a response. However, biblical discernment is a wonderful thing that leads to biblical action.

Three Results of Biblical Discernment

Good Judgment

Paul wanted the Philippians to have biblical discernment so that they would approve excellent things (v.10). The idea here is that they would be able to distinguish between those things that were better and those things that of less value spiritually. Young's literal translation says, "Proving the things that differ." This of course leads to the next result, sincerity.

Real Sincerity

The ideal here is that when held up to the sunlight no spot may be seen. It is a pure piece of cloth. In this context, it is discernment without the impurities of human or worldly wisdom. It is the ability to understand what God desires in your life, and then to walk in that desire. This in turn will cause you to be without offense.

No Offenses

To walk in biblical discernment will make it impossible for anyone to lay a charge against you. That is a legitimate charge. Someone might accuse you of wrongdoing, but your actions will be pure and right because you have walked in the light of truth. This is the ultimate goal that Paul desires for the Philippians that they would be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

Realizing the Fruits

So how do you begin this quest for biblical discernment? Go back to the beginning of Paul's prayer. He prayed that their love would abound more and more. The root of all biblical discernment is a love for God. When you come to the Scriptures come to discern the heart of God. Come to spend time learning of His righteousness.

The greatest commandment he gave us is to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Look at the end of verse 11. Paul indicates the fruits of righteousness are by Jesus Christ. Love Him and you will learn how to serve Him.

Therefore, seek knowledge, but not for the sake of knowledge itself. Seek to know God and commune with Him. When you do this, you will realize the fruits of righteousness in your life.

Father, I pray as Paul: fill us with a burning desire to know you, to understand you, and to understand ourselves that we might bring glory and honor to your deserving name. Do not leave us to wander in the wilderness of human wisdom, but fill us with the fruits of righteousness, amen.