

“DOING WHAT IS BEST” **PHILIPPIANS 1:10-11**

You are facing a decision and you must do something. You are going to react in some fashion. You are caught between the proverbial horns of a dilemma and anyway you turn you are going to be gored. When it is unclear what to do, how do you determine what is best?

Paul offers us guidance in this text: **“so that you may approve the things that are excellent....”** A deep knowledge of God’s unconditional and unchanging love for you (see “Abounding Love,” previous study) produces the capacity to “discern what is best” (NIV). You can respond -act and react- best to the world around you when your heart is filled with love. Profound assurance of the mysterious love of God so transforms life that you begin to leave behind actions and reactions that come from fear, insecurity, self-doubt, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority. A new, peaceful confidence and assurance will begin to pervade your life and decisions. You can live out of a heart filled with the love of God, and such living is “excellent” indeed! How should you respond to the circumstances you will face today? Whatever happens in your life, responding out of a heart seared by the abounding love of God will *always* be the “best,” the “excellent” response. *Always*.

Living with the deep knowledge of the love of God will enable you **“to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.”** The word “sincere” is literally, “to hold up to the sunlight for inspection.” Could your life, motives, words, actions, and thoughts stand up to the penetrating inspection of a Holy God? Of course not. Neither could anyone else. (That’s why there is a cross and a Savior.) But the point is this: as you begin to live in and out of the deep knowledge of God’s love for you, two things begin to happen: (1) God begins to transform your thoughts, motives, words, and actions so you become increasingly “pure” (NIV). e.g. You will be less interested in judging and more interested in loving other people, and (2) You will become more intensely aware of those areas of your life that are not ruled by the love of God. But don’t let this discourage you. Let it press you again and again back to the cross for mercy, forgiveness, grace, and more love. Remember,

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure,
His power has no boundary known unto men;
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus,
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.

Living out of love motivates us to “blameless” living. In preaching out of my discovery of how amazing God’s grace truly is, people have accused me of being soft on sin. I am not. I have just become more concerned with the heart of a person than the behavior. The police can cause you to change your behavior, e.g. driving 85 MPH and seeing a state trooper. Seeing the patrol car makes you obey the speed limit, but it doesn’t make you *want* to obey the speed limit. A “real knowledge” of amazing grace will bring about a changed heart. Jesus knew that ultimately only love can transform a blameful heart into a “blameless” heart. Jesus is about changing the heart, and when your heart is abounding with the love of God, your behavior *will be* changed *because* your heart has been changed. When you experience this working in your heart you will know real freedom!

Verse 11 continues this thought: **“Having been filled with the fruit of righteousness.”** When you live out of a deep knowledge of the love which God has for you, you will be “filled with the fruit of righteousness.” “The fruit of righteousness” is what fills us (passive voice: we don’t fill ourselves; someone else does it to us) at conversion. (This is your testimony every time you receive the Lord’s Supper.) Paul specifies the source of the filling: **“which comes through Jesus Christ.”**

What goes wrong, then? If you were “filled with the fruit of righteousness” why do you often not act with the character of Christ (Galatians 5:22f)? Two reasons, it seems to me: (1) We forget the grace that has saved us, and thus, the “real knowledge” of the love which God has for us fades away. (2) We get sucked into performance-based religion, trying to earn by our behavior that which we already have as God’s gift. This puts you into an impossible position: blameworthy yet trying to merit the favor of Holy God. The harder we “work” the more desperate the straits. True, the behavior may appear righteous, but the heart becomes enslaved, this time

not to unrighteous sin, but now to unrighteous religion. We become religious functionaries, and in the process, the liberty and joy of glorious redemption dies.

What is it then that will set you free again so you can live “**to the glory and praise of God?**” It is this: the deep knowledge of His love and grace for you. This sets your heart wonderfully free--free not to sin, but free to live “to the glory and praise of God.”

I say to you again: understanding God’s unconditional love and amazing grace *does not make you want to sin*, rather, *it transforms your heart and you want to fall down and worship Him and rise up to serve Him*. It is then that we live “to the glory and praise of God.” John Piper: “God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him.” “Real knowledge” of His love is what satisfies. When you truly know His love, you will do what is best.

Grace to you,
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Talk back with me. Does this “hit the mark? Can you apply it to your life? Is it helpful to you?