



Season 8 Podcasts

The Discernment of the Gospel

By

Mark McGee

So far in my 8th Season Podcast series I've shared thoughts with you about:

- 8 Rules for Bible Study
- 40 Rules for Ministry
- The Heart of the Gospel
- Defending and Confirming the Gospel
- Your Fellowship in the Gospel
- The Completion of the Gospel
- The Affection of the Gospel

The next aspect I'd like to share with you is the 'discernment' of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

After expressing how greatly he longed for the Philippians ‘with the affection of Jesus Christ,’ Paul shared a specific prayer he had for them:

“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment ...”

Philippians 1:9

Paul wanted the ‘love’ of the Christians in Philippi to ‘abound’ more and more in ‘knowledge and all discernment.’ We already have a good sense of the context in the first eight verses, so let’s look at this particular verse to see why Paul was praying this particular prayer for them.

The word ‘love’ is *agapé*, which Christians recognize as that special kind of love that emphasizes ‘preference’ for others. That’s the kind of love Jesus Christ has for us, and it’s the kind of love He wants us to have for each other. Paul knew that, so he prayed that their ‘*agapé*’ love would ‘abound still more and more.’

The words ‘may abound’ come from the Greek word *perisseuó*. It means ‘to superabound, be in excess, overflow, have in excess, have in abundance, have a surplus.’ Paul’s prayer for the Philippians was that their ‘love’ for Christ and each other would overflow in superabundance and never run out. However, Paul was specific in the kind of love he had in mind for the Christians: ‘in knowledge and all discernment.’

The word ‘knowledge’ is *epignósis* and means ‘true knowledge, to be fully acquainted with something, perceive, to ascertain, recognize, understand, be aware.’ Combining two Greek words, *epí* and *ginóskō*, strengthens the idea of the ‘knowledge.’ It’s a knowledge that we can experience in a personal way. Paul did not want the Philippians to have just a ‘head’ knowledge about the love of Christ; he wanted to have a deep, personal, experiential knowledge about that love. Unfortunately, too many people in churches today have only a ‘head’ knowledge about Christ. They have little depth of understanding of what it means to be a child of God. Paul wanted more than that for the Philippians.

The words ‘all discernment’ are *pas aisthésis* and mean ‘every type of, all manner of, to make a judgment, to perceive and know with one’s senses, to notice and apprehend using one’s senses.’ Paul prayed that the Philippians would use a combination of experiential knowledge and their perception that came from an ability to use one’s senses to make a judgment. That’s the kind of ‘love’ Paul wanted for the Philippian Christians. I might add that the word *aisthésis* is used only once in the New Testament, here in Philippians 1:9. Discernment is so important in life, but the fact that only Paul used the word and said it was part of his prayer for the Philippian Christians makes this even more important that we understand the part it plays in our relationship to Christ, His Gospel, to each other, and to the spiritual needs of an unbelieving world.

Unfortunately, the kind of love many Christians express today resembles ‘worldly’ love rather than ‘godly’ love. They are more concerned about demonstrating a love that is devoid of any kind of ‘true knowledge and discernment,’ It would be baffling for Christians who do have a true knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and an ability to judge and perceive what is true except that Jesus and His apostles warned us that this would happen.

“For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money ...” 2 Timothy 3:2a

Too many Christians love themselves and money more than they love the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. I find that extremely sad, though I shouldn’t be surprised. I think the best thing we can do is pray the same prayer that Paul prayed for the Philippian Christians, and remind our brothers and sisters in Christ what could be their’s if they would pay attention to ‘true knowledge’ and the ‘discernment’ that God wants all of His children to express.

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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