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Series 2.

ABOUNDING LOVE

Philippians 1:9-11.

Paul prays that the Christians in the church at Philippi "abound more and more in love." Phil. 1:10. This is a prayer of deep insight and understanding of what the New Testament sets down as an indispensable priority in the life of a Christian. In the last issue we pointed out that the tenses in the Greek reveal that Paul's concern for the Christians is so intense, that he keeps on praying that their love might grow. The phrase, "your love (agape)" as Lightfoot suggests is the "inward state of the soul," and it is a Godlike love which differs from "Affection which is more emotional." (W.E.Vine). It is a Divine love given to him by the Holy Spirit, and reinforced by a choice he deliberately made to follow after love. 1 Corinthians 14:1. This love is dynamic in that it is a state of the soul which is capable of "abounding more and more."

As Paul expounds on this truth he is concerned first, with the dynamic of Divine love. What do I mean by this? What Paul is talking about here is the force, energy and power that characterize love. He is not discussing erotic love,

social love or even friendship love. The word "agape" in the Greek for love places love on a higher level than any of the aforementioned. This love is an unselfish love with God-like qualities. He is echoing what he wrote in 1 Corinthians 13. Indeed this chapter is an exposition of what the nature of this love is. It is a holy and selfless with God-like qualities. It is the way God loves and we are exhorted to love in the same way. It sums up what "agape" is. C.S Lewis wrote that "God loved us not because we were lovable but because he is love." The demands of this love may appear to be daunting and even impossible to reach, but the astounding truth is that Paul's believes that it is a glorious possibility in Christian experience. "This is my prayer," he writes "that your love may abound more and more." Phil. 1:9. Jesus in His great High priestly prayer, (John 17:26) prayed for the disciples, "that the love His Father had for Him, maybe in them." Paul believes that this love is a gift of God poured into his heart by the Holy Spirit. Romans 5:5. When Paul prayed that God's love abound more and more, he assumed that God's love was already in their hearts, and because it did, he wanted it to grow. Paul is not praying for the impossible here. He is not an idealistic dreamer, nor does he propose a visionary philosophy. He prays that love may abide in their hearts. This love is the

fruit of the Holy Spirit whose abiding presence is made possible by the atoning death and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Consequently this love is not a goal to be attained; it is a quality of life to be experienced, developed and expressed. The love of which he speaks is made possible experientially by the gospel of Christ, which is the power of God. It is not something to be ignored. To be filled with the love of God is one of the fundamental principles of holy living. It gives holy living its' meaning, value and dynamic. To ignore or neglect this love is to miss the essence of sanctified living, leaving it impotent and without reality. Since this is true, then giving attention to it is one of the first priorities of the Christian life. Strictly speaking a loveless Christian is a contradiction in terms. Jesus made clear that it is by this love that the world will know that we are His followers. Paul's deepest desire is that this love would grow in the lives of the children of God, and recognizing that the dynamic of this love is a possibility in their lives, prays that their love may abound more and more.

The significance of this possibility is that it is marked by sufficiency. This love has no limit. It has no measure. It is a love that is dynamic in that it can expand and grow. Its growth is without parameters. "This is my prayer that your love may abound more and more

in knowledge and insight." The word abound used by Paul here is from the Latin which spelled out means "wave upon wave." Dr F.B. Meyer pictures the word "abound" as a bucket under a stream issuing from a fissure in a rock pouring over all sides. The word means to overflow like floodwaters, superabundant, with out measure. Paul's desire is that this love rise to its highest expression. He is talking about the expulsive power of a new dynamic: Agape. The nature of this love suggests that as it grows, it supplants self-love. It "abounds more and more." Agape love and self-love cannot co-exist. This love replaces self-love. The abounding of this God like love will resist and expel anything that is contrary to its nature. The abounding more and more of love will reveal itself in authentic Christ likeness. It is this overflow that will bear the fruit of self-less living in the relationship with God, and with those with whom we come in contact. It is neither restrictive nor confining. It is a lavish and extravagant. This kind of lavishness was never illustrated so clearly and extravagantly as when Mary took expensive perfume worth a years wages, and poured it on the feet of Jesus, wiping his feet with her hair. Love overflowed the parameters of cost. It spilled over the limits of price. This love is not calculated or cheap. It abounds more and more and is lavish in its generosity.

We have a graphic description of this love of God in 1 John 3:1. John is overcome by the abundance of agape love when he writes "How great is the love **the Father has lavished** upon us, that we should be called the children of God. And that is what we are!" We are recipients of the extraordinary grace and extravagant love of God, the result of which confirms that we are the children of God. It is this love which Paul prays will abound more and more in their hearts and lives.

Paul recognizes that there is great potential in the life of Christian love. He indicates this in his prayer, for he prays that their love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. It was not that the Christians at Philippi did not have love. It was that they did not love enough. Was it possible that they were satisfied with the status quo? Maybe the potential of their love was not being expanded, and so he prayed that the love they did possess would grow, develop and mature.

Now Paul mentions two areas in which love is to grow. They are two dimensions mentioned in verse 9, in which love is to expand. They are knowledge and insight. Paul is concerned with a balanced Christian walk in life and he says there are two qualities necessary to make up this balance. They are,

a. The Growth of Love which influences the heart and

b. The growth of Knowledge which enlarges the mind.

We will table the discussion on this and returned to it in the future.