

BEDWELL GLOBAL MINISTRIES

EXPOSITORY SERMON

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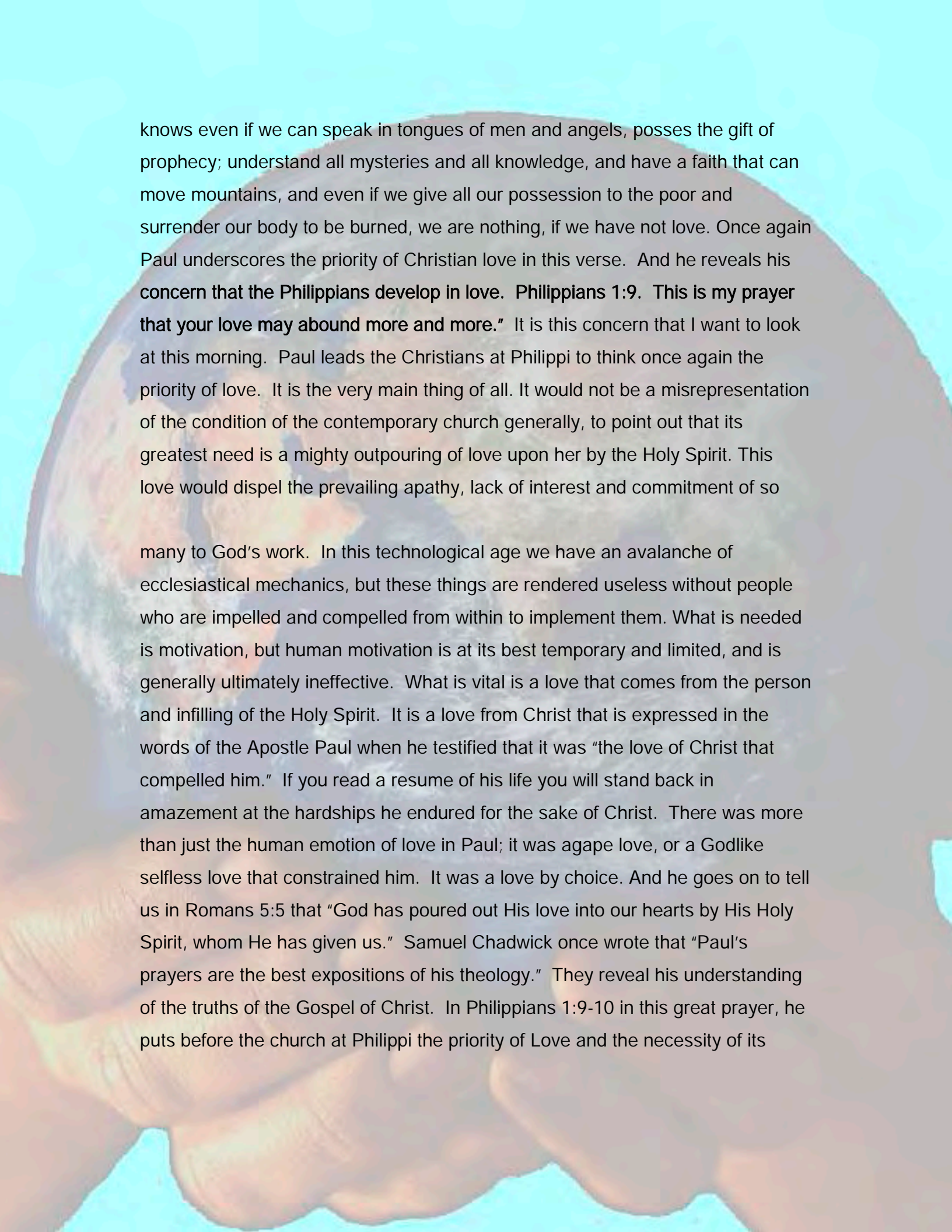
Bedwellglobalministries

ABOUNDING LOVE

SCRIPTURE READING -Text - Philipians 1: 9 -10.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul writes in verses 9-11. v. 9. "And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and insight, v.10, so that you may be able to discern what is best and blameless until the day of Christ, v.11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God." This is a prayer of deep insight and understanding of what the Christian character and spirit should be in the life of the Child of God. When Paul prays he reveals what his deepest desire and longings for the church are. You discover in them, what he considers to be priorities in the lives of Gods people. His prayers reveal what he has discovered to be to be of first importance in the journey with God. Paul is always serious about excellence in our relationship with God. The heart of his prayer is his pulsating passion and burning desire that the love of God's people abound more and more in knowledge and insight. Paul once again comes back to priority of love. He knows that love is indispensable for the development of the church. He knows the church is not the church without love. He knows that everything she does is empty and useless without love. He



knows even if we can speak in tongues of men and angels, possess the gift of prophecy; understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and have a faith that can move mountains, and even if we give all our possessions to the poor and surrender our body to be burned, we are nothing, if we have not love. Once again Paul underscores the priority of Christian love in this verse. And he reveals his **concern that the Philippians develop in love. Philippians 1:9. This is my prayer that your love may abound more and more.**" It is this concern that I want to look at this morning. Paul leads the Christians at Philippi to think once again the priority of love. It is the very main thing of all. It would not be a misrepresentation of the condition of the contemporary church generally, to point out that its greatest need is a mighty outpouring of love upon her by the Holy Spirit. This love would dispel the prevailing apathy, lack of interest and commitment of so

many to God's work. In this technological age we have an avalanche of ecclesiastical mechanics, but these things are rendered useless without people who are impelled and compelled from within to implement them. What is needed is motivation, but human motivation is at its best temporary and limited, and is generally ultimately ineffective. What is vital is a love that comes from the person and infilling of the Holy Spirit. It is a love from Christ that is expressed in the words of the Apostle Paul when he testified that it was "the love of Christ that compelled him." If you read a resume of his life you will stand back in amazement at the hardships he endured for the sake of Christ. There was more than just the human emotion of love in Paul; it was agape love, or a Godlike selfless love that constrained him. It was a love by choice. And he goes on to tell us in Romans 5:5 that "God has poured out His love into our hearts by His Holy Spirit, whom He has given us." Samuel Chadwick once wrote that "Paul's prayers are the best expositions of his theology." They reveal his understanding of the truths of the Gospel of Christ. In Philippians 1:9-10 in this great prayer, he puts before the church at Philippi the priority of Love and the necessity of its

development in Christian experience. To Paul this is not an option. The first truth he sets before us is,

1. THE DYNAMIC OF DIVINE LOVE. Philippians 1:9 -11.

What do I mean by this? What Paul is talking about here is the force, the energy and the power which characterizes love. Paul is not talking about an erotic love, social love or even a friendship love. He focuses on an unselfish love with God-like qualities. He is echoing what he has written in 1 Corinthians 13. This chapter describes what essentially a holy selfless Godly love is. C.S. Lewis declared that "God loved us not because we were lovable but because He is love." This is nature of the love of which Paul speaks. What is amazing in Paul's challenge here. This Godlike love is considered to be,

a. A Possibility in Christian Experience. Philippians 1:9. Paul writes "This is my prayer that your love may abound more and more." Philippians 1:9. Jesus

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prayed to His Father for the disciples in John 17:26 that the love His Father had for them, maybe in them." This love is a gift of God poured into our hearts 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. His concern was that it grow. Paul is not praying for the impossible here. He is not an idealistic dreamer - nor does he propose a visionary philosophy. It is not a goal to be attained; it is a quality of life to be experienced and developed and expressed. The Apostle Paul in his second letter to the Corinthian church, chapter 5:14, passionately writes that it is Christ's love that compels him. In this specific verse, it is not only his love for Christ that compels him, but rather a quality of Christ's love within him that compels him. In the life of the church, and in the evangelistic mission of the church, we have not paid enough attention to ensuring that this love is our personal experience, possession and passion. So often we have rushed ahead to plan and become active in the mission of the church, and we have pushed this quality to the sidelines, and we wonder why we spin our wheels and grind our gears. This is unnecessary because this love of

which Paul speaks is a possibility in our hearts and lives. Paul moves on to emphasize

b. Love's Sufficiency in Christian Experience. Philippians 1:9. This is my prayer love that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and insight. Paul points out that the word "abound" 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, without measure. Paul desires love to rise to its most expansive expression. The nature of this love suggests that as it grows, it is supplanting self-love." It abounds more and more." This is not a restricted confined love. It is a lavish love. This kind of lavishness was never more displayed so clearly as when Mary took expensive perfume worth a years wages and poured it on the feet of Jesus, wiping His feet His feet with her hair.

Love overflowed the parameters of cost. It spilled over the limits of price. This kind of love is not calculated or cheap. It abounds more and more. There is always cost to it. David the King of Israel, you recall had the opportunity of obtaining some land for nothing. It was land on which he wanted to build an altar to the Lord. But he rejected the whole idea of a cheap deal with a certain amount of contempt as he uttered those words, "Neither will I offer to the Lord....that which costs me nothing." This is the language of abounding love for the God he served. Paul prays that the Christians at Philippi abound more and more in love. Paul also underlines,

c. Love's Potentiality in Christian Experience. Philippians 1:9. Paul expounds on this thought as he is concerned 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. The potential of love was not being expanded, and Paul prays that the love they did possess would grow and develop. Now Paul is clear on the areas in which love is to grow. There are two dimensions mentioned in verse 9, in which this love is to expand. They are

knowledge and insight. Paul is concerned with a balanced Christian walk in the Christians, and he says there are two qualities necessary make up this balance. He says that there is to be firstly,

i. The Growth of Love which influences the heart, and secondly,

ii. The Growth of knowledge which enlightens the Mind. The words of Dr Paul Rees are revealing at this point, for he said that in the “Christian faith there is no rift between an enkindled heart and an enlightened mind. Loving God with our mind, body and soul and walking in the light or knowledge, ensures a balance on our Christian journey. Undisciplined love can be dangerous and lead to excesses. Light, Truth and knowledge alone can be harsh, cold, judgmental and impersonal. “Love without knowledge can be flamingly destructive as a forest fire in the dry season. Knowledge without love may result in egoism, while love without knowledge is sentimentality. But when knowledge and love walk hand in

hand, blessing, fruitfulness are the beneficial results. The knowledge referred to is not simply intellectual development, but to the grasp of spiritual truth on a practical level. It is knowledge of the heart and not simply of the head.” Such knowledge comes from God the Holy Spirit and His Word. It is knowledge of God Himself, His ways, His salvation and His holiness. Love is to abound more and more in all of this. But this love must also abound in depth of insight. It refers to the necessity and importance of a discerning, discriminating knowledge or the ability within us, whereby we can make right moral decisions. Paul is praying for mental and moral illumination in spiritual values. Love in the Biblical sense is not blind. Bill McCumber would say, “God save us from the folly of mindless living and heartless thinking.” It has been my observation that across the Evangelical movement many churchgoers park their minds in the parking lot with their cars, and come into the sanctuary with the attitude, please me, entertain me, excite me, make me feel good, tickle my ears, spoon feed me but don’t ask me to pick up my knife and fork when the message comes through. Give me an emotional moment, but don’t ask me make an effort to worship - don’t ask me to reflect on

the Word of God -don't expect me to receive and obey the Word of God. Then we wonder why the modern heresy in the church is superficiality. The Paul realizes the danger of this condition and urges the church **"to love abound more and more in knowledge and insight."** This describes the dynamic, the power and energy of Divine love. Paul also brings to our attention,

2. THE DISCERNMENT WHICH IS THE CONCERN OF LOVE. Philippians 1:9-

11. This love which is to abound in knowledge and insight, is so that you might be able to discern what is best and maybe pure and blameless until the day of Christ." The word "discern" means "put to the test." It was often used in the testing of coins to see that they were genuine. Effective discernment is grounded in the love that abounds more and more in knowledge and insight. If love abounds in these attributes, then the Christian has the ability to put to the test challenges and the decisions with which he is faced in life. There are two

basic areas in life in which discernment is needed for the Christian. The first dimension in which this discernment is needed lies in the ability and the insight to,

a. Discern Between Good and Evil. Philippians 1:9-11. This discernment is not based on how we feel about it. This seems to be the measure by which so many make judgments and set priorities for life. Henry Blackaby in his excellent book on Holiness writes "It amazes me how so many people somehow believe that as long as they do not feel something is bad, that it is not bad – as long as they feel okay about it, they can continue to do it. As long as God does not deal with them immediately, it must be okay. We are moving closer to an absolute confrontation with God who makes no exceptions." This discernment is not based on how we feel. It is based on the Divine love which abounds in knowledge and insight. Satan who at times appears as an angel of light is a master at deceit and can camouflage evil to appear good. If we are not prepared, he can seduce us into sinning by making evil look right and playing down the seriousness of sin.

Furthermore there are often, distinct differences between what appears to be

good and that which is actually good. Dr. McCumber makes this clear when he wrote, "Evil can wear the robe of righteousness, and ravenous wolves wear sheep's clothing. That is why John warns us in his letter "Dear friends do NOT believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God." This is not a small issue. It is not to be trifled with or set aside as irrelevant. Paul is extremely concerned that the Christian be alert to the seduction of the evil one. His prayer is serious and challenging. "This is my prayer," he writes, "That your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we can prove or test or discern what is best. Or as Moffitt translates it, "Enabling you to have a sense of what is vital." We require discernment to know the difference between that which is good and that which is evil. Paul is not trifling with incidentals in these words. He is dealing with serious issues concerning the Christians. We live in serious days and serious days demand serious action.

"Love implies doing, but it must be doing what is right and worthy of effort." The second dimension in which discernment is needed is the ability to,

b. Discern between that which is good and that which is excellent. Philipians 1:9-10. J.B. Phillips paraphrases these words in this way. "I want to be able to recognize the highest and the best." To many are satisfied with the good to the neglect of the excellent. One has said that "There are many Christians whose lives are minor tragedies, not because they have left the paths of good but they have failed to discern and do God's first and highest will for them." (McCumber) God's highest will is what He desires for them. Paul is not interested in living in a spiritual rut. He wants to make sure that the Philipians break out of or do not settle into a monotonous mundane mediocrity in their spiritual condition. He was the role model of someone who strived for that which is excellent. In this letter in **Philipians 3:7, he writes "I consider everything loss compared to the surpassing greatness or the Excellency of knowing Christ my Lord for whose sake I have lost all things."** Paul longs for the best. He wants to excel in the Christian walk and what he wants for himself, he wants for the Christians at Philippi. His desire

is that they possess a discernment which will be able to establish vital and excellent priorities.

Now what is the reason for this? He answers this question in verse 9. It is in order that they maybe "pure and blameless until the day of Christ." The priorities we discern to be excellent, will determine the quality of our Christian character. Moffet translates it this way, **"My prayer is that you have a sense of what is of value so that you maybe transparent."** The word pure in this context may emerge from two sources. It may come from a word that means sunshine combined with another word meaning judge. It describes that which is able to stand the test of sunshine. It is the test of being exposed to the sun or held up to the light of the sun and is seen to have no flaw. If it can pass these tests, then it is genuine. In other words it passes the scrutiny and judgment of the sun. In the context of what Paul writes, here it refers to Christian character that can stand the test in light of God's scrutiny. But pure can also mean that which is placed in a sieve, whirled around and around and in doing so, all impurity is extracted from it. So the word pure describes Christian character which is sifted and cleansed from all impurity. The steps are clear in Paul's prayer. This is my prayer said Paul "that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that, or in order that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ." Our character should be such that it will stand the test of the judgment day of Christ. Finally Paul talks about,

3. THE DESIGN WHICH IS THE COMMITMENT OF LOVE. Philippians 1:11.

Everything we have said in this message if applied to our hearts and lives, will reveal itself in the "fruits of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ." Paul says we are filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ"- to the glory and praise of God. Paul touches on two truths here. First, **a. The Fruit of Righteousness is Distinctive. Philippians 1:11.** Paul makes clear that we can be filled with fruits of righteousness. It is distinctive because it is the righteousness that comes from Christ. The origins of this righteousness are not found in the intellect of man or displayed in the life of men, for if they were they

would be seen as filthy rags in the sight of God. Nor are they found in a well thought out doctrine of righteousness designed by human intellect. It is Divine righteousness. It is a righteousness that comes from Christ and being filled with His righteousness leaves no room for unrighteousness. This more specifically is a reference to fruit of the Spirit. The fruits of righteousness are synonymous with the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23. "The Fruit of the Spirit is love joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law." The fact that it comes through Jesus Christ, underlines the truth the holiness is not an emotional fullness or ceremonial act, it is an ethical fullness so wrote Daniel Steele. This makes it distinctive. Secondly,

b. The Fruit of righteousness is demonstrated. Philipians 1:11. Fruit is not hidden. Fruit reveals what kind of tree has produced it. You can tell what a mango tree is by its fruit. A Mango tree does not produce peaches. Righteousness is the fruit of Christ pointing to Him as the source of righteousness. Jesus said that He is the true vine and we are the branches and if a man remains in Him he will bear much fruit; apart from him nothing can be done. There can be no fruit of righteousness in any life apart from remaining in and dependence on Christ. **It exemplifies and honors Him. The fruit of righteousness is of the Holy Spirit and is to be demonstrated to glory and praise of God.**

Conclusion

Mongomery Boice tells of how Lawrence of Arabia was in Paris after World War 1 with some of his Arab friends, he took some time to show them the sights of the city: the Louvre, Arch of Triumph, Napoleons, the Champs Elysees. They found little interest in these things. The thing that really interested them was a faucet in the bathtub of their hotel room. They spent much time there turning it on and off; they thought it was wonderful. All they had to do was turn the handle and they could get all the water they wanted. Sometime later, when they were ready to leave Paris and return to the East. Lawrence found them in the bathroom trying

to detach the faucet. "You see," "it is very dry in Arabia. What we need are faucets. If we have them, we will have all the water we want." Lawrence had to explain that the effectiveness of the faucets did not lie in themselves but in the immense system of the water works to which they were attached. He had to point out that behind this lay the rain and snowfall in the Alps. Many Christian people are living that are as dry as the deserts of Arabia. They have faucets, but there is no connection to the pipeline. For love to abound in our walk with God we must be connected to the source who is the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us ensure that we are connected to Him.

