

Last week, I bit off a bit more than we could chew, and so (in a way) we're going to be having some left overs today ... But you know how some dishes are always better on the second day??? And some leftovers are plenty-of-a-meal in themselves??? Well, I reckon that's going to be the case for us today...

So, we're going to read Philippians 1:6-11

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Righto, so we finished up last week, talking about how we can be partners in the Gospel, and how we're 'all in this together' — In Christ, the Christian church, is a fellowship of Grace. And in Christ, we are:

- a fellowship who support one another; and
- love one another; and

- build one another up; and
- we are in ministry together...

And Paul identified 3 ways, that the Philippian church were doing this:

1. Firstly, they supported him in his imprisonment.

And we briefly talked about how we the free church, have a responsibility, to partner with the persecuted church. And we can partner with them, by supporting them financially and in prayer, and by simply remembering them... (not to be the forgotten, suffering church)

2. Secondly,
The Philippian church shared in his ministry, in the defence of the Gospel (and we're going to touch on this again today)

3. They shared in his ministry through the **confirmation** of the Gospel.
And that's our topic for today.

To confirm the Gospel, is to demonstrate that it is true, and that it's operational...

Back in the day, I had a Landcruiser tray-back, and being a young fellow, I had to have the aftermarket turbo (just that bit more power)... And to look after it, I installed a 'Turbo

Timer'''. And some of you know what I'm talking about, but I'll explain it for those who don't...

It's always better for an engine, if you let it warm up before you work it hard. But it's also good for an engine if you let it idle for a while (to cool down) before you shut it off... And that's particularly so, if the engine has a turbo – if you've been working an engine hard (which I was good at) (back in the day) ... It's pretty important to let your turbo cool down before you shut it off, and depending on how hard the engine's been working, that can take a few minutes...

*Anyway, for those who can't **spare** those few minutes, you can install a timing device (called a turbo timer). And so, with a Turbo Timer:*

- *you can pull up at the Post Office (after racing there to catch it before it closes);*
- *turn off the key; (**don't leave it in gear, because the engine's going to keep running**)*
- *You can get out;*
- *lock your car; and*
- *you can go into the post office, and your car is still running...*

And with my Turbo Timer, you could set it for 1min/3/5. And if it was set for 3min, in 3min time, it would shut off...

Sometimes, if I knew I knew I'd only be a few minutes in the shop, I'd flick the switch to 5min, and it would still be running when I got back to it, and the a/c was still going, keeping the ute nice and cool...

But when I first installed this thing, how could I know if I could trust it? I mean, the last thing I'd want to do, is leave the car somewhere, with it idling for a whole day...

How could I know, that it was actually going to turn itself off??? How could I confirm that it was real / operational / effective???

*Well, I reckon about the first half a dozen times I used it, I stood there and watched it, to see that it **did** shut down...*

*I observed it, to confirm its authenticity... This thing **is** real. It doesn't just say that it will shut the engine down. It **does** shut the engine down...*

So, how do we confirm the Gospel? – How do we demonstrate the authenticity of the Gospel, to a world who disbelieve it???

Well, the Gospel **can** be confirmed through observation

- The Gospel isn't just an empty concept;
- Not pie-in-the-sky-when-we-die;
- Not something which is idyllic, but non-existent
- The Gospel, among the people of God, is to be demonstrated.

And therefore, it can be observed...

Love; fellowship; purity; righteousness; holiness...

Jesus said: **John 13: (ESV)³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, (here's the evidence / confirmation) if you have love for one another."**

And we need to realise, that this didn't just apply to the original **12** Apostles – **We are disciples of Jesus – He's saying it to us. John 13: (ESV)³⁵ By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."**

BTW, I think the love we have for each other, is probably greater than we even thought. For me, it's really become evident right now, in the way I miss your company (while we're not allowed to meet)...

Paul expressed this very sentiment, in **V⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.**

And we're probably all feeling like that right now – how we yearn for each other, with the affection of Christ Jesus.

You know the saying, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder"... Well, I suspect the issue is, "We just take stuff for granted", and we don't appreciate what we have, until it's gone... And we've taken fellowship for granted. I'm really looking forward to when the State Government allow us to start opening up fellowship.

And (provided the rules remain as they were indicated when I recorded this), this week, we're going to be able to have gatherings of up to 10 people, and so we're going to be able to have our Bible Study groups again...

Righto, so let's come back to Philippians:
What's the confirmation of the Gospel? What's the evidence that the Gospel is 'fair-dinkum', and that it's 'fair-dinkum' in me???

1.

Well, the first evidence, is the affection that Christians have for one another... – That's what Jesus said “They will know you are my disciples, by the love that you have for one another”...

I don't know how many times I've had people tell me, that they're a Christian – they just don't like going to church, because they don't feel the need... *In the kids story last week, Andrew talked about “being a team”... Well, a Christian who isn't fellowshiping in a church, is like a footballer who doesn't belong to a team... It's a nonsense...*

Christians yearn for fellowship with other Christians. You cannot honestly say “I love God”, when you don't love your Christian brother (1 John 4:16)...

When a church has a genuine affection toward one another, **that** is a sign of a church who love Jesus...

2.

The second confirmation of the Gospel in a church, is when that church, has a love, that is based on truth...

V⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more (but not on its own), **with knowledge and all discernment**, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.....

Alright, an expression of love, **isn't** a confirmation of the Gospel, if that expression of love, is actually a perversion of love... Sadly, sometimes knowledge and discernment, are abandoned in the name of love. And when that happens, love gets distorted, and so it's not true love at all...

Let me give you an example:

There are churches, who have pretty much removed the word "sin" from their vocabulary... They don't preach 'repentance from sin', because they don't want people to feel 'judged'. In their eyes, that's not loving them...

Then, there are some churches who take this even further – they completely abandon God-given knowledge and discernment, and **fabricate** their own variety of love...

I don't think I can give you a clearer example of this, than in the area of teaching on sexuality:

The Bible very clearly teaches that God created us as male and female, and that marriage is to be between a man and a woman. That's God's good design for sexual intimacy – between one man and one woman, within the covenant/commitment of marriage... And all other sexual expression is sin (sexual immorality)...

And yet some churches:

- affirm premarital sex;
- affirm SSM;
- conduct those weddings;

They have the belief that, “Love has to come first, and for me to love this person, I have to **affirm** them, and I have to affirm their lifestyle. And if I'm **not** affirming them, I'm not loving them.”...

Such churches, have abandoned Godly knowledge and abandoned Godly discernment, to construct their own version of love...

And let me be quite blunt:

If my definition of “love” necessitates a rejection of God's truth, what does that say about my idea of love??? It's false... And if that distortion of love, is against God's truth, where does it come from? Satan... ...

The sort of distorted love that I just described, leads to nothing less than spiritual death... If the message I receive, is a message of affirmation and it encourages me to continue live

in a life of sin – if there is no repentance, then there is no forgiveness...

And any variety of love that causes me to remain in sin, and therefore go to Hell – that's not love...

That's like saying, "Because I love my child, I'm not going to discipline him and correct him when he goes and plays on the road..."

Godly knowledge and discernment, go hand-in-hand with love, otherwise it's not Godly love...

You know, some people feel that "truth" and "love" are the antithesis of each other – they're against each other... Nothing could be further from the truth... Godly knowledge and discernment, **builds** love...

But, what is this knowledge about, anyway??? Is it just about knowing rules and regulations??? You know, I've met some people who know their bibles really well, but they're the most loveless critters you'll ever find – just full of vinegar and condemnation and hatred...

I think we need to remember that this knowledge and discernment that Paul is talking about here, is all within the context of the grace that God has shown **us**... Back in V7, Paul said , ...**you are all partakers with me of grace**, both in my imprisonment and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel.

When it comes to the ‘knowledge’ of the things of God, What do you reckon, is the first thing that we should know and understand???

Grace...

- the Grace of God who loved me so much that He didn’t want me to remain in my sin, and so he saved me from it...
- The Grace of a God who loves you so much, He doesn’t want you to remain in your sin...
- He loves you so much, He doesn’t want any kind of distorted of love, preventing you from experiencing the grace that’s available for you, in His pure love...

Distorted love, sometimes prevents us from experiencing the fullness of God’s overflowing Grace...

I’m going to say something really profound now: “God knows best”... It’s that simple... I **don’t** know best. **God** knows best. And **God’s** love, is a love that saves. It’s a love that’s based on truth ... And it works.

The confirmation of the Gospel, is when a Grace-filled church grows in love, truth, and discernment,,, – that’s when you can see that the Gospel is real...

Now, I haven’t said a lot about “discernment” yet. We talked about “knowledge”, but what about “discernment”? Well, knowledge and discernment, need to go together... Do you know the difference???

Knowledge, can be learned. Discernment, is to do with wisdom – it's a gift of God...

And Paul's prayer, was that they (we) – that our love, may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment...

Abound more and more – be growing all the time...

You know, I don't think there's really any secret to 'knowledge'... You know how some people really know the Scriptures really well,,, do you know how that comes about??? They read the Scriptures a lot... And they don't just read over it – they study the Scriptures...

For me personally, most biblical knowledge I have, is from studying God's word – not from Bible college. Don't get me wrong – Bible college helped, and I don't want to ever be seen as a Bible college basher. There are some really good Bible colleges who will help you to grow spiritually , and in Biblical knowledge,,, but only if you love God's word...

And the second thing that helped me to grow in knowledge, was particularly when I used to spend countless hours on tractors, and I used to devour bible teaching on Cassettes...

And some of you have told me, that's what you do – you listen to podcasts of bible teaching...

But the **second** part of that, is discernment... There are some really popular bible teachers, who are **not** teaching truth, and

that's where the Spiritual gift of discernment kicks in. Devouring teaching, well that's a good thing, but not if it's false teaching – there's nothing more destructive...

Some people within the church, have a very real gift of discernment, and they can filter what's being said, and very quickly know whether this is Godly teaching, or whether it's a falsehood...

Now, being a Spiritual gift, we pray that discernment will grow in the church... But we don't all have the same spiritual gifts ... And so, for the church to work as the body that God designed us to be, it's important that we recognise those who have a gift of discernment, and that we pay attention to them...

I've noticed (over the years), that some disciples of Jesus, have a history of being led astray over and over again... Some get hooked-up in every false teaching/conspiracy theory/the latest thing (new and exciting)... While other people who have the gift of discernment, step back and wonder "What are they? Lemmings? Why are they following so blindly???" "Can they not see?"...

Well, no, they can't see, because they don't have the Gift of discernment, and you do... And if we're praying for discernment to abound more and more in the fellowship of Christ, we're praying for a couple of things:

- a) we're praying that those people who **do** have a gift of discernment, will sound the warning, when they notice

that others, are being misled; and

b) we're praying that we would all gain discernment, and that we would hear the warning, and grow in knowledge of the truth

And I want to encourage you to go deeper. Our relationship with God, will only grow, as we grow in knowledge and discernment. Don't ever confuse a 'child-like faith', with 'an infantile understanding'... Many people don't want to go any deeper than the Children's story... But here Paul is praying that their knowledge and discernment would grow, (more and more), ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

It's about guidance for righteous living... The Lord wants us to approve what is excellent. Don't just be content with a cursory knowledge of the Gospel. Know God's word. Understand His word... And by knowing it, be ready for when Christ returns...

I love 2 Timothy 3: (ESV), where it says:

¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

That's what Paul is talking about here: Know the Word of God, so that we can be pure and blameless for the day of Christ...

3.

Which brings us, to the third confirmation of the Gospel – The fruit of righteousness. (Spirit). The fruit of the Spirit, is righteousness...

Can the effectiveness of the Gospel be observed? Of course it can – righteousness in the people of God... Are we growing more and more righteous every day???

- If I see a church that's growing in enthusiasm, but its members are starting to swear more and more,,, Neahhhh, I don't think that's the Spirit of God at work.
- Attracting all the young people, it might appear really good on the surface,,, but if that church is also a place of increasing immorality,,, Neahhhh, it's probably not the Spirit of God at work.
- Has a reputation for being alive, but its members are becoming more and more selfish/fixated on wealth-generation / financial prosperity,,, It's probably not the spirit of God at work...

But when I see a church

- who genuinely love one another, and who love the world that Christ died for;
- who are being transformed into the image of Christ
- casting off sin that entangles, and growing in righteousness;

- giving up the pleasures/ambitions of the world & focussing on eternity

That's a church who are growing in the Spirit..

Remember last week, how we talked about being a slave of Christ, and how we owe Him our total allegiance... Let me read Romans 6:16-18 (ESV)

¹⁶ Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, ¹⁸ and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

Those verses in Romans, hold together, what we've been learning here today:

We **used** to be slaves of sin, but not any more... We had to re-learn what righteousness is. Because the worldly idea of "what is right" – it is so distorted, we need to completely un-learn that, and learn the ways of God...

And in His grace, with knowledge and discernment, and by His spirit, He transforms us, and we become the confirmation of the Gospel....

In a way, it confirms to others, what is already true in us –
That God has saved us, and is present in us. The Spiritual
salvation and inner transformation, is evident by the outer
expression of the fruit of the Spirit.

Let's pray:

Lord, we want to thank You,
that you began a good work in us, by bringing us to faith.
We thank You that You continue this good work, as we grow
in love, knowledge and discernment.

Lord, forgive us, for when we've had a distorted view of love.
Forgive us for the times when we've had the attitude that "We
know best".

Because we don't... "You alone, know what's best"...
You alone, make real, undistorted love...
Help us to love, with that sort of love.

Lord, please don't let us be misled.
Our desire, is to approve what is excellent.
Lord, give us the gift of Discernment.
And help us to recognise those in our midst, whom You have
gifted with Discernment.
And help us to listen to them,
that we would **not** get led down the garden path,
but rather, be led into righteousness.

Lord, help us to be a fellowship of Grace,
Filled with love;
Knowledge;
Discernment;
And righteousness.

In the Name of Christ, Our Lord, Saviour and Master,
Amen.