

## I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to Pathway and welcome to part two of our new series. I'm doing a series of talks based on an ancient book in the Bible. The book is called Philippians.
- B. The title of the whole series is: **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't!**
- C. The book was written by a man named Paul. He is the supergiant of the earliest days of the church. When it comes to sharing the good news of Jesus around the world, nobody matched him. Paul was number one.
- D. Nothing stopped him.
- E. In fact, this little booklet called Philippians is a letter from him to a church in the city of Philippi. Philippi was a bustling Roman colony, and that means something... which we're going to see.
- F. When Paul wrote this book, he was a prisoner, so this is called a Prison Epistle of Paul—he wrote 4 books of the NT this way.
- G. Let's get into the Word...
- H. And as we dive into Paul's words, especially his prayer, I want us to hear it through the lens of our series theme. Because if there's one area where those 'I can't' messages bombard us, it's in our ability to truly love and to fully receive love.
- I. So today, my message is: **Quit Telling Yourself I Can't Love or Be Loved.**
- J. Paul's prayer shows us how God makes that possible.

## II. Scripture

- A. *"[6] being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; [7] just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. [8] For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. [9] And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, [10] that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, [11] being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."* (Philippians 1:6-11)
- B. Before we even unpack what Paul prays for these Philippian believers, notice the incredible love he expresses to them.
  - 1. He tells them, 'I hold you in my heart.'
  - 2. They are his 'partners in grace.'
  - 3. He longs for them intensely, with a heartfelt tenderness.
  - 4. In a Roman world that could often be harsh and impersonal, Paul opens his letter with a flood of love, showing them just how much they mattered to him and to God.
- C. One of the coolest things I've ever seen happens at the football team practice for Shasta College. They have what's called "I Love You Thursdays."
- D. It blows me away. When practice is over on Thursday night, the head coach tells everybody something like, *Now go tell your team you love them.*
  - 1. And then this happens: every player and every coach gives a quick hug to every player and every coach and says, I love you.
  - 2. And I know you might think that's weird. But you've gotta understand that these are men aged 18 through 22, and a lot of them have never had anybody in their lives tell them I love you. They didn't grow up that way. They've never had that affection expressed to them.
  - 3. And on the other side of that, a lot of these men have never said I love you to anybody in a way that was healthy and not manipulative.
  - 4. So you got 100+ men in full football gear coming together as a team and making sure that every guy feels loved, every guy feels part of the team.
- E. In his own way, that's what Paul just did. I love you, he says. And I pray for love to grow in you.
- F. Essentially, Paul is praying for them to be incredibly healthy and thriving in the love department.
  - 1. **The essence of God's work in your life is to bring you to a place where LOVE is an ever-expanding, ever-deepening reality that defines who you are becoming in Him.**
- G. This plays out in marriage. This plays out in family. This plays out in friendships. This plays out in healthy relationships. And this plays out in you overcoming the dysfunctions you've been handed in your life.
- H. When Paul enshrined his prayer for new believers in the city, it was a prayer above everything else for love.
- I. To understand the power of Paul's prayer for these Philippians, and for us, we need to first get a glimpse of the world that shaped them – a world that was often incredibly damaging to the human heart's ability to love and be loved. Let's step back into ancient Philippi for a moment... warning, this is going to be rough.

## III. Five Brutal Facts about Roman Culture

- A. So, how did the world program these Philippians, potentially creating deep blockages to the kind of love Paul prayed for? Let's confront a few brutal facts about life in a Roman city like Philippi:
  - 1. **Brutal Fact #1: Your worth was dictated by public perception.**
    - a) Life was an unrelenting stage of honor and shame. Your value wasn't inherent; it was dictated by public perception. Any misstep meant public disgrace for you and your entire family... I can't be loved if anybody knows the real me.
  - 2. **Brutal Fact #2: Absolute power, not affection, defined the home.**
    - a) The *paterfamilias*, the father, wielded absolute legal authority over his household, including the power of life and death. The system demanded rigid obedience; expressed affection or emotional connection optional. God meant family to be the source of tenderness and affection in our lives... ancient Rome had none of that.
  - 3. **Brutal Fact #3: Humans were virtual property.**

- a) Slavery was the bedrock of Roman society and its economy... with up to 60% of the population being slaves. Slaves were property. Their bodies were entirely subject to their owner's will. This put a literally demonic dehumanization at the core of their culture and even of their whole economy. I'm not valued as a person; only as a commodity.

**4. Brutal Fact #4: Life was disposable.**

- a) The practice of infant exposure was legal and commonplace. Unwanted newborns – particularly girls or those deemed imperfect – were simply abandoned in garbage dumps... a standing message saying, "If you don't fit the profile, you can't be loved."

**5. Brutal Fact #5: Sexual exploitation was normalized and all-pervasive.**

- a) This was perhaps the most devastating assault on the human heart. For the vulnerable—the young, women, and especially the enslaved—sexual violation was not just common; it was an expected, structural part of life.
- b) Consent was an irrelevant concept. Consent was not even a concept at all.
- c) Slaves were, by definition, sexually available to their owners; Roman law offered them no protection from sexual assault. This wasn't hidden; it was a deeply ingrained, saturating evil that warped any understanding of intimacy, trust, or love.

- 6. Given these realities, what 'I can't' statements about loving and being loved would be relentlessly programmed into their very being?

- a) It's a chorus of 'I can't trust, I can't be vulnerable, I can't be safe, I can't be truly loved, I can't truly love.'
- b) And it was this brutal world that Paul instituted "I love you Thursdays," right here in Philippians chapter 1.

**(1) The gospel doesn't just save souls; it rehumanizes people.**

- B. In his prayer, it's as if Paul is speaking directly to their deepest wounds. He's saying...

- 1. "You've been lied to. So much of your upbringing in Philippi was a deception. It was a distortion, a lie from the Dark Side. But that is not the ultimate truth for you! There is a real truth. There is a real knowledge. There is a real discernment waiting for you."

- C. Paul prays for a genuine love to grow big in their lives.

- D. He wants it to abound more and more. But this love must be rooted in *true knowledge* – *epignōsis*.

- 1. That's love based on a reality check. It's not the twisted "wisdom" of your world.
- 2. This love must also be guided by all discernment – *aisthēsis*. That's the reality check becoming part of your psychology. That's external reality becoming internal perception, internal wiring, internal emotional health.

- E. Paul is challenging everything they knew. He's saying, "You thought your culture knew what was excellent? It doesn't have a clue. You thought it knew what virtue was? It is lost. Your culture doesn't understand what truly makes a person whole and sincere. It doesn't have a clue what makes a person genuinely blameless before God. Your ideas about love? They come from a culture that is depraved. A culture that is broken. A culture that is utterly lost."

- F. And you could say the exact same thing about the culture you live in today. You are swimming in a sea of damaging, defeating, debilitating deceptions.

- 1. And it is breaking your heart.
- 2. And it is breaking your children's hearts.

- G. So Paul says, "Let me show you where real love comes from."

- H. And this sets the stage perfectly for understanding how such a transformative love could ever take root and flourish in hearts so damaged, in a world so profoundly broken.

- I. How do hearts, programmed by such a broken world, become capable of this kind of boundless, beautiful love?

- 1. Is that something you would want for your children?
- 2. For yourself?
- 3. The magic happens in v. 11.

**IV. The Fruits of Righteousness**

- A. Paul reveals the secret of love in verse 11:

- 1. "*being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*" (Philippians 1:11)

- B. The tense of this verb means this comes first. Whatever he's saying here is the foundation that the love he prays for is built on top of.

- C. Before your love can abound, you first have to be filled with something.

- 1. This is really important; I hope that you can get it.
  - a) It's absolutely non-negotiable for emotional and mental health which are the foundation of love.
  - b) And it is absolutely obliterated by 90 percent of people who interpret this verse of Scripture.

**(1) Being filled with what?**

**V. "The Fruits of Righteousness."**

- A. Let me start by explaining that the word righteousness simply means goodness. Moral uprightness.

- B. So the standard interpretation of this phrase, the fruits of righteousness, is good Christian behavior. You become Moral. You become Decent. You do good works. You practice Moral uprightness. You demonstrate a changed life.

- 1. It's about Behavior. Behavior. Behavior. All the famous Bible scholars say so. When they explain Philippians 1:11...

- a) John MacArthur says: "a genuinely saved person will inevitably manifest righteous behavior."
- b) Albert Barnes says: "all proper conduct... that their lives should be "replete" with all that is good and pure."
- c) John Gill says: "good works in general are meant, which are performed by a righteous" person.
  - (1) They all say that when Paul wrote, "having been filled with the fruits of righteousness" that that phrase refers to your holy, moral, decent, lovely behavior that you do after you get saved.

- 2. I respectfully disagree.

- C. Let me put on my seminary professor hat for 3 minutes. In this lifetime, there are two important phases in your Christian life.
1. Phase 1, Justification. Phase 2, Sanctification
  2. Justification
    - a) **Justification is the incredible, free gift of God where, at the precise moment you first got saved, He deposited into your account an overflowing amount of His own perfect righteousness and goodness.**
    - b) This happens entirely by His grace, through your faith in Jesus.
    - c) From that very first day and lasting forever, your status in His eyes is one of perfect and complete righteousness.
    - d) As a result, God in heaven immediately declares you permanently and perfectly RIGHTEOUS, a declaration made to all creation.
    - e) The profound benefit? You are truly good enough for God, now and forever.  
(1) (See Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8-9; 2 Cor 5:21; Rom 8:1)
  3. Sanctification
    - a) **Sanctification is the ongoing work of God, beginning the day of your salvation and continuing day by day, to bring your actual way of life into conformity with the perfect righteousness you already possess through justification.**
    - b) How does this happen? You actively work out your salvation into your daily life, empowered by Christ and His grace, which then produces good works.
    - c) Unlike justification, your sanctification in this life is always an incomplete process – there will be ups and downs, progress and setbacks.
    - d) But the result is that your behavior, your character, becomes more and more moral, righteous, and good, leading to the benefit of an excellent quality life that honors God and blesses others. You could say that the ultimate result is love.  
(1) (See Phil 2:12-13; Rom 6:1-4; Gal 5:22-23; Eph 2:10)
- D. Let's bring this back to the main point, and the main point is LOVE. In Philippians 1:11, when Paul prays for love, and then grounds that love in you having been filled with the fruits of righteousness, almost every single Bible interpreter interprets that as sanctification... your post-salvation Christian life.
- E. Let me show you why I disagree. Turn one page to Phil 3:9:
1. *"and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;"* (Philippians 3:9)
- F. That's not sanctification, it's justification. That's not performance, it's status.
- G. **It's not behavior, it's identity.**
1. Here's the breakthrough I had this week as I was studying:
  2. **When Paul writes that an abundant, emotional and psychological healing in the love department must be grounded on you being filled with the fruits of righteousness, he is talking about you drilling deeper into justification, not sanctification.**
- H. Because Scripture recognizes that the fruits of righteousness are a basket of blessings that come to you on the day of your salvation, and are all logically downstream from your justification.
1. And... Here's the main point... That these fruits of righteousness provide the only genuine, authentic, effective way of becoming emotionally healthy, mentally healthy, psychologically whole, and relationally competent that anyone will ever find.
    - a) Let me say it this way...  
(1) **The way God heals your broken heart, and restores you to love and wholeness is by giving you a basket of grace, and inviting you to feast on that grace every day of your life.**
  2. Eat to a point of fullness from the fruits of righteousness.
  3. So, if "being filled with the fruit of righteousness" isn't primarily about us gritting our teeth to produce better behavior, what if it's about God filling us to overflowing with the profound, life-altering internal realities that spring directly from our perfect, imputed righteousness in Christ?
  4. What if these are the fruits that come to you downstream from salvation.. fruits that heal us from the inside out, making us whole and capable of that abounding love Paul prayed for?
  5. Let's explore what these "fruits of righteousness"—these direct results of your justification—could be:
- I. The Fruits of Righteousness
1. **Complete Forgiveness: Healing from Every Self-Condemning Voice.**
    - a) You've told yourself, 'I can't be forgiven for what I've done, so I can't be truly loved.' But God fills you with Complete Forgiveness, silencing that 'I can't' with His 'You ARE forgiven, you ARE loved and you are lovable. (Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 1 John 1:9)
  2. **Unconditional Acceptance: Healing from Self-Rejection and Insecurity.**
    - a) Your family told you, 'I can't be accepted if I'm not perfect.' God fills you with Unconditional Acceptance and says, 'Quit telling yourself that. I have accepted you already. YOU are perfectly acceptable to me. (Rom 15:7; Eph 1:6; Heb 12:22-23 [being welcomed into God's presence])
  3. **Unmixed Approval: Healing from Performance-Driven Living.**
    - a) You thought, 'I can't ever truly be good enough to be approved of.' God fills you with His Undiluted Approval in Christ, proving that 'I can't get it right is wrong!'
    - b) (Matt 3:17 [spoken of Jesus, applied to us in Him]; Rom 8:33-34)
  4. **Affectionate Love: Healing from Loneliness and Fear of Abandonment.**

- a) Your past relationships taught you, "I can't find love that lasts; I can't trust it not to leave."
- b) But God fills you with the truth of His Genuinely and Eternally Loving nature, a love that sought you, bought you, and will never let you go. He says, "Quit telling yourself that! My love for you is perfect and permanent, freeing you to give and receive love without fear."
- c) (Rom 8:35-39; 1 John 4:9-10, 16)
- 5. **Your Father's Personal Delight in You: Healing from Worthlessness and Insignificance.**
  - a) The world, or perhaps even your own inner critic, whispered, "I can't be delighted in; I'm too flawed, too much of a burden."
  - b) But God fills you with the astonishing truth of His Personal Delight in You as His beloved child in Christ. He sings over you and says, "Quit telling yourself that lie! You are cherished by your Creator, and that makes you secure enough to delight in others and receive their love."
  - c) (Zeph 3:17; Ps 149:4)
- 6. **Peace with God: Healing from your Inner Critic and Alienation.**
  - a) The chaos around you taught you to always keep your guard up. I can't relax. I can't rest. I can't stop performing.
  - b) Not with God. You have Indestructible Peace with Him, a complete reconciliation that calms the deepest storms. He says, "With me, you can relax! My peace provides the restful platform from which you can extend grace and love."
  - c) (Rom 5:1; Col 1:20)
- 7. **Eternal Security: Healing from Anxiety and Fear of the Future.**
  - a) Your fears and past hurts warned you, "I can't love freely; I can't be vulnerable because I'll just get hurt again."
  - b) But God fills you with Unshakeable Security and Confident Hope in Christ, assuring you that you are held firmly and your future is secure. He says, "Quit telling yourself that! My security gives you the courage to overcome those fears and love openly and sacrificially."
  - c) (John 10:28-29; Rom 8:1; Heb 6:19)
    - (1) You are secure forever.
    - (2) You have everlasting life.
    - (3) You are royalty.
    - (4) You are built for honor.
    - (5) You are a new creation.
    - (6) You have power.
    - (7) You have agency.
    - (8) You have God with you.
    - (9) You have victory.
    - (10) You have a future.
    - (11) You have a destiny.
    - (12) You have a protector.
    - (13) You have a Father.
    - (14) You are richly blessed, highly favored, deeply loved.
      - (a) When you got the gift of God's righteousness, you also got all these things too.
      - (b) And that's just getting started.
      - (c) **When you fill your heart and mind and emotions and soul with the fruits of righteousness... that's when healing flows and love grows.**

## VI. Conclusion

- A. There's a new worship song that captures it beautifully. It says, "Everybody's got a list at least a mile long > Of every scar and every sin from everywhere that we've gone wrong > But there's reason for rejoicin', and the reason is because > That list was nailed to the cross."
- B. That's it! Every reason you tell yourself "I can't be loved," every failure that makes you feel unworthy, every sin that brings you shame – that whole devastating list was taken by Jesus and nailed to His cross. He paid it all. He bore it all. And because of that, you are free. Because of that, you are forgiven, you are accepted, you are righteous in Him.
  - 1. Go back to the Cross.
  - 2. Go back to your Savior.
    - a) Remember what he did for you.
    - b) Remember the price he paid.
    - c) Remember such love for you.
    - d) Remember such care.
  - 3. Go back to your salvation.
  - 4. Again and again and again and again.
- C. Every day you can say...
  - 1. "I am completely forgiven. Shame has no power here."
  - 2. "I am fully accepted by God. I don't need to perform for His love."
  - 3. "My Father delights in me. Today, I live from that delight."
  - 4. "I am eternally loved and secure. Nothing can separate me from Him."
- D. You are more loved, more accepted, more forgiven, more delighted in, and more secure in Christ than you can possibly imagine.
- E. When it comes to the Love Department, quit telling yourself I can't.