

February 11

Scriptures: Read Philippians 1

Key Verse: “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment...” (Philippians 1:9)

Overview

There is a remarkable observation made by Paul in Romans 10:2. He is talking about his fellow Israelites when he says, “For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.” They were zealous but poorly informed; this sounds like a lot of present-day Christians. We’re not talking about baby Christians here, but about Christians who’ve been believers for years but insist on staying in the playpen. Worship for them is feeding enthusiasm instead of feeding faith — swelling the heart and starving the mind.

Paul is alluding to the same phenomenon here. In this case, he’s praying for the Philippians, that their love for God will grow in terms of more knowledge. He wants them to learn more about Jesus, more about righteousness, and more about purity (vv. 9-11), in order to strengthen their ability to discern not just what is good but what is best (“excellent” v. 10).

The apostle Paul emphasized the same point when he said, “But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). To grow in grace means to grow in understanding and appreciation of what the grace of Christ is and its implications, not only in terms of personal faith, but evangelism. And, as is obvious, to grow in grace requires growth in knowledge. The heart may start the engine, but it is the mind that determines the car’s direction and supervises its maintenance.

The more we know about God, the smarter we become. That’s why Paul links knowledge with discernment. The heart may do the loving, but the mind tells the heart why God should be loved.

Prayer

Father in Heaven, we pray with Paul today in Philippians 1:9-11. (Please read this together with us and use the words “we” and “our” rather than “I” and “your”).