



“Always in Our Hearts”

You’ve often heard me say that in the Starkville congregation, August brings an unofficial “New Year’s Day” because of our new and returning college students. Well, this past week our resident members had that feeling of a child’s first day of school, sending off to college, and marriage ceremony all wrapped in one. We have a tremendous sense of excitement for our graduates as they embark on the next phase of their lives, yet at the same time that quiet sense of loss, knowing that we will see them far less frequently, if at all, over the coming months and years. As I had a (literal!) front row seat at commencement this past week, I took great pride in seeing our seniors walk across the stage and receive their diploma covers and have their name called out as graduates. I also had a bit more of a feeling of loss, not having been able to connect with our students as much this year as in years past because of the pandemic.

I so often feel the same as Paul when he expressed to the Christians in Philippi:

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 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. 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.... For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and

praise of God.....Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.”

To all of our students, know that we love you with the love of the Lord and pray for you continually. Know also that if you're leaving, whether it be for the summer or for the next adventure in your life, the church in Starkville will always keep you in our hearts and be longing for your return, whether it be for a short visit, a graduate degree, or a new job in Starkville.

Grace and peace,
David Shaw