

Confident In God's Continuing Work

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This morning and starting throughout morning's services, I'll be starting up a new series. It will be from the book of Philippians. And so if you will please go ahead and turn to the book of Philippians and I am looking forward to going through this series with you. It's a joy to preach from the word of God.

Well, this letter immediately conveys a pleasant warmth highlighting the genuine and affectionate relationship between the sender, the apostle Paul and then the recipients in Philippi. This close bond exists despite the significant distance. This is roughly a thousand miles apart from each other. We don't see anything of out of sight out of mind here. These brothers and sisters despite the distance they are close at bond. We're going to see that. So even though despite again difference in the situation they are close together in heart, knitted together in heart by the Holy Spirit.

And so Paul the sender is writing from a jail, arrested by the way for preaching the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that and that was in Rome. And let me just mention to you the prisons of those days are not like the modern western facilities that we have here. Let me just give you some some details to kind of draw to your mind what I'm talking about. First of all, they were dark. There was no lights. It was just pitch dark and they were cramped. They were not these facilities that you can even fit a lot of people would just be so cramped. They would just be these little dark cells cramped together. And not only that, they were cold. No heating, no air conditioning, none of that sort. You received the coldness in that dark, cramped cell. And addition to it, they were without toilets in the modern convenience sense. I'm not going to go into detail, but you can imagine the smell that was produced in that environment. Food wasn't prepared by chefs in these cells in this location. They had to be brought in by a friend or a family member that thought about you and had the remembrance to give this individual food or else this person can starve to death. That's just a few details of what we're talking about here where the Apostle Paul was confined in. This was certainly not a comfortable or luxurious place to dwell in by no means.

While the recipients are situated in Philippi, a thousand miles away, they are thinking about this man, the Apostle Paul. Let me just remind you of Philippi. It was considered a very wealthy city due to the silver mines that were located at this location. So strategically, this is God here. He used the major Roman highway for this opportunity of this letter to be transferred a thousand miles away to the church located in Philippi.

And so Paul's letter offers a profound look into his inner life. He's going to share with these brothers and sisters what he thinks about them. Instead of dwelling on his difficulties or complaining, this letter resonates with joy, much joy. And this joy is rooted in his deep

connection with Christ and a heart full of him. For it couldn't be from his surroundings, could it? and this preventing his circumstances from overwhelming him. He took care of his inner soul. And he wasn't defined by grief or grumbling. You see none of that here in this letter, but by his vision of God's sovereignty over all situations, he kept near to Christ and was constantly filled with his joy.

So, Apostle Paul remains confident that the Lord is in control of his circumstances. He has complete peace about that. We're going to see that. Now, seeing our lives from this perspective should remove all intimidation, all types of fear. How is this possible? You may ask. However, this often doesn't translate well into our daily lives. We're not in a dark cell like the Apostle Paul where we don't have to deal with our family concerns or work related concerns and the day-to-day life. Right? So the Lord understands this. He understands our current situation. By the way, very similar to the church of Philippi. So this is timeless truths that the Lord wants us to understand which is why he guides us through this letter through the apostle Paul teaching us how to maintain this joy despite life's troubles and difficulties and the apostle Paul didn't grasp this immediately himself and he will mention that in this letter he doesn't put himself above anybody he actively practiced it in his life and for him the effort was worthwhile. We're going to see that in this letter. If that was true for him, it is equally true for you and me. Amen.

So joy is one of the key themes of this letter. And it's striking how frequently Paul uses this word 16 times mentioned in each chapter of the Philippians. And despite his current circumstances and developments within the church in Philippi, let me just point out some things that were going on. It wasn't a perfect church by no means. There were some disunity there, grumbings, disputing amongst sisters in Christ, lacking of being one in mind in Christ, and so much more. We're going to go to that. But again, it goes down to this. Paul shows no sign of depression or a doom and gloom scenario. No, he doesn't talk about those kind of things. His heart overflows instead with joy because he is full of Christ. He has this vertical relationship that is good, healthy and that is what we all can experience in our own Christian life.

And then this joy is also rooted in the fact that the Philippians had not forgotten about him. So Paul deeply valued this tangible expression of their love the horizontal relationship and as it is wonderful feeling when others show empathy and remember us right and this church of Philippi remembered him so the book of Philippians first introduces us to Philippi and actually in the book of acts and specifically chapter 16 verse 11 where Paul and his companion Silas brought the gospel to this city marking the beginning of the church in Philippi in Europe. It was the first church in Europe. And this work faced considerable adversaries including oppression and persecution that led to Paul's imprisonment. And yet the message of the gospel ultimately shone brightly even from the confines of this dark prison cell.

So Paul wrote this letter while in prison again for the sake of the gospel and about 10 years after his initial visit to Philippi. Despite the time that has passed, the bond between Paul and the Philippians remained strong after 10 years characterized by regular contact between each other. And so the Philippians had consistently supported Paul's living. Again, he would have starved to death if this church didn't support him. And so upon learning of his detention in Rome, the church of Philippi, they sent Epaphroditus, a faithful brother in Christ, to visit him frequently to deliver one gift after another after another.

And so, Apostle Paul clearly welcomed their support. He wasn't ungrateful. He was thankful to the fullest. In fact, evident in the tone of this letter. So Paul's letter to the Philippians is primarily an intimate expression of deep gratitude more significant than the gifts he received above that Paul was thankful for the Philippians heartfelt compassion in what was revealed in his heart and it was this that he was confident in their understanding and trust of this relationship that it would be marked by how they represented the gospel at this church. So the loving tone underscores the profound connection, truly valuable relationship he shared with this particular church.

And the gift from the Philippians was a tangible expression of their enduring love for Paul. They held him close to their hearts, never forgetting him, but always thinking about him with heartfelt gratitude and concern. Always concerned about what is Paul what is he where is he at? and Paul reciprocated this deep affection recognizing their worry and aimed to alleviate their anxiety through this letter.

So this mutual profound relationship between a church and God's servant is a powerful model for all local churches including us here at Calvary Road. So Paul viewed every circumstance even his imprisonment as an opportunity to advance the gospel and minister to people's spiritual needs. And in this deep way, in this personal way, he sends this letter to them. He shares experience with the Philippians. And unlike the book of Romans, which key theme there is doctrine, the book of the Philippians primarily focuses on the Christian life and experience.

So it is important to have doctrine right to understand it deeply but it's also important to have an encounter with Christ and to live out that relationship day to day in and through us. So true Christianity is not merely about doctrine. It is a life of experiencing Christ where doctrine and life are inseparable and mutually essential. And spiritual development is a continual process and not a quest for ultimate material success or a single defining best moment of our life. Not just capturing all the best moments. That is not the Christian life. And we see that with the apostle Paul instead. We see a video running continuously of his life through these pages of scripture. All the ups and downs that we know this is how the Christian life really is.

So this for this growth to occur, Christ must be absolutely central and you must constantly focus on him, engaging with his word and then by that your spiritual growth means being increasingly filled with Christ daily, embracing him and all your actions and doing nothing apart from him. And this is a profound commitment. And the question remains, have you reached this level in your spirituality of this having this fullness of Christ? I certainly haven't. And neither had the Philippians, hence writing this letter.

And so the Christian life is likened to a pilgrimage through a wilderness. And what is a wilderness? It's not like the deserts here in California. They were dry. Really dry. No water nearby, dead all around, and a very unwelcoming landscape. Much like the world to the Christian, that's how we're supposed to see the world, its systems, and all that. And a Christian's primary focus is not on earthly surroundings, right? But on Christ in heaven, fix our eyes on him. And what does that do for us? It gives us a heavenly perspective and objective that is a constant motive for the journey that Christ has placed us in on this earth and inspiring him for greater activity in his ministry.

For the sake of this goal the Christian willingly gives up anything that hinders this achievement. Amen. So life in this world is marked indeed with many struggles that impact us day to day. And so this letter we're going to encounter a man whose life is saturated with Christ not saturated by the surroundings. So when you learn to focus steadfastly on Christ at all times, you develop increasing resilience against the relentless attacks of temptation which seems to be going ever more strongly, doesn't it? Today through all the media outlets, difficulties and problems and struggles and worries lose their power to try to separate us. They will try their best to separate from you and Christ for he is greater than all our troubles. They want to know how to get to those troubles and insert themselves instead of Christ. But Christ is what did he say? Never leave us nor forsake us. Amen.

So when Christ is involved in your life, the problems don't vanish. They don't. But they are brought under his control. All things are under his control. Amen. So instead of struggling in faith and your faith, you experience the power of the spirit. And when Christ is seen, the Holy Spirit is at work. When you see him more, Holy Spirit is at work. And as your eyes are fixed on Christ, the Holy Spirit keeps on working. It's a paradox, isn't it? See, it's fixing your eyes on him, not work before Christ. Amen.

So, the Holy Spirit gains free access that way. When you look to him, free access because you're looking at him. He's showing you things of Christ day to day more and more full and full in Christ. And when you do that, your entire outlook in life will look different with the person of Christ more and more involved in your life. Would you want to continue struggling by the way in your own struggle in your own strength or would you rather have the strength of the Holy Spirit with enduring all the struggles? That's the question I pose to you as we enter into this book. It was a long introduction but I think it was necessary to help us engage with this book and not treat this lightly but to see what immense benefit can be done and wrought into your soul if you will truly allow the word of God speak to you this morning.

So let us look now at verse one. Verse one says this. Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi with the bishops and deacons.

Here we see this salutation from the apostle Paul and this is usual Paul's letters. He begins by identifying himself as the author. He then includes along in this case Timothy whom Paul referred to as his own son in the faith. We see that in 1 Timothy 1:2. Timothy was a trusted companion in Paul's ministry throughout Philippians 2:20, if you will go there, it says this about Timothy. For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state. and was already well known to the Philippians at this time. So by naming Timothy alongside him, Paul emphasized that Timothy also fully endorses the letter's message. He agreed upon this and this was significant because Paul planned to send him to them soon. And so although Timothy is listed as a co-sender, the letter's content indicates Paul as the sole author. This is evident because Paul frequently uses the first person pronoun I throughout the text.

Also note that Paul does not write as an apostle. He introduces himself and Timothy as the servants of Jesus Christ. By the way, this word servant in the Greek means *doulos*. And the literal translation of this word is bond servant which means one who is subservient to in this case Christ and entirely at the disposal of Christ his master because Christ redeemed this bondservant you as the bondservant and this description is of all Christians because why he set us free. 1 Corinthians

6:20 says this, "For ye are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." You belong to him. He owns us now.

And then Galatians 3:13 says this, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." The curse is the result of what? God's judgment for our disobedience. And Christ had no disobedience in him whatsoever. He was obedient unto death. And yet he took upon our disobedience, our sin upon him. He took our disobedience and our sin upon him and took that curse upon himself. That's our savior. Amen. And that burden of this curse had been lifted by Christ sacrifice on the cross. We don't have that burden anymore of that sin that so easily besets us. And anyone who trusts and understands the price Jesus paid for their redemption will always desire to be his bond servant. I am included in that.

And so Paul and Timothy identify themselves as Christ bondservants placing them on the same level as the Philippians, the Christians. You notice that? So, the true significance of this letter does not come from the author's apostolic authority by no means. What truly matters is how the contents of this letter are applied to daily life. That was the concern of Paul. That was the concern of Timothy, not about position.

So instead of focusing on self-centered goals, Christians focus on eternal values, namely the gospel that our lives are aligned with God's will and his word because they have eternal value. And this is seen in Paul's life as a bondservant not on the basis of his position as I mentioned as an apostle. Paul avoided writing as an apostle to emphasize that the Christian experience he describes is accessible to all ordinary Christians not just those with apostolic status. The experience shared here is one that is common to every believer who lives as a bondservant of the Lord and having ceased to live for themselves only.

So Paul addresses his readers as all the saints, making it clear that his message includes everyone and transcends any internal divisions or parties. Meaning, oh, I'm with Paul or I'm with Cephas or I'm with Christ. Remember that in Corinthians. None of that. He doesn't want any of that. He wants everyone to know I am a respecter of no man. He chose that to use this term specifically to all saints.

These saints hold a dual identity. Their spiritual position you see here in the text is in Christ. That's their that's our spiritual position in Christ Jesus. And then there are also the saints in Philippi. You see that at Philippi which we see as their earthly position. We have dual citizenship. Amen. So, you're called to live out your faith and bear witness right where you are in your community and in the local church. That's what Paul was saying. You're in Philippi. Go from there. Go from your local church. Just as believers in Philippi, that's what we're supposed to do.

And as a saint, you have been set apart from the world in Christ Jesus. This means you no longer belong to the world but have been separated to live for God. Your daily life in the very place you reside is where you express this calling to your neighbors to your community. You are to be the light and salt as Jesus said. So that's the all saints.

Now let's pivot to see what does with bishops and deacons what does that specifically entail? While these mentioned here with bishops and deacons makes it clear that they are considered on the same level as the saints in Christ Jesus. He is the main common denominator even amongst

them. By the way, in the Bible, bishop or overseer, another way of translating it, or elder or pastor refers to the same leadership role in the local church, involving guiding and feeding from the word of God and caring for God's people and the qualification of an overseer can be found in 1 Timothy 3 1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

Well, of those between those two books with 1 Timothy 3:1 pointing out the importance of having a desire for the office that is very important before all that. The first thing that Timothy mentions is do you desire this office? Is God calling you to this office? Is it a personal internal call? I praise God that I had that and I also received external confirmation from the voting. Those are both very necessary that the church of God sees the qualifications met not perfectly but met to a degree that this is a person that is qualified.

Now let's look at deacons. Deacons are people who are responsible for the material things for the care of the local church the people around. The qualification of a deacon can be found in 1 Timothy chapter 3:8 to 13 that this is not a lesser service than that of the overseer but it's just another type of office. The overseer is mainly responsible for the spiritual needs of the believers. Both these offices require a direct dependence on the Lord. They are both to show no respecters of persons, no favoritism whatsoever. And I pray that as a pastor and for all the deacons that we do that and you see that then only there then only then when that happens the service can be of great use that we can truly honor the Lord when we do it that way. Amen.

Now, let's go down to verse two. Verse two, read along with me silently. Grace be unto you and peace from God our father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul includes his opening greeting with his customary blessing, desiring that his readers experience grace and at the same time internal peace daily. Grace signifies undeserved and freely given favor. Only God can give that kind of grace, unmerited favor. So when one lives with an awareness of this bestowed grace, one would experience the peace of God. Grace is before peace. Paul was very good about order.

And so Paul's desire is for the Philippian believers to receive peace and grace from the two persons of the Godhead. You see that? You see God our father and from the Lord Jesus Christ both the father and the lord Jesus Christ take a deep interest in believers. Are you aware of that on a daily basis? They have deep interest in you. And in turn, believers experience peace and grace as they maintain a strong interest in everything related to the father and the Lord Jesus Christ. It's a dynamic relationship. As he cares for us, we care for the things of God. Amen.

And so within the context of this letter, it is clear that grace and peace comprehensively defines the entire Christian experience. And so these two blessings are relevant to every aspect of a Christian's character development.

Verse three, if you would read along. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy.

So Paul's letter is characterized by a basic tone of gratitude here. When he considers the Philippians, he is immediately moved to give thanks. And this mirrors a common human experience. Thinking of certain individuals you might have in mind often brings forth

unavoidable emotions. The nature of these feelings reflect the significance of those people in your life. And while negative experiences might prevent an overflow of that gratitude, the feeling is quite different when you reflect on people who have profoundly impacted you in a positive way. People to whom you owe a great deal. And again, that's done due love with a different change of heart where people really love you because it's the love of Christ shown abroad by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

So just as good memories bring joy and gratitude to a person, so too does Paul's recollection of the Philippians affect him. He expresses his thankfulness to God every time he thinks of them. every time you notice that it says always in every prayer and he expresses his thankfulness to God in this way and in recognizing that God is the one who established this bond of fellowship.

Look down with me verse four. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy.

So Paul consistently he remembers the Philippians and their involvement in his ministry which is why he always thanks God and prays for them and significantly his prayers for them is not a heavy burden whatsoever or a complaint before God. No, but rather his prayers come from a source of confidence and with joy. That's how he's praying in that tone. He prays with joy and then he prays for you all. So think about that for a moment. Every single believer in the church of Philippi, he was thinking like this. Not this person is excluded. No, no, everyone. That's that was convicting to me.

And so I love the heart posture of the Apostle Paul here as an elder himself, as Apostle himself. And so this all-encompassing joy and prayer for the entire congregation is a fact worth noting. He didn't put this lightly here. When he meant all praying like this, he really means it. So this church appears to be united without exception in the gospel and demonstrating complete involvement in the gospel. Paul shared with them and even with Paul imprisoned they continue to be participants in the gospel consistently offering their support for the furtherance of this and the gift they sent to him serves as evidence of this commitment. Such a church inspires the same level should inspire the same level of participation. Amen.

And then let's look at verse five if you will. Says, "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now."

The bond with the Philippians was deeper than mere acquaintance. They were Paul's spiritual family, his true brothers and sisters in Christ. This was genuine fellowship marked by shared testimonies and a mutual faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is what fellowship means. Sharing the testimony of the Lord Jesus Christ and then having the mutual faith that the gospel is what sustains us in our living that Christ lives in and through us and we're sharing in that in conversation.

So he says that here and then from that moment he says from the first moment they heard the gospel I love this part when the first moment they heard the gospel from Paul they immediately embraced it two are recorded in the book of acts acts 16:14 this is what it says and a certain woman named Lydia a seller of purple of the city of Thyatira which worshiped God heard us whose heart the lord opened that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.

And in Acts 16:25-33, it's an amazing story here. At midnight, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God and the prisoners heard them. And then verse 26, and suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were shaken. And immediately all the doors were open, and everyone's bands were loosened. and the keeper of the prison awakening out of his sleep and seeing the prison doors opened, he drew out his sword and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light and sprang in and came trembling and fell down before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, he and all his straightway.

Furthermore, their support for his ministry and the preaching of the gospel was not one time. It wasn't just a mere emotional reaction but a sustained commitment with that word there where you see from the first day until now until this receiving of this letter 10 years later same commitment.

Now some Christians show a momentary enthusiasm for a structured gospel outreach ministry and joining the collective effort for the Lord. However, their gospel activity often ceases once the event ends and regular life resumes. The Philippians, however, in contrast were different. Their dedication to the gospel was not based on temporary emotion or impulse. It was continuous and persisted with the understanding of the words until now.

Here at Calvary Road. I am looking forward I'm really truly looking forward to finding more opportunities to be consistent in our gospel outreach to our communities where we reside. And so, please continue to be in prayer for those opportunities to become a reality soon. Amen.

Let's continue at verse six. Verse six, being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Paul acknowledged that the Philippians journey was ongoing recognizing that until now. You see that expression also here. It was not the final destination. When they received this letter, it was okay, you're done. No. Nevertheless, he expressed complete confidence in them, looking forward to the completion with joy. His assurance for their future stem from the knowledge that the fruit evident in their lives when he first encountered them was a product of God's good work in them. Therefore, he was certain that God will continue and complete this work culminating you see there in the day of Jesus Christ.

So the first day marks the beginning of our spiritual journey as believers. That's the start of the race. The day of Christ is the period when Christ will openly take sovereign control over the whole world. And that's in Psalm 2:8. So for believers, this future day begins with for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord. And immediately following this we will appear before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10. At that time, we will gain the Lord's perspective on our lives, resulting in the

same judgment as his. He will give us the judgment, and we're going to say yes and yes and yes. Every judgment will be perfect at that day. And then the culmination, 1 John 3:2 says this, "We shall be like him." Signifying the completion of God's work in us.

So as we come now to the close of our service this morning, I want to give you a moment to reflect on what we just heard. Paul reminds us that salvation is not something we achieve. It is God. It is something God begins. He starts the work. He carries the work and he completes the work. And he does it through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is his gracious work from beginning to end.

And perhaps as we've opened the scriptures today, you might be thinking, you've never had a moment when you turn to Christ and trusted him as your savior from your sin. If God is beginning something in you today, don't turn away. The Bible says, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." You've heard the word of God here today. The Bible tells us that Christ died for our sins and rose again so that we may have a new life in Christ.

So in the same God who began his work and is so is faithful always to complete it. And you don't have to fix yourself first. Remember that was my mistake. You simply come to Christ as you are. And I would count it a privilege to open a Bible and show you how you can know Christ personally. Let God begin his good work in you. Maybe it might be today. That is my prayer.

Let's pray. Father, what an awesome privilege it is to preach your word. I thank you Lord for the example of Apostle Paul right at the beginning showing us how to be constant and consistent and being filled with Christ through the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you Lord for the example of the church of Philippi of their deep relationship and fellowship in the gospel with the apostle Paul. Thank you for their commitment their example of it through the ways that show their affections through all these years before writing of this letter.

I pray Lord that we would take notice of these things that your Holy Spirit would imprint it into our hearts to see these timeless truths and to apply it into our own lives. And Father, I pray that the gospel will be advanced in greater ways to this local church and throughout the world for Christ's sake. I pray for those as well that do not know Christ that has not sensed that work that we see that he does from the very beginning to the end. Pray father that your holy spirit will convince them that they must come to Christ and him alone for salvation from their sin. Blessed and father and we'll thank you in Jesus name. Amen.