



## PHILIPPIANS: WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

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### Philippians 1:1-11:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,  
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:  
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 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.

Hello family. I'm really excited to kick off this new series in Philippians where we really look at the idea that we can experience gain in our loss and uh, that's what the apostle Paul is going to help the church see in their own situation. Now we're going to look at Philippians 1 and just the first eleven verses, which really is an intro with a prayer, and it's important to know the background as we enter into this text.

See, Paul the apostle is writing a letter from house arrest, he's in jail in Rome and he's writing a letter to this house church. It's a small church, probably 20 to 40 people that meet in a woman's house, her name is Lydia. And he's writing to a situation where they're experiencing suffering, they're experiencing troubles. And I wanted to go through this text together with you because it's very familiar to what we're experiencing.

Uh, being in houses stuck almost like we're under house arrest. Now, some of the background of the story is that Paul is writing to the church that he planted, that he and Silas and Timothy helped get started. Luke actually records this in Acts chapter 16, how the Spirit redirected Paul, Timothy and Silas to a Macedonia and they landed at a leading city called Philippi. Now, Philippi was a Roman colony, uh, that was set up to be a mirror image of Rome. They wanted to be a colony in Greece where if you came into it, it felt like you had walked actually into Rome.

So Paul is with Timothy on the Sabbath and typically they would end up going to a synagogue to find Jews and then share with them about the Messiah, Jesus. But there's no synagogue it appears, so they end up at a river and they find these women who are having a prayer meeting. This woman's name is Lydia and she's leading the group. She's also a business woman, seems to be prominent, a wealthy, influential woman in Philippi. And Paul shares the gospel with her and she and her whole household come to faith and are baptized.

The next scene in the story that Luke gives us is of a slave girl who is a fortune teller who's being used by her owners to make money off from her fortune telling. Of course, Paul immediately knows he can call that a spirit out of her and he does. She set free. Uh, it seems, she probably comes to faith in Jesus. These slave owners are furious because they just lost their business. So they have Paul and Timothy beaten and then, uh, put in prison or sorry, Paul and Silas, uh, beaten and put in prison. And uh, uh, then in prison there's an earthquake that shakes the place, opens the doors, releases the shackles, and immediately, you know, now Paul and Silas were singing, they were praying when, when this happened and, and then the, the jailer wakes up and he immediately freaks out, because he assumes everybody is gone, that they've all escaped and he's about to kill himself with a sword.

But Paul yells out, Don't do it! We're all here! No one's left!

To which the jailer runs to Paul and says, Sir, what must I do to be saved?

And Paul then tells him, Believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved.

And a church has started. That, what a crazy way to start a church, an earthquake, a demon possessed fortune teller, a a woman doing business who's praying at a river. And it's amazing how God can take the craziest situation and bring people to faith through it and even form a church through it. And I believe that he's going to do that in this season, family, that during COVID-19 God is going to use the situations we're in to bring many people to faith and to strengthen and grow the church. I mean, it might seem crazy to you, but God is known for taking the worst of situations and bringing incredible gain out of them.

Now, it's ten years later when Paul is writing this letter. He's writing it, you'll see with full of thanksgiving and joy. Uh, and, and just absolute deep affection for these people that he loves dearly. Uh, but he's also writing to address some problems with them. They've, there's probably some gossip and some rivalry within inside the church is leading to some separation or division in the leadership, they're experiencing external attack, which is causing them to experience suffering and anxiety. There's also some who are rising up to kind of take advantage of the situation and use and abuse the church for their own personal gain.

So Paul's going to address all that, but what you're going to see through the entire letter is going to keep bringing them back to Jesus Christ as their only hope to endure the suffering, to have hope in the situation, to not live in fear, and to experience unity in the midst of it.

I really think we need this letter right now. We need to know that we can experience gain in our loss, that there is something beautiful that God can bring out of the situation we're walking in. So let's look at it together.

Verse 1, chapter 1, Paul and Timothy servants of Christ Jesus to all, (And that's a word he's going to use over and over again. He wants to affirm their unity by continually referring to everyone, not just to a few) So to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First of all, I hope you notice it's all about Jesus. Three times in his initial greeting, he says, Christ Jesus, servants of Christ Jesus, saints of Christ Jesus. Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. See, Paul throughout the entire letter is going to talk about Jesus over and over and over again. He knows that if we're fixated on something other than Jesus, we won't have hope. We won't find unity. We won't make it through in a way that gains in the middle of our loss. And that's true for us, family.

As we go through COVID-19 we need to continually remember the gospel, fix our eyes on Jesus because it's so easy to get fixated on the news. It's so easy to get fixated on our losses, which are real. It's so easy to get fixated in a how long we've been in our homes and if we're not careful, we will fixate on how long we might be at our homes and instead of fixating on Jesus.

Now, like I said in the Weekly Devo a week and a half ago, a couple of weeks ago, I want you to own your feelings. I want you to do a feeling check in every day. I want you to say, what am I feeling right now? But we can't just get fixated on our feelings. We have to state them, own them, and then go to Jesus with them because he will meet the need and the desire that the feeling is indicating we are longing for.

So that's what Paul does here as well. He's getting them to fixate on Christ Jesus. And then he refers to them as servants and saints, which is really interesting. Paul doesn't say, Hey, I, this is the apostle Paul coming to you. He says, no, this is Paul and Timothy saints, or I'm sorry, slaves. Or better translated, slay...uh, servants and slaves. Like we are purchased by Jesus from his own blood shed on the cross, we belong to him. So we are slaves to Jesus, who are sent to the church to serve you on behalf of Jesus Christ.

See, Paul wants to start there because he knows they'll never move towards the things he's going to call them to if they don't remember, first and foremost, that not only are they sons and daughters of God, but they're servants and slaves of Jesus Christ, that they are here to do his work and to serve one another in the midst of the trial they're facing. He also calls them saints. And the word "saint" is "set apart" or "holy one". That that idea of "set apart" means God has saved you and me, if you're a Christian, for purposes he prepared in advance for us to engage in. That we are his unique people, his set apart people, his holy people in the world to be a distinct kind of people in the midst of circumstances we're facing.

So for our own application during COVID-19 when we hear the word "saints", we ought to think how are we to be a unique people who walk through the situation in a way that's entirely different than the world?

See, Paul wants the church and Philippi to be an expression of God's rule and reign on this earth. Like we taught, we were talking about last week in our prayer, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Paul wants them to be the saints of God, the set apart people, who give people the experience of heaven on earth. Just as people would come to Philippi and say, This feels like Rome. God wants people who interact with the church to say, This feels like heaven. This feels like I'm in the kingdom of God. This feels like I'm experiencing Jesus's rule and reign over my heart, over my mind, over my life. These people that I'm with are showing me what it would be like if I had that myself. So we have a great opportunity to serve King Jesus as we serve others and display the kingdom as saints of Jesus Christ.

Now in order to do this, I want to remind this church, we're all in this together. This, this is all of our situation. This is all of our reality. This is all of our calling as the church. As Paul continues his letter in prayer, we're going to see him pray-preach. Parents, you might know what this looks like. You maybe are about to sit down for dinner. Your kids are fighting. They're saying mean things. They sit down. Is that what we're going to have for dinner? Are you kidding mom? Come on. That's not what I like, and they start complaining and you go, Okay, Stop. We're going to pray and this is what your prayer sounds like, Father, I pray that you would remind us that we are blessed that many in the world don't have food, but we have food. That many of them don't have a house. That don't many of the people don't have a in the world, don't have a warm place to sit, to sleep, to enjoy family together. We have that. God I pray you to remind us again of how good we've got it. And Father, just as you are loving and kind and gracious to us, would you teach us how to be loving and kind and gracious to each other? And you might continue to pray. How many of you've ever done that? I'm guilty of that for sure.

And, and what's going on is Paul is praying he's going to write his prayer out so he, they do know he has been praying for them, but his prayer is instructive. His prayer is in a way, a leading in the way they ought to believe and therefore live. And so he's going to give thanks first of all for their partnership and the gospel. Then he's going to make intercession for their relationships that they would abound in love. And then he's going to acknowledge and praise God for the way God has made them fruitful.

So let's start with the first part. He gives praise, gives thanks for their partnership in the gospel.

Verse 3, 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.

You're going to see this in Paul. You're going to see this throughout the Bible, before Paul goes to intercessory prayer, making requests for God to do something, he starts with thanksgiving prayer. I think it's a great pattern for us to learn from. See, he wants to be thankful and full of remembrance, and he wants the church to be thankful and full of remembrance of what God has done for them before they ask for God to do something for them.

The way that this works is it keeps our hearts, when we start with thanksgiving, in a posture of humble gratitude, and because we know of what God's done in the past, it enables us to pray with a confident expectancy. See, the reality is family, so much of our grumbling discontentedness and are fearful anxiety is actually just connected to the fact that we're focused more on what we're lacking. We're focused more on what's wrong. We're focusing more on what's not going the way we wish it was going, and instead of focusing on who God is and what he's already done and who we are as a result of it.

So Paul wants to start there. Now think about this. Paul is in chains in prison and he is the most joy filled man in all of Rome. Why? Because he always starts with thanksgiving. So we can experience the same kind of joy if we start every moment thanking God for what he's already done, for what he's already given us. And there's no better time for us to do that then now, because if we're not careful, we will only focus on what's wrong, what we don't have, what we don't get to do instead of what God has already done for us in Christ.

Now, also notice Paul, when he gives thanks, rarely gives thanks for things, he almost always gives thanks for people, even the broken ones and in this situation he's saying, I'm giving thanks for all of you. I'm thankful to God for every person in the church.

Doxa I want you to hear this. I along with the elders and staff are so thankful to God for you. I mean we, when we pray, we pray for you, we pray with joy in our hearts because we are so thankful for this, this church. We're so thankful for every one of you

and the gift that you are and I hope that you hear that and that leads you to also give thanks for others.

In fact, I would want to just stop and ask, how have you been doing in this? Have you been pausing to give thanks for your brothers and sisters, for the leaders God's given you, for the people who care for you that are in your life? Even now made me take a moment just in your heart, capture those people in your mind and give thanks to God for them. Their faces, hopefully, hopefully their faces are showing up right now and you're in the the mental screen that you have that their names are popping up and you're saying, Yes God, thank you. Thank you for them.

See, Paul is not just thankful for people but also for their partnership in the gospel. See, all of them, every member of the in the church is a partner with Paul and the gospel and a partner with one another. And that's the same with us as well, family. We need to remember we're partners in this. We're together in this.

We're all in together in this and the word partner or partnership in Greek is "koinonia". Some of you may have heard that word before. The idea of koinonia is that it captures this concept of very close relationships that are mutually committed to a common purpose and are willing to sacrifice and share resources for that purpose. And that relationships that are koinonia are like marriage and family, uh, business partnerships, uh, when people purchase property together and own it together. And the church for sure is that the best picture of koinonia.

Now, sometimes the word koinonia gets translated "fellowship". And if we're not careful, we think, well, you know, fellowship is like having coffee or tea together going out with the guys that have, uh, you know, some beer and pizza together. And that's not the right idea of fellowship. A better way to picture fellowship is really like in the narrative of J.R.R. Tolkein's uh, The Fellowship of the Ring. What what that is, is really kind of a story of the church in some ways. That you've got this radical diversity of, of this crazy mismatch of, of creatures and people. You've got, you know, pipe-smoking hobbits with big hairy feet. You, you've got a few warrior men, you've got an elf with amazing archery skills. You've got this come-out-from-under-the-mountain dwarf with an axe.

All together they share in this common mission of defeating darkness and saving Middle Earth. And they're so devoted to the mission and so devoted to one another

that they're willing to die for it. See, that, that's the picture of koinonia. That's the picture of true gospel fellowship, true partnership.

Remember Doxa, that we don't go to church. We are the church. And in this season we need to embrace koinonia. We need to embrace gospel partnership like never before. We're all in this together and we are forever family on the mission of Jesus. That's who we are. And Paul continues to describe the affection he has for them in this gospel partnership.

He says, 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 defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. See, all of them had received the same grace of God through the good news of the gospel.

They were partakers together of that and, and then they, they lived a life on the mission of Jesus together. I mean, just think about what they experienced together. You know, they, they, they saw a household come to faith. They saw slave girl get set free from a spirit that was possessing her. They saw a jailer, a family come to faith. This is like an Asian woman, a Greek girl and a Roman soldier all finding themselves becoming one family. And then they watched Paul get beat. They watched him suffer and now they know he's in prison suffering more. And if you don't know the story, they, they send this guy named Epaphroditus to go and take care of Paul's needs and to bring an offering from the church. For ten years, this church has been supporting Paul and caring for his needs and Epaphroditus is almost loses his life in the journey, and, and, and fortunately he's, he's saved.

But they hear of this. And so this church is suffering together and Paul knows they're now suffering from attack outside and attack inside. And he's saying, Then you're your partners. Don't forget this. You suffer together. You suffered with me, you gave me money, you supported me, you helped me. We are together in this family, and they experienced this, and I know when we experience that kind of familial love, and gospel-centered partnership, and an absolute devotion to the mission to see the gospel advance together, that forms a bond.

I mean some of my greatest experiences or when I was with people who are committed together to give their lives devoted to Jesus for the sake of advancing the gospel and seeing more people come to faith. I'm sure many of you have



experienced that. And it's one of the richest experiences you can ever have, when you're willing to give yourself for others at whatever cost it requires. Family, we need to do that now. We need to experience that now. I want to ask, do you believe we're all in this together? Do you believe we're all partners in the gospel?

You know, many of you have done that, a great job of this family. I'm so proud of us. As far as I've heard, our giving has continued to stay pretty steady. You're continuing to support the work. I'm hearing of people reaching out and caring for each other in remarkable ways at cost to self and even our finances. I'm seeing people reach out to, to pray for one another. We've already seen some, some healing happen. We, we saw a young man who got in a car accident, went to ICU, and I saw a lot of you start to pray and God, God rescued him. I mean we're partakers of the gospel together. And I'm telling you, the more that we do that together during this day, the tighter our bonds going to be, the greater our love is going to grow, the more fulfilling our life with Christ is going to become.

I remember years ago I was working at a Christian camp and, uh, one of my best friends, his name is Tim, uh, we led these kids to Christ in this cabin and, and uh, one of the kids got sick. And I remember hearing in the middle of the night, all of a sudden the, the, what were the kind of the murmurings of what was going to be vomiting all of a sudden. And he vomited all over the place. A couple of their kids started vomiting. We had like four or five or six kids just getting sick and they of course, back to sleep cause they felt better after getting that out. But my friend Tim and I spent hours cleaning up all the mess and it was horrible. I mean, we had to run in, plug our nose, pour Clorox, bleeds all over the floor and water and clean it up and then run out and do it again.

And I remember when we got done with it, we sat out on the hill and it was a beautiful star filled night. And we're laughing and we're crying and, and we just started praying and just saying, God, thank you that we get to do this together. Thank you for this partnership. I mean, we're getting to see kids' lives changed and we're stepping into the mess of it all. But we're doing it together. And family, that's what I want us to experience in this season. That we would step in the mess together, that we would be true partners in the gospel and we thank God that we get to do this for his glory together.

You know, it's interesting for some of you might be lacking joy during the season. And I think the question I would ask of you if that's where you're at, is, Are you going

to Jesus? Are you, are you going to community? Are you still committed to his mission? See, that people are going to lack joy during the season, are going to be going to be the people who don't have Jesus, don't have gospel partners, and don't have something worth living for that's bigger than themselves. Family, we have Jesus, we have gospel partnership and we have a mission that's worth giving our lives to right now. So I encourage you, keep pressing into those things together and you'll find joy in the midst of our loss.

Now, Paul continues and he gives thanks and then he goes to intercession. And he intercedes for their relationships. Verse 9,...it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

See, Paul knows the nature of the gospel and gospel partnerships. He knows that the more we look to Jesus, the more we devote ourselves to one another and the more faithfully commit ourself to his mission, the more we're going to experience our love grow, more and more. And so he's praying that. That the motive would be love, that the expression would be love. And he's praying that we would grow in love in such a way that we grow in love, that has knowledge and discernment. See, some of us have a lot of knowledge and very little love.

And Paul says to the Corinthians in chapter 13 in his first letter, If you have all, all, all that knowledge but you don't have love, it amounts to nothing. So some of you are right now my go, I know a lot, but I don't love a lot. And there may be others of you are going like, man, I love like crazy, but you might lack knowledge. Maybe you lack the knowledge of the gospel and the truths of God in his Scripture. Or maybe you lack the knowledge of the people that you're actually trying to love. And if we do that, that just leads to foolishness or sometimes we try to love and it doesn't really help people.

There's actually a book written about when helping hurts when we try to help people, but we're not doing what they actually need and we don't want to do that in this season. We want to have a love that grows and abounds more and more in knowledge and in discernment.

See, we want to love in ways that are practically wise. That's what, that's what Paul is talking about. That we engage the present situation, yes with love, but love that understands the best way to love in this situation. I'm telling you, we need practical wisdom for how to love during COVID-19. Paul's praying for that, for the church and I

want to pray that for our church, that we would love in a way that abounds more and more in knowledge and in discernment. And he says it this way, So that you may approve what is excellent.

See, the apostle Paul doesn't just want them to do what's good. He wants them to do what's best, what's going to be the best for their situation. And you know, I, I've found at times when we try to help people, sometimes we don't do what's best. I remember I was with our kids one time and we ran into a homeless man and he like immediately asked us for money.

And I said, well, what would you like to use the money on? He said, Well, I want to buy a bus ticket. And I said, Well man, well how about if we drive you, uh, to where you need to go? Oh no, no. It's a long way away. I said, okay, well how about if we drive you to the bus station and pay for the ticket? No, no, you don't need to do that. And I said, no, that's what we're going to do. And see, I knew that probably he wasn't telling me what he really needed.

Eventually he said, Okay, I don't really need a bus ticket. I'll come clean. And I said, Okay, well what do you need? So, I need some food. I said, Okay, well let's go get lunch together. And, and he said, Oh no, no, just give me the money. I go, Well, no, no, it's okay, we'd love to have a lunch with time with you. Let's go get lunch. It's a subway right over there. Let's go eat. He goes, Nah, actually, I'm not really hungry.

I said, Okay, well what do you need? He goes, Well, actually I don't need anything. I just want comic books. I said, what? He goes, yeah, there's a comic book store just down the street. Can we go get some comic books? I'm like, let's do that. That'd be great.

You know what the guy needed? He needed a friendship. He needed somebody to talk to, and so we walked all the way over to the comic book store, got to know his story. Sadly, the store was closed, but you know what? He got what he needed, at least in the moment.

Now we didn't see him again. But I know in that moment I was teaching my kids that love needs to have knowledge and discernment that we, we pay attention to what's needed, not just to what someone's asking us for. And I'm telling you during the season we're going to need that kind of love that abounds and knowledge and discernment.

And Paul continues. And so that, so that we can be pure, which means we have a sincere love and we can help others have a sincere expression of their need. He says so that we, so that we would be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.

And that word "blameless" means that we don't cause any unnecessary offense. See, there's a big difference between doing what is good because I feel bad and I want to make myself feel better by doing something for you, and doing something that is good because I love God and I love you and I want to help you. And so that's the kind of love we're going to need during this season. And Paul knows for them to address the situations they're facing, they need that kind of love, that abounds and knowledge and discernment and is pure, sincere and blameless. It does it in a way that doesn't cause offence but also truly helps people. See, that's, that's what he wants for us.

You know, I, I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but I've had people try to love me or you know, give a gift to me and you kind of tell that they don't really know you. It's not really that sincere. And the more you get to know people, you can give actually give gifts that mean something.

I love that about Christmas at the Vanderstelt home and even here at the, with a staff, we did a Secret Santa this last year. And when you know people well you, you get gifts that mean something. My kids get excited to give gifts to their, their siblings and to their mom and dad because they know what we love and they get excited seeing us open something that has depth and meaning to us. I don't want to disparage my grandfather. He's not with us anymore, but I grew up every year getting a card for Christmas with a \$5 bill from him. I almost never got his presence. I don't mean presence. I mean him being with me and it's like he didn't even know me, cause he didn't know what I loved. I mean I was getting a \$5 bill when you could only buy a couple of candy candy bars with a couple with a \$5 bill. It's just like he didn't know me, didn't discern what I needed. It was like love without knowledge of me.

And so family, I want us to have love of knowledge of God so we know what he's like and what he would do in this situation, and knowledge of one another so that we can love in ways that are really meaningful during this season. We're going to need practical wisdom to love in practical ways that are really helpful to one another while we go through this.

Now I want to ask this question. Are we doing that in a way that we're experiencing good news right now in our home, where the kingdom of God is being tasted? Where, when people, when your family is in the home or your friends are in your home together, they're going, Yeah, just like when you go to Phillipi, it feels like Rome, when you go to this house, it feels like the kingdom. When we eat together, it feels like the kingdom, when we gather, gather on Sunday mornings to remember Christ together, it feels like the kingdom. This is what it feels like heaven right now. And are, is your neighborhood experiencing that from you and are your social media leads and feeds and interests showing that that's what you're all about.

I know for me, I want to keep asking how can I express love in a way that's full of wisdom in ways that mean something so the kingdom of heaven gets experienced? Now you might go, Man, this is a lot, Jeff. We're already struggling just to make it through ourselves. But I remind you, you're not in this alone. We're all in this together. You have Jesus. You have a Spirit. We have one another. We're committed to gospel partnership. We are the church family. You are the church. And lastly, you have the power of God, to help you get through this.

I love how Paul ends his uh, greeting here. He says in verse 11, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

He wants them to understand they don't produce this life. Jesus does. It's in union with Christ, it's in dependency on his Spirit, it's when we go to God in prayer, that God brings the fruit about in our life. I love it.

In verse 6, which really is the centerpiece of his prayer. I didn't read it yet. We heard it in the reading, but he says this in verse 6, ...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.

See, Paul wants them to remember God opened Lydia's heart. If you look at Acts 16, that's clearly how the verse reads. That Lydia didn't make herself believe, God opened her heart to believe. God set the girl free from the spirit that was possessing her. God led the jailer to cry out, Save me! How am I going to be saved? And God did all that.

And if you've come to faith in Jesus, he did this in you. You know there's some of you watching right now and God's doing this in your life right now. He's drawing you. He's creating a hunger in you for something way bigger than what you've got right

now. See, the Bible is really clear. God put, wrote eternity in all of our hearts. And right now some of you are in the place, you're going, Man, I need, I need help. I need a friend. I need a savior. I need somebody to step into my mess and help me.

And some of you, this is the day where you need to respond to Jesus. Like God opened Lydia's heart. Like God set the slave girl free, like God call called the jailer to cry out, Save me! Some of you are in that place right now. I want to encourage you, cry out to God. He wants to set you free. He wants to change your life. He wants to come in and be near to you in these this season and you can do that. You can cry out to him now and say, Jesus saved me, I believe that what you did on the cross for the forgiveness of my sins, that you, you can cleanse me of all the things I've done wrong, that you can come by your Spirit and dwell in my heart by faith. I need you right now.

Some of you, that's where you're at, and I want to remind the rest of us who already know this to be true. We're not going to make it through this with joy because we worked really hard to try to be joyful. We're not going to make it through this with love that abounds for one another because we tried really, really hard to be more loving. We're not gonna make it through this in a way that's going to thrive because we worked really hard to thrive. In fact, all of you know, that if you've been doing that, trying with your own strength, you're exhausted right now. No, we're going to do because it's he who began the good work in us.

We were saved because he did the work. He woke us up, he showed up, he changed our hearts and he who began a good work is going to be faithful to complete the work he started. See, this idea of gospel partnerships, is really this concept that we're in the business, the family business that God started. We're in in the venture he began. And here's the good news. Whatever God starts, he always finishes. And whatever God does, always gets perfected. It's always the best.

See, I can imagine the Philippian church is wondering right now, Are we going to make it through this? Are we going to lose what we had with one another? Or we do, or maybe they're thinking, Did we just blow it? I mean, is God mad at us? Did he just abandon us? Like what's going on? And I'm sure some of us are thinking that right now in the midst of COBID-19 we might be going like, What did we do wrong or are we going to make it? Is the church going to thrive? What's it going to be like on the other side of this?

And I want you to hear this. God started this, this good work of saving you, of forming a church. He did that with Doxa. I mean we're here because of the grace of God. We are the church we are today because God did this. And here's the good news. He's not going to give up. He's going to finish what he started. See, Paul prays with that confidence. He wants them to know he got, he got, God has this in his hands. This is not difficult for him.

I remember as a kid playing basketball when we were really little, we could hardly throw the ball up to get it up to the hoop, and we play with our dad. And you always knew if you gave it to Dad, in fact, you always wanted to be on dad's team cause he was pretty tall, and if it gave it to dad, he would generally score for you. He's always higher than everybody and he is closer to the basket than everybody. And so generally if you had dad on your team and you kept giving Dad the ball, you won. Family, when we pray, especially in this season, we're giving Dad the ball. We're giving it to the one who's bigger than us, who is, who can reach to the heavens, who can accomplish what we can't accomplish. Family, we've got to give him the ball right now.

That's what Paul's doing. He's saying thank you for these gospel partners. They've been so faithful to support me over the years. We're in this together. God help them to grow in their love that is practically wise and genuine, pure blameless. And God when you do this, as you grow us, as you get us through this, as you give us joy and the sorrow, as you bring gain through our loss, we will keep remembering and keep saying, you did this. This is for your praise and your glory.

Family, I want to encourage you to just take a clue from this passage. Take some time to give thanks for the gospel partnerships we have. Then as you do that, pray for one another. Intercede, that our love would abound more and more in knowledge and discernment so that it's pure and blameless. So that we engage the situation in ways that really help people. And then lastly, remember it's he who is doing the work in you and through you. He started it, he'll finish it. And at the end we will continue to give him praise for all that he's done. Let's pray.

Father, we pray that with the apostle Paul, you would lead us to continually remember that you, you have this, that you're big enough to handle it. Teach us in prayer to give you the ball, to trust you, teach us to give you thanks for our brothers and sisters and to lean into the partnership of the gospel this season, to not be alone. Father, some people are still alone. I pray you would move them into community. Father, we thank

you that we also can expect that you will grow our love through this season, that we will love you more, that we will love others more, that we will love each other in ways that are more excellent than we did before. And Lord, as this happens, we praise you because you're the one who's doing it. You started it, you'll complete it. And so we praise your name for it. We pray this in Jesus name, amen.

Family, as you now respond, I'd love to encourage you to follow that pattern of prayer. That you would give thanks for the gospel partnership, for your brothers and sisters that God's given you in the in the faith. Take time to pray specifically for people by name, that their love would abound more and more, that God would teach us practically how to love each other in this season, in ways that are wise and good. And then pause and just give God thanks for the work he's already done. He's done a good work in you. He's going to complete it, but thank him for the work he's already done. Give him praise for the work he's doing in our lives. I love you, family. Hope you have a good week.