

Partners in the Faith

Philippians 1: 3-8

It is impossible to read the letter to the Philippians and miss Paul's great love for the church. In fact, as you read his many epistles, the love he had for the church is confirmed again and again. It does appear he had a special bond with those at Philippi and he sought to encourage them in the faith. He was well aware of the impact they had on his life and ministry, and the partnership they shared in the Gospel.

While he was no longer with them, separated physically, I still see a loving pastor speaking to the congregation he longed to serve. The passage we have considered today paints a picture of a healthy, prosperous congregation of believers. We need to develop and maintain the same attitude and affections they possessed toward one another. Our service to the Lord requires individual service, but congregations will never accomplish the task they have received unless they come together in faith, unity, and love.

As we discuss the [sentiments](#) Paul shares in the text, I want to consider the thought: [Partners in the Faith](#). First we discover:

I. A Conscious Gratitude (3-5) – Here Paul reveals his overwhelming gratitude for the church at Philippi. We need to possess the same gratitude for Fellowship. Notice:

A. His Remembrance (3) – [I thank my God upon every remembrance of you](#). It is evident that the church in Philippi was continually on the mind of Paul. As he thought of the church, he was compelled to thank the Lord for them. His love and devotion prompted him to pray for them.

- I understand my role is different than others in the church. I serve the church in a full time role. You are my only responsibility as far as vocational work is concerned, but it is more than a job I am expected to perform. I too am thankful for each of you and the opportunity I have to serve you. I hope each of you are mindful of the church throughout the day and thankful for those who make it up. We are all blessed to be part of such a wonderful group of believers!

B. His Request (4) – [Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy](#). Each time Paul prayed, he sought the Lord for the church in Philippi. He was thankful for them and desired the blessings of the Lord upon them. They were continually being lifted up by Paul. I don't want to overlook an important aspect of Paul's prayers for them – he did it with joy! It was not a burden to pray for them. He loved them and found great joy in interceding for them.

- I honestly try to pray for the church daily, but I know I could do better. Prayer is the most powerful tool we have and often the least used. As members of this local body, we are obligated to continually pray for one another. Each time we pray, we ought to speak to the Lord on behalf of our congregation. That is not being selfish; that is being a good church member, with a genuine concern for the local body of which we are a part. Our prayers should be offered with joy. It should never be a burden to pray for those within the church. We are privileged to have such an opportunity. I hope we will make the most of those opportunities!

C. His Relationship (5) – *For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.* Paul was also thankful for the fellowship he enjoyed with the church in Philippi. This speaks of them being fellow participants. I have heard it said that fellowship can be described as two fellows in the same ship, working together to move the boat and stay on course. They were fellow laborers in the Gospel of Christ. They shared a common salvation, and a common desire to advance the Gospel. Paul was thankful for those with whom he shared a relationship and a burden for the unsaved.

- Healthy churches require healthy relationships. If we are to remain effective, we must all be willing to actively participate in the work of ministry. There is too much to accomplish for only a few being engaged. We need to be mindful of one another and the needs of the unsaved.

II. A Confident Attitude (6) – *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.* Although Paul was unable to be with the church in Philippi, he was confident of their ability and endurance in Christ. Consider:

A. The Confirmation (6) – *Being confident of this very thing...* Paul was writing to the church from a Roman prison and they continued to face adversity and persecution for their faith, but there was no reason for fear or doubt. Paul was confident of his calling; he was confident of their salvation; he was confident in the Lord. He wanted them to possess such confidence as well.

- His confidence had been developed through a deep and enduring relationship with Christ. He goes on to share the source of their confidence, and the power they possess.

B. The Origination (6) – *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you...* Their confidence was not in men or human ability. They were not depending on the authorities or others within society. The Lord had saved them by His grace. He alone was the source of their salvation and their strength. They had no reason to fear the Lord failing to provide for them. They had received a gracious gift from the Sovereign of the universe!

- Isn't that a blessing? The Lord is the source of my salvation, my life, my hope, my strength, and my security. While the world may deny Him, and even reject the message we share, He has given us the gift of grace. My hope is not in this world or anything it offers. My salvation and eternal hope is in Christ!

C. The Inspiration (6) – [Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it.](#) While they faced adversity, and likely questioned their abilities, Paul offered a word of inspiration. They were not serving the Lord within their own ability. They had not provided for their salvation, and they were not responsible to work in order to maintain it. The Lord had not given them a task to accomplish alone. They were merely the vessels through which the Lord worked and revealed His power. He had begun this work in them and He would continue it!

- Likely most of us are self-conscious about our abilities and often feel inadequate as we serve the Lord. I know I struggle with it more often than I care to admit. Such worry and anxiety is of no benefit. It only distracts us from being used of the Lord. He hasn't asked us to serve within our own ability. We are not responsible to maintain the church. We are only expected to be obedient to the Lord as He works through us. He began this work in us when we were saved and He continues to work through us.

D. The Duration (6) – [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.](#) There was no reason for them to fear the Lord ever abandoning His work in them. It began at salvation, continued in their present lives, and would remain throughout eternity. The Lord had not saved them to forsake them along the way. He had begun a work that would be carried to completion. The saved were secure in Him. The work of grace that started at salvation would endure until the Lord calls for the church and they met Him face to face.

- Many today worry about their security in Christ. They question whether one can know for certain they will make it to heaven when they die. This verse settled that for me. The Lord began this work in me at salvation. He continues to work in my life according to His divine will, and He will continue to work in me until He calls me home to meet Him. I do not advocate we have the right to live as we please, but He started this work, and I believe His promise to finish it! [1 Peter 1:5](#) – [Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.](#)

III. A Content Fortitude (7-8) – Although Paul was bound in prison, he was not dismayed. He continued to trust in the Lord and rejoice in Him. He sought to convey his commitment, even while facing adversity. Consider:

A. His Devotion (7a) – *Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.*

Paul remained committed to the church in Philippi. He remained committed to the work of the ministry as long as he lived. It would have been easy to have given up, and lived his last years in solitude, but he remained devoted to the church. He wanted to be a blessing to them any way he could, for as long as he lived.

- What a challenge for the modern church in America. Commitment and devotion to the church are lacking in our day. We need those with a burden for the church and the unsaved. We need to live each day with a heart for the Lord, His church, and the work of the Gospel.

B. His Delight (7b) – *inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.*

Although Paul was bound in Rome, and they were miles away in Philippi, he rejoiced for their fellowship in the faith. They sought to encourage Paul in his bonds. They too had received the gospel of grace in salvation. They continued to share the good news with those who were yet unsaved. While he longed to be there, working alongside them, Paul rejoiced that work continued, even in his absence.

- We share a bond the world cannot remove. We are recipients of grace and partakers of the divine inheritance. We belong to the body of Christ. We may be separated at times, but the bond we share in Christ is not hindered by space or time. As believers, we are family in the Lord, entrusted with the Gospel, and obligated to carry on the work of the ministry!

C. His Desire (8) – *For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*

Paul greatly desired to be with the church in Philippi. He thought of them often, praying for them continually. He longed for them with great compassion and affection. He was not just paying lip-service to them, but longed for them and loved them as the Lord desired.

- I am convinced we need to share Paul's desire. No doubt we all love the church, but do we love her as we should? Are we burdened for her needs and committed to her well-being? Do we miss it when we are unable to come together in worship? Are we committed to praying for the church as we should? I pray our desire for the church will deepen and grow, helping to maintain a healthy environment within the church.

Conclusion: I am thankful for the church and rejoice to be included within the body of Christ. We serve the same Lord and are going to the same heaven. He has begun a work in the saved that He promised to continue. There is peace and security in Christ. Are there needs in your life? Have you received this gift of grace in salvation? Seek the Lord for whatever needs you have!