

Four Graces of Christian Living

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[0:00] Philippians chapter 1. We'll read the first 11 verses. Please stand together with me for the reading of God's word. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart. For whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

God bless you. God bless you. I invite you to open to Philippians chapter 1. As you do, do you remember what you were doing 10 years ago?

[1:41] Well, that's how long it was from the time that the Apostle Paul first brought the gospel to these people and the time that he is now writing this letter back to them.

The first time that he came into Philippi and preached and found people lost in sin and saw them saved by the grace of Christ and gathered together into a church.

The first gospel fruit in the whole continent of Europe. And now he's some 80 or 800 miles away in Rome.

He's in prison for his faith. The Philippians have heard about his imprisonment. They've sent Epaphroditus to him with a gift. He's come all the way to Rome with his gift.

He's there to minister to him and to find out how he's doing. And this is the letter. These four chapters are the letter that is sent back to the church at Philippi. From servants of Christ Jesus to all the saints in Philippi.

[2:52] Now, it was customary for letters in those days that after you signed on with your original greeting, that you gave a period of the letter for thanksgiving, sometimes to the gods or whoever.

Paul uses that same form of letter writing. And he fills it with Christian content. And so, from this prison letter comes a message of Paul's thanksgiving, of Paul's joy, of Paul's confidence, and of Paul's love.

And I trust that the Lord Jesus himself will draw near and teach us something more of these graces of the Christian life. First of all, Paul's thanksgiving.

Verse 3, I thank my God every time I think of you. Every time I remember you. Now, remember where Paul is. He's not out and about preaching and busy doing this and that.

He's in prison. And so, he's got a lot of time on his hands. Time to think. Time to remember. And isn't memory a wonderful gift of God?

[4:06] There's Paul. And from his cell, he can revisit people and places where he's been in his mind. And every time he went down to Philippi, in his mind, something happened.

He found his heart strangely drawn to the throne of grace with thanksgiving. It happened every time he remembered them.

He couldn't even think about them without fresh thanksgivings to God for them. I thank my God every time I remember you.

And so, there he is in that cell and he thinks, there's that slave girl in the church at Philippi that was set free from demon possession. Thank you, Lord.

And there's that jailer who almost committed suicide and was that close to eternal torment. Thank you, Lord, for saving him. And there was Lydia.

[5:12] Heart closed up like a castle with the bars drawn. And Lord, you opened her heart. Thank you. There was her household. The jailer's household. There was the church that met at Lydia's house.

There were the overseers and deacons. And thank you, Lord, for every one of them. I wonder, are there people in your life that just the very remembrance of them leads you to the throne of grace and thanksgiving?

Thank you, Lord, for this person. Thank you for your work of grace in their life. Is that true?

Just of a few. Or is it true of your brothers and sisters here at Grace Fellowship Church? Is it true of your overseers and deacons? Is it true of all the saints who are in Christ Jesus?

You say, well, some of the saints aren't all that saintly. Well, these saints in Philippi weren't perfect either. And Paul wasn't blinded to their faults.

[6:23] No, in fact, in this letter, he's going to put his finger on some of those faults. It seems like they were arguing and complaining a bit.

And he's going to talk about that. There were two women that were having a squabble. You, Odea and Sintiki, you straighten that out and agree together. He's going to deal with their faults. They needed greater humility and unity, apparently, as this letter is filled with that theme.

So he knew their faults. But their faults were not allowed to squelch his thanksgivings to God for them. And could it be that he thought about his brothers and sisters in Christ in a way that we don't? That the reason upon the memory of any saint in Christ, we do not immediately go to the throne of God in thanks, is because we get hung up with their thoughts.

That we need to have the apostle come and teach us how to think about our brothers and sisters in Christ. When he thought about them, he wasn't focused on their faults.

[7:39] He didn't become preoccupied with their faults. And isn't that so often the problem? It shuts down the whole business of thanksgiving before the throne with us.

What's the first thing that comes to mind when you remember so-and-so, saint so-and-so, and go right through the congregation? Oh, I think of this problem.

I think of that fault. Well, there's your problem. That's why the very remembrance of them does not lead you to the throne of grace and praise. May God teach us to see in each other the abundant causes for thanksgiving to God, so that whenever we think of each other, the very first thing that comes to mind will be, thank you, Jesus, for saving her.

Thank you that he is not the man he used to be. Thank you for your amazing grace that's being displayed in that home. Well, what was it about the Philippians especially that caused Paul such thanksgiving?

He tells us in verse 5, verse 4, something of a parenthesis, and we'll come back to it. But why are you so thankful to your God? Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

[8:57] Now, this word partnership, if you were in the adult Sunday school class several months ago, will remember was koinonia. This is because of your fellowship in the gospel, your participation in the gospel, your partnership, this shared business that we had together.

And that from the first day. So, Paul goes back in his mind to the very first day when he came with the gospel to Philippi. And he says, you not only gladly received the gospel yourself and partook of its benefits, but you also wanted to have a part in making it known to others.

From the very first day, that was the way you responded to the gospel. Now, is that you? That you not only have received the gospel, but you want to have a part, a partnership, in seeing it made known to others?

Does your checkbook bear solid witness to that reality? Do your tax forms that you will fill out show that you not only have received the gospel, but it has got a hold of you and you want others on the other parts of the world to find out about this gospel?

Well, that was the way it was with the saints in Philippi. They partnered with Paul. They were co-workers with him in his gospel endeavors. They owned the cause as theirs.

[10:26] They shared in it. They became partners in this business. And they did so with their finances. They did so with their prayers. They did so with their sympathy. They did so with their leader sending Epaphroditus to them.

They did it with their sympathy for him, their hospitality. In every way, they partnered with him in gospel labor. And my fax machine and email box used to be bombarded with stock tips. And everybody wanted to tell me what the hot stocks are and which ones would have the best return on investment. Somehow we've got it shut off now. But do you know that it's possible to own stock in gospel works?

Do you know it's actually possible to be a partner with missionaries in gospel endeavors? You can partner with the Vons in Grenoble, France.

You can partner with the Favres in Payer in Switzerland and Neuchatel. You can partner with the Underhills over in Nairobi, Kenya. You can partner with Matthew Brennan in Quonmel, Ireland, with the Perones up in Canada, with the Hutchison's and Ellis's in Manila.

[11:44] You can become a partner with it. Those are just a few of the hot stock tips of the day that pay eternal dividends. From the very first day until now, you've been partners with me.

And he remembers the very first day when he preached to Lydia and the Lord opened her heart. You know what she did? She believed and then she immediately said, you come home to my house. I want to take care of you gospel workers.

She invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house. That's an invitation you can't refuse. She had just believed in the Lord. And so she, come with me.

And she cared for the gospel workers' partnership in the gospel. It's exactly what happened with the jailer on the first day of his conversion. He believed and he took them into his home and he washed their wounds and he fed them and kept them for the night.

And then when Paul left town, this church was the only church that supported Paul in his gospel labors. tells him that later on in this very letter.

[13:00] And this partnership in the gospel was no flash in the pan thing that fizzled out after a few months, after Paul was gone. But he says, from the first day until now, until now, it was a sustained interest in furthering the gospel.

He'll say in chapter 4, verse 16, for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. They had abounded in the grace of generosity, proving the sincerity of their love, 2 Corinthians 8, 1-8, so much so that Paul boasts about the Macedonians to other churches.

The way that these Philippians and Macedonia had given was to be told abroad. And it was a sustained interest then for the whole ten years since he's been gone, even to this very day, from the first day until now, because remember, he's just received a paproditus who's brought a gift from them and himself to minister to them.

Such persevering partnership is what caused the Apostle Paul to see that their faith is real. It was a sign of true conversion.

And that's why it caused such joy and thanksgiving in Paul's life that whenever he thought of the Philippians, he thought of their persevering partnership from the first day until now in the Gospel.

[14:24] And so he said, thank you, Lord, for the work of grace you've done in these Philippians. Notice the Godward focus of his thanksgiving.

He doesn't say, I thank you, Philippians, for your partnership in the Gospel. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

Later in the book, there are, or the letter, there are references that we would say he's thanking them. But here his thanks is going Godward. Parents, you have the job of teaching your children to say thank you.

And you have to teach them over and over. When someone gives you something, you say thank you back to them. And the idea is that you say thank you to the one who has enriched you. Well, the Philippians have enriched Paul with their many gifts and partnerships, but he thanks God, not them here.

Why is that? Because God's the reason there are any saints in Philippi. God is the reason that there are any people not still serving their lust and greed in Philippi.

[15:32] God's the reason there's anyone whose heart has been open to the Lord and whose heart and wallets and hands have been opened to the Lord's servants. And so he says, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

Paul's simply tracing the stream back to the fountain. He sees this liberality in the Philippians toward him and he says, where's that coming from?

And he follows the stream and, oh, here's the fountain. It's God. Thank you, God, for the Philippians. And that's what we need to do. Any good thing that we see in each other, in the saints, we trace it back to God and we say, thank you, God.

You're the one that's made the difference in this person's life. This is why she's like this. This is why he's like that. Thank you. Salvation is entirely his work in the Philippians.

And so it's only right that he be the one that's thanked. If it wasn't his work, then there'd be no reason to be thanking him. Paul should just be thanking the Philippians.

[16:44] Oh, he has a Godward view of salvation and we see it here. The only reason there are any saints in Christ Jesus in Bremen is because of him. Let him receive all the praise and thanks for his works in our lives.

That's Paul's thanksgiving. May it mark us in every remembrance that we have of each other. Then Paul's joy. Verse 4. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.

Now this is the first of many references to joy in this epistle. There's some 14 different references to joy. It runs like its own theme throughout the book.

And let's remember where Paul is. He's in prison. And so his prison joy reminds us that true joy does not depend upon our circumstances.

Our joy does not depend upon everything going well for us. Paul's in prison and he's experiencing joy. Joy. If Paul can rejoice in prison then we have cause for joy in our trying circumstances.

[18:06] This isn't the first prison. That prison back in Philippi ten years earlier had witnessed his prison joy. Remember? When about midnight after being flogged and feet in the stocks in the inner dungeon of that prison, he and Silas are singing and praising and praying to the Lord.

And so now ten years later the prison in Rome witnesses prison joy as well. The bars could not keep the joy out. And so I want to know, Paul, how do you find joy in prison?

How do you find joy in prison? Well, we're going to learn many things about joy throughout this letter. But let's just notice this at this point.

That this joy was experienced in prayer. This joy that he's talking about was experienced in prayer. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.

This joy he's talking about right here and right now is experienced in joy. And I wonder then that could it be the reason I have no more joy in my prison-like experiences is because I'm not praying like Paul was praying in his prison.

[19:27] If I prayed more in my trials, I might know more joy in my trials. So we see in this text that Paul not only prayed with thanksgiving to God, but he also prays with joy.

And those two are very closely related. Indeed, thanksgiving produces joy. The one gives rise to the other.

Thanksgiving gives you the food for joy. It gives you the reason for joy. Have you ever noticed that thankless people are joyless people? There is a cause-effect relationship here.

And the very opposite is seen here in Paul that he's thankful and therefore he's joyful. So there's progression here verses 3 to 5.

He's remembering them. He's thinking about them. That leads him to thanksgiving. Thank you God for these people and your grace in them.

[20:28] And remembering the grace of God in these people causes him to pray with joy as he's praising God, thanking God, and going on to ask things of God.

It's with this joy. He thanked God for what he had done and was doing. His mighty work of salvation in their lives, their persevering partnership in the gospel.

And so Paul's heart is filled with joy as he prays for them. So he couldn't remember them without thanksgiving. And as he came before God in thanksgiving and prayer, he couldn't pray.

for them without joy. And that's not just his favorite for all of you, he says. Isn't he? In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.

Remembering brought thanksgiving and thanksgiving in prayer brought joy. The psalmist knew it. Psalm 92 and verse 4.

[21:35] You make me glad by your deeds, O Lord. I sing for joy at the works of your hands. Make me glad at your deeds.

I sing for joy at the works of your hands. So in thanking God for his deeds, we're remembering his deeds and this makes us glad. Let me ask you something.

What makes you glad? What fills your heart with joy? What sets you jumping and leaping and singing for joy? Your answer to that question reveals your true character.

A new heart rejoices in God's works, in what he is doing, in what he has done. And so the Apostle Paul, as he remembers the saints, thinks about the works of God in them, prays with joy.

Brothers and sisters, is prayer time a happy time for you? Is prayer time a happy time for you? It can be. It was for the Apostle Paul, who was a sinner like us.

[22 : 47] How did it become a happy, joyous time for him? Well, he spent time thanking God. And his thanksgivings and prayers to God spill over in joy.

So, spend more time thanking God. Spend more time remembering the works that he has done. If you shortchange thanksgiving, then your joy in prayer will be short changed as well.

So, he prays with a thankful joy for all of them all the time. That's Paul's joy. And we come third to Paul's confidence. Verse six, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Now, right there you have a summary of Paul's theology of salvation. As for salvation, God begins it, God continues it, and God completes it.

Now, that's the whole of salvation for the Apostle Paul. And if you would remember those three points, you'll have a good summary and outline of salvation.

[24 : 13] He begins with the fact that God began the work of salvation. In confidence, this, that he who began a good work in you, God is the beginner of this work of salvation.

That's not only true of the Philippians, it's true of you. Whoever you are that are saved, all of you, I can say this much of you, God began that work in you. How is it that you're a Christian this morning?

Do you think about that from time to time? How is it that I'm here, one who knows the Lord, am a believer? Well, I repented and believed the gospel.

Oh, you did. Well, how did that happen? Well, I came to see the ugliness of my sin and my great offensiveness before a holy and good God and I came to see the beauty of Jesus Christ who perfectly meets my need as a sinner.

Well, you did. How did you come to see that? You know the Bible says that we are spiritually blind and we cannot see. How is it that your eyes were opened? Tell me who opened your eyes.

[25 : 22] Oh, well, it was the Lord who opened my eyes just as He opened Lydia's heart so that she could believe. You repented of your sin? How is it that you came to turn from that that you once loved?

Oh, well, the Lord has changed my will, my desires, my orientation to life. It used to be self and sin, but now I want to please Him. Where did that come from?

How is it that you're a Christian this morning? Well, I came to Christ. And Jesus says that no one can come to me unless the Father first draws Him.

You see, there are no self-starters in salvation. God must begin the work. And it's necessary because if we understand the plight of man, we are so sinful that we would never take the first step. God had to take the initiative. And that's what Paul is saying here. He began this work. Are you convinced of that? You must be. Even if your experience doesn't make it seem so to you, you must judge by God's Word.

[26 : 34] He began that work in you. He gave you faith and repentance. He gave you spiritual life and drew you to faith in Jesus Christ.

Christ. So, Paul is confident that God had begun this saving work in the Philippians because he saw their response to the gospel and it wasn't just a fizzle job.

They have, from the first day till now, have embraced the gospel and have been furthering its cause. And that showed Paul that the work in these Philippians is a genuine work.

They have had the work of salvation begun. He's convinced of it. I'm confident that God has begun this work in you, he can say. And since he's confident that God began the work, he can be confident of a second thing, that God will continue this work all the way to its completion in the day of Christ Jesus.

Notice his confidence is in God, not in the Philippians. He's not confident because the Philippians have such a steadfast determination, such a commitment to the things of God.

[27:41] his confidence in their final salvation is based not on their willpower, but on God's willpower.

I'm confident that he who began the good work of salvation will carry it on to completion until the day of Jesus Christ. Christ. Notice the one who began the work is the same one who carries it on to completion.

And now we're into this question. How is it that you were still a Christian? We've talked about how is it you became a Christian? How is it that you've been a Christian for ten years? How has that happened?

Ten months? How has that ever come to pass? There's a devil at every step that wants to drag you into hell forever. There's a world that is alluring you saying come come I'll satisfy you.

And what it is offering you is the very thing that in your own flesh you find there's something that you want in it. How is it that you've still been on this narrow road for some ten years now?

[28:59] Because he who began the work is the one who is carrying it on. He's the one who's continuing the work. How do you continue in the way?

You say, well, I just keep looking to Jesus. I just keep trusting in Him and when I fall I repent. Where does that grace come from? To keep looking to Jesus.

To keep repenting of our sin. That's God working in us. Both the will and to do of His good pleasure. And Paul is confident that the one who began the work is the same one who will carry it on to completion.

Jesus Christ, the author and the finisher of our faith. The same one who authors it finishes it. God had said, okay, I'm going to begin the work.

There, I've started the work. Now, from here on out, you're on your own. How far would you get?

Did you make it to next year?

[30:11] Before you went back to the world? Back to the mire, like the sow that returns to wallow? How long would it be before you went back?

Did you make it to the end of January? Would you make it to the end of this week? Folks, it happened a whole lot faster than any of us realize. But blessed be God, he who began a good work in you will carry it on.

Will carry it on. He begins it. He continues it. And thirdly, he completes it.

He completes it. And that's why Paul has such confidence in the final salvation of these Philippians. Because he knows that God completes what he starts. Everyone in whom God starts the work of salvation, he carries it on to completion.

[31:25] You say, but I know somebody who started in the Christian life and they're back in the world. Well, you may. And all you've proven is that those who start themselves, some work, some religious experience, do not last.

But you've not disproven Paul's point that all in whom God begins a work, he carries it on all the way to completion. So how do you know those whom God has begun the good work in?

Well, you know this because they will persevere and that work of salvation will carry on all the way to completion. For what God begins, He finishes!

What He sets out to do, He will accomplish! Many of you have half read books on your shelf at home. Not because you are presently reading them, you've given up on them long ago and they will be half read books.

Or half finished projects that you started and then for one reason or other you gave up on it. You began! But you didn't finish! That's the way we are!

[32:32] God is not like us in that regard. Why do we not finish things? Well, we might just lose interest. I thought the book was a good one, but then when we got into chapter 15, it just started to drag.

God does not lose interest in saving his people. Can a mother forget the babe at her breast? Though she may forget, I will not forget you.

See, I have engraved You on the palms of my hands. No, God doesn't lose interest in saving his people. His glory is at stake. He started a work. Can he finish it?

Why else do we not finish what we start? Well, we run out of resources, run out of money, run out of time, run out of ability to finish.

Of course, when we turn to God, we see that he has no limits on his resources. He is infinite in power, in wisdom, in ability. We leave some things undone because we die.

[33:41] And when we die, all of the things that we've been doing are left unfinished. But he is able to save completely those who come to him because he ever lives to make intercession for us.

He never dies. So he's able to complete the work of salvation all the way to the end. This is our saving God. What he starts, he finishes.

You might be a young Christian just starting out on this pilgrimage and you wonder because you see others falling off. Kids that went to church and now they're in the world over their head, have no interest in Christ and you wonder, will it happen to me?

What's to make me any different? Where do I get any assurance? Where do I find any confidence in this Christian life? Friend, you don't look inside.

You don't look to yourself. You don't say, because if I can just screw up enough determination, I can get to the end. No. It's because he who began the good work in you will carry it on to completion.

[34:51] There's your confidence. That's Paul's confidence. His confidence in the Philippians. I'm confident God's begun a work in you. Therefore, I'm confident that I'll see you in heaven. It's his confidence for himself.

You think he ever forgot that road to Damascus? How he was going there to slaughter Christians and persecute them. How he met the Lord Jesus Christ and had his whole heart and life radically transformed.

His sins washed away. And the one who began the work, he could say, has been carrying it on every day since and he will complete it.

God is determined to see his work completed. He didn't teach you to swim, to let you drown, the song says. He didn't teach you, he didn't build his home in us to move away.

He didn't pick us up to let us down. And so we ought to draw great comfort from the fact that those in whom God begins a work, he will carry on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

[36:01] It's his day. What day is he talking about? It's his day when he comes back, when he is glorified, glorified in his saints, and his saints in him, when he judges all men, and his honor is vindicated and held up for all to see, he will carry out our salvation all the way to that day of Christ Jesus, the last day.

And when we see him, we'll be made like him, and then the work will be completed. Until then, we're all a work in process, but in that day it will be over, it will be finished. Just as Jesus, one day from the cross, was able to cry with a loud voice, it is finished!

What was finished? He had accomplished all of the salvation of all of his people forever and ever. He had accomplished it there.

He had done everything necessary to make us right with God. It is finished! So there will come a day, Revelation 21, 6 says, when you will hear a voice from the throne.

It is done! And what will have been done? That wonderful salvation fully accomplished by Christ will have been fully and perfectly applied to all of his people.

[37:19] And you'll look in vain for sin in any one of them. They'll all bear the likeness of Jesus Christ, their elder brother. That was meant to be a great comfort to these Philippians.

You'll find out at the end of chapter one, they were going through persecution. They were being tried for their faith. What's going to keep us on board? We've got persecution coming at us. I don't know how I'll stand when the question's put, Christ will your life.

Here's a comforting fact for Christians under persecution, Christians under trial. If God began a work, He will continue it. Yes, you Philippians have persevered for ten years now.

But God gives more than a ten-year guarantee on His salvation. He carries on the work to completion. Until the day of Christ Jesus, till safe in glory my anchor is cast.

What if I fall? He'll pick you up. What if I stumble and turn away? He'll come after you and He will bring you to repentance. And He is the one who carries on the work.

[38:28] I will put a new heart in you and a new spirit in you. I'll remove from your old heart and put in a new heart and I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and move you to be careful to keep my commands.

You see He's the one who will get the job done. Paul's thankfulness Paul's joy Paul's confidence in this God of salvation from the first step to the last step it's His work.

And lastly Paul's love verses 7 and 8 he says it's right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel all of you share in God's grace with me God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ

Jesus Paul deeply loved these Philippian Christians some commentators have said this is his most intimate letter and you keep noticing the alls don't you it's not that he just had a few favorites no he loved them all we need to see two things about his love it was emotional and it was expressed first of all Paul's love was emotional now our age has so perverted the meaning of love that for many love is pure emotion nothing more a warm fizzy in the gut there's no commitment in love so it's easy come and it's easy go and our divorce rates demonstrate our view of love half who get married end in divorce and so love becomes something that well

I just don't love her anymore and so we end the marriage love is only this feeling as if it's a fever that comes upon you and then you get over that's the perversion of love in our day and we see this perversion in the music in society all around us and we're right to react against it but our danger is to overreact against it does the culture say that love is just a feeling our danger is to overreact to say there is no feeling in this business of love and we squeeze all the emotion right out of love love we say it's just a commitment it's just treating people the way love treats them you got to be patient to them you got to be kind to them and it doesn't have anything to do with how I feel it's just behavior love is just behavior and so we comfort ourselves and we say well

I don't like them but I love them I don't like to be with them but I still love them I'm afraid such thinking and defining of love does not hold up to the scriptures love is more than emotion but it is emotion it is emotion the apostle Paul shows us that clearly it's the kind of love he has for the Philippians and it's the kind of love that in his prayer that follows that he prays that we as the saints might have for one another so we better know what this love is notice the emotional content of his love it is right for me to feel this way about all of you since I have you in my heart now that sounds something like what a husband might write home to his sweetheart wife when he's away on business wherever I roam in this world dear you're always with me because

[42:41] I have you in my heart now that's emotional that's affection that's a feeling and Paul had it for all the saints at Philippi he's some 800 miles away but he tells them distance doesn't separate us because you're in my heart when I walk through those bars you came with me because you're in here and he says you're in my heart whether I'm in chains or on trial when I go and stand before the emperor and I have to answer for the faith that I hold you're with me you share in this grace with me we're together we're united I'm united to Christ you're united to Christ and being united to Christ we're united to one another this is tender affection and it was for all the saints even you odia and sinticky that had all kinds of problems in their relationship with each other that he will sort out and then in verse 8 notice the emotion in his love he's got this feeling in his heart and he knows that people can't see in our hearts there's only one who can see the heart and it's

God so what does he do he appeals to God who can see his heart and so in verse 8 he says God can testify how I long for all of you God who sees my heart can see in there this longing this yearning this strong desire to be with all of you when you are away from the saints from some extended period could you call on God to be your witness to say I long to be back with the saints there's a desire in my heart to be with them to spend time with them to be near them this is far more than a cold calculated commitment well I'm supposed to behave this way toward people in love so I will do the duties of love this is warm hearted this is strong desire this is intensity of feeling notice he says

God can bear witness that I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus literally with the bowels of Christ Jesus the viscera the internal organs which were the seat of emotions right there that's where I love you and I love you with the affection of Christ himself Hendrickson translates with the deeply felt affection of Christ Jesus now as soon as he speaks of loving them and longing for them with the affection of Christ Jesus that brings a whole other thing into view doesn't it how does Jesus love you is there any emotion in Jesus love any feeling in his love for you or does he just say well what's his need what's he need oh he needs somebody to die in his place okay I'll go and do it if that's what love does for a person

I'll go and do that he needs encouragement she needs support okay well if that's what love does then I'll do my duty it borders on blasphemy to even think that way doesn't it about our savior because we know that his love is affectionate love even as Paul says that he compares his love for us as the love of a bridegroom for his bride read the song of Solomon and see the love of Christ for his church read Psalm 45 and see the Lord Jesus Christ enthralled with his bride and Paul says I long for you with that very affection of Christ he's not just saying my love for you is like Christ's affection he's saying that my very love and longing for you is with the affection of

Christ in other words it's his affection my heart throbs and beats with the same affection as Christ's affection for you because Christ is in me and his love is flowing through me for you and that love is an emotional love Christ's own love dwells in his heart and runs out toward these Philippians who are his own so may Christ increase his own affection in our hearts for each other!

[48 : 25] not only does Paul have this affectionate love in his heart for the Philippians he's telling them about it isn't that interesting say does Jesus ever tell you about his affection for you well if you ever open the Bible you have to say yes he's telling us on every page he loves us we're his people we're the apple of his eye!

treasured possession and that's what Paul's doing here at the very outset of his letter here at the outset he says I love you so that whatever I'm going to say to you later on in this letter never divorce it from the fact that I love you do I need to get in your face a bit about your need for humility and unity do I need to tell!

I want you! know right up front I love you you know we receive exhortation better when we know that the person loves us and Paul is saying up front I love you and I long after you with your very affection of Christ love love love and love and love and love and long for and long for my joy and crown that is how you should stand firm in the Lord dearly beloved I love and long for you well I must ask you do you express your affectionate love for the saints can you say that God who knows my heart knows how much I love you well I have room to grow in this area folks perhaps you do as well so

I want to start this morning I want to tell you that I love you I want to tell you when I'm away from here and my thoughts go back to Grace Fellowship Church that God who is my witness knows that I look forward to returning and seeing your face and ministering to you praying and preaching walking the narrow road to heaven arm in arm praying together as a group of men you don't know love that God has put in my heart for you who are in Christ Jesus and I must learn to express that to you and you and I must learn to express that to each other in our greeting of each other well what have we seen this morning we've seen something of Paul's thanksgiving we've seen something of his joy something of his confidence and now of his love I wonder do we need to confess anything to God about any of those four areas our thanksgiving our joy our confidence our love do we need to thank him for any of those things do we need to ask him to increase any of these graces in our hearts and life

I'm going to give you opportunity to do that right now and if you're lost and you're not confident that God has begun a saving work in your heart you need to seek him at once ask him to save you to forgive your sin to change your heart to have mercy on you for Jesus sake let's pray together and I'll conclude!

[52 : 05] Oh our Father thank you for bringing up close to us one of your servants who had Christ living inside of him and therefore we see the fruit of Christ in his life thank you for the apostle Paul for what we have seen of his thanksgiving joy confidence and love and in so far as he was following Christ help us to follow him help us to think about all the saints about each other in a different light in a light that causes us to recognize the true saving grace of God in their lives and so to abound in thanksgiving joy and in confidence that he who started the work will continue it with this affectionate love of Christ thank you Lord Jesus for all of these things for apart from you we would have none of them we would have no reason to give thanks we would have no reason to rejoice this morning in each other's lives we have no confidence of standing in the day of judgment we have no confidence that we were loved with an everlasting love and so we thank you

Lord Jesus for purchasing all these realities for us help us to love you more and to live in the light of these Christian graces we ask in Jesus name Amen