

God Will Complete the Work He Started in You

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[0 : 00] So we are studying the book of Philippians. So if you got your Bibles, go ahead and open to Philippians if you haven't already. We're just getting started. Last week we just had really not even an introduction.

I think we did look at the first two verses. But last week we looked at this idea of how should we read the book of Philippians? How should we approach it?

Every book in the Bible is different and has a different context. And having a good idea of the big picture of the context of the book we're reading or the passage we're reading is important to understanding it.

And by the way, we all ought to be reading our Bibles. But really ultimately we want to understand what the words are saying. What the message is that God wants us to learn from them.

So it's important that we not just read but we study. Today in the section or the passage that we're reading, there's a very popular verse. And I've heard this from many people as their life verse even.

[0 : 59] And it's that verse 6. That he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Very encouraging to many of us as believers. But we'll, as you may know, there are many popular verses.

Sometimes you'll see them on a placard or a big poster. And they're taken completely out of context. And that happens a lot when you just have a single Bible verse.

And so it's easy to do, right, when you just post Bible verses on a poster. Which is fine. It's not like there's anything wrong with that. But it's easy when it's just by itself to just not really understand, well, what is the context of this verse?

So we'll be taking the time to look at the context of this particular verse. A few other things that we'll look at. I'm going to have a couple of Bible study tips in here that we'll consider.

We'll look at, Paul has a prayer here that he's praying for the Philippians. And so we're going to take a look at the specifics of his prayer as a model for us, by the way.

[2 : 01] And then really a big picture theme here in this passage is a big word. It's a theological term, sanctification. Sanctification, becoming holy. And so that will be kind of the big picture of what we're looking at this morning.

This letter to the Philippians is quite positive. As we read and as we heard from Amelia, there's a lot of thanksgiving, a lot of endearment.

And so there's a lot of positivity coming from Paul when he's writing to the Philippians. We know that that's not always the case in every one of his letters. In fact, we're going to be looking at some examples of his letters to the people in Galatia and the people in Corinth a little bit later on.

And those have more of a not quite as positive. There's a lot of negativity there and really correction going on. The first thing as far as a Bible study tip.

So, as we talked about last week, this is a letter written to Christians who are members of a particular group that the Bible calls the body of Christ.

[3 : 17] We try to make a difference between a group from the past that is kind of still continues on but has a future. But it's kind of in their group is not really quite active right now.

That's Israel. And so God had made a covenant with Israel in the past. Today, God is working with this group he calls the body of Christ.

Now, it includes Jew and Gentile both. But the promises are different. The approach that he takes is different. The Jews, their big thing was keeping the law of Moses.

That was very important to their relationship with God. For us, as members of the body of Christ, we have a more grace-oriented approach to having our relationship with God and being part of God's family.

And so as Paul is writing this letter to members of the body of Christ, we are also members of the body of Christ. And so really, what he's writing is directly relevant to us in a way, for example, that Deuteronomy would not be as directly relevant.

[4 : 30] It's still good. We still ought to read it. We can still learn things. In fact, even Deuteronomy has instructions and righteousness as Paul teaches. But the covenant that God made with Israel is not our covenant.

We live in the age of grace and, as Paul calls it, he teaches the gospel of the grace of God, the good news of the grace of God for us.

But as Paul is writing, we can put ourselves in the Philippians' shoes. We're in their shoes. So as he gives instruction to them, we learn from that, and we take that as instruction for us as well.

But another kind of tip for application is we can look at the life of Paul and his approach to the Philippians as the author of this letter. And take notice of how he's approaching his prayers for them, his attitude towards them.

And for us, each of us, most of us are in some kind of position of leadership. And so we can take that same attitude towards those under our care.

[5 : 47] Let's jump into the first verse we'll look at, verse 3. We'll just look at verse 3 through 5 here. Again, it says, He's expressing his gratitude for these faithful believers.

And as he goes out through this entire letter, he's commending them for their faithfulness. Again, in contrast to some of the other letters that he wrote. But he's giving thanks, and then he's saying, Hey, I pray for you guys all the time.

I make requests for you. He actually tells us a little bit later specifically what those requests are. We'll look at that towards the end of our time this morning. But we should pay attention when Paul prays.

The prayers that he prays are the kinds of prayers that we can pray. And that we ought to pray. He says that he prays with all joy. And by the way, this is the first time that the word joy is mentioned, but it's not the last by any means. As we mentioned last week, the word joy or rejoice is used, I think, at least 16 times in this short letter.

[7 : 09] And really, joy is the theme, as far as I can tell, the theme of this book or this letter to the Philippians. Verse 5, so as we look at this kind of sentence, and really it's, as you may be familiar with Paul's writing, he tends to write very long sentences.

And so it can be a real challenge when you write really long sentences to discern an interpretation. And that can actually be the case right here.

So I'll read this again. I'll read it a little bit more slowly. Verse 3, What is he saying about your fellowship in the gospel?

Because before that, he says, I'm thanking God for you, and also I'm praying for you. So is he thanking God for their fellowship? Or is he praying for their fellowship?

It's interesting, as I was reading through different commentaries, I saw both. People were saying he was thanking them for their fellowship in the gospel, and others that he was praying for their fellowship in the gospel.

[8 : 32] Which is it? I think based from the context here, we can say, when he's talking about their fellowship in the gospel, he's being thankful. He's not necessarily praying for it, even though that wouldn't be wrong or the wrong thing to do.

We can pray for people to be united in fellowship around the gospel. But I wanted to bring out a Bible study tip, especially when you're reading the epistles of Paul.

Like I said before, the epistles of Paul can be quite... He can write really long sentences.

Sometimes you look through a chapter of his, and it's like two or three sentences in one chapter. And a lot of times they go all kinds of places, this way and that.

So there's a technique called a sentence in a sentence. And so we can apply that here, and this is kind of just a simple example. But what you can do as you're reading through the Bible, especially Paul, try to maybe underline, or you can write out, hey, I'm going to take out some of the unrelated parts, and we're going to focus on just one theme in this really long sentence, and take out the parts that are a little bit distracting, at least right now.

[9 : 48] They're good, and they're needful, and they should be there. And Paul's trying to, I think, take a lot of information and pack it into one paragraph or one sentence. So in this case, if we just remove verse 4 and just read verse 3 and 5 together, this is an example of creating a sentence

within a sentence.

And so we would read it like this. Now, you might make a mistake, right?

You might not align the right things. But I think if we kind of read closely and carefully, we can try to be careful, and it helps us to understand what we're reading.

By some of these little tiny bunny trails that Paul takes, and just removing those for the time being, we can look at them later, and just focusing on kind of the theme of maybe one part.

For example, verse 3, I thank God. Well, what's he thanking God for? Well, he's thankful for their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. So a little Bible study tip. Hopefully, that will be helpful to you.

[10:57] By the way, what is the fellowship of the gospel? A lot of times we think about fellowship as, well, we got the fellowship hall. We Christians, we fellowship. That means we hang out and we eat food, right? It's usually what we do when we fellowship.

This word fellowship doesn't quite mean that. Really, and I like to use this example, but it's like the fellowship from the book by Tolkien, the Lord of the Rings, right?

The fellowship of the ring. It is a brotherhood, a fraternity, a partnership, or some kind of camaraderie between people.

And that is what Paul's talking about here. He's really grateful for their fellowship in working with him in the spread of the gospel. We'll find out later that these people in Philippi have supported him financially and in other ways by sending people out as missionary workers with him for over 10 years, faithfully.

And so he is grateful for their fellowship, their camaraderie in the gospel. He says, from the first day until now. And he's going back to when the church in Philippi was founded.

[12:11] We mentioned that last week in Acts chapter 16 is a description of the founding of the church in Philippi. And most people think that that's about 10 years before this letter was written.

And so he's grateful that for the last 10 years, they have been faithful supporters of not just his ministry, but the ministry of the gospel overall.

You know, it's quite common, and I don't know if any of you have noticed this, but it's easy for us to get excited about something, right? And then over a certain amount of time, our excitement kind of fades.

And that can happen in the Christian life. You become a believer, you find out about the free salvation that God offers, that you can have eternal life and be with him forever, and we grow excited.

And then as the years go by, maybe it's because of the cares of life for whatever it might be, our passion, our fire dies, and it grows cold.

[13:16] And that doesn't necessarily mean that we aren't Christians anymore. But we just might not continue to grow and be as passionate as we once were.

And we don't want to let that happen to us. I had this experience, my wife and I met at a Bible college, and there was a lot of passion in that Bible college.

A lot of young people who were excited about the things of the Lord, and a school of about 100 students. And something really horrific happened. There was just sexual morality that really destroyed that whole school and that whole ministry.

And I watched as many people in that school, just their faith kind of fell apart. Some people, they did. They ran right back into the world to live in the worldly system, not really caring for the things of the Lord anymore.

Others, they remained faithful to Christ, but their life, they just kind of went living their life without really much passion or zeal for the Lord.

[14:30] And, you know, we shouldn't allow the things of this world, the things that happen even in the church, to impact us like that. We need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus, not leaders or other Christians around us, though we want to be a help.

And, of course, the body of Christ is a help to us, but we need to keep our eyes focused on Him and our passion burning. So let's move on to this verse 6.

And this is the famous passage most of you probably know. But he says this in his thankfulness for the Philippians. He says, Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

And so what's going on? What's the big picture? What is he talking about that he's so confident of? That he, who's that? Well, it's talking about Jesus, who has begun a good work in you.

He will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Many people have looked to this verse as an indication that we can be confident of our eternal security in the Lord.

[15 : 45] That because we trusted in Him at some point in the past, that we can be confident that God will ultimately save us on the day of judgment, that we will have eternal life.

And that's a view or a doctrine that I strongly believe in. But I actually don't think that that's what Paul's getting at here. What I think Paul is talking about is his confidence in these believers that they will grow in the Lord, that they will mature.

He's confident that that will happen throughout their lives. Sanctification is kind of the theme. Even though he doesn't use that word here, Paul uses that word elsewhere.

And sanctification is just the process of Christian maturity, growing in your faith, growing in your spirituality, growing in the Lord, becoming more like God.

And that's God's goal for us and should be our goal as Christians. More like God, more like Christ. But here's a question I have. Is our sanctification, is our growth in Christ, is that guaranteed?

[16 : 58] It's not. It's not guaranteed. Indeed. Some might read this verse and say, yes, it is. And some would even say, if you are not growing in Christ, you know what that's an indication of?

That God really didn't do a work in you in the beginning. And so they use that as an opportunity to say, hey, listen, God must, your faith must be invalid. And I don't think that that's helpful.

But I'd like to make a case here for God's desire for us that we be sanctified. I'm just going to read through a bunch of passages. You ready? The first one, 1 Thessalonians 4, 3, it says this, for this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you should abstain from sexual morality.

He's got a very specific thing to be sanctified in, sexual purity. But this is the will of God for you as a member of the body of Christ, that you would be sanctified.

1 Corinthians 1, verse 8 says this, talking about the Lord, who will also establish you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[18 : 10] God is faithful by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. So God called you, and he's faithful to work in you to sanctify you.

He's committed to that work. 1 Thessalonians 5, 23 says this, Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

2 Thessalonians 3, 3 says this, But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And then Hebrews 12, 2 says this about Jesus, which I think really drives the point home with what Paul's getting at here to the Philippians.

And it says this, Hebrews 12, 2, looking unto Jesus, who is the author and the finisher of our faith. He's the one who started it, and he's the one who will finish it, who will complete it.

But, is that against our wills? Or do we have to be somehow involved in the process?

[19 : 30] Here's another passage from Paul, 2 Corinthians 7, 1, and it says this, Therefore, having these promises, so he just listed a bunch of promises, Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

If you're familiar with the term sanctification and holiness, they're actually the same word.

Sanctification is a verb, holiness is a noun. And so, but in the Greek, it's the same root word.

And so, perfecting holiness, we need to pursue that as believers, pursue perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. But Paul starts this off saying that he has confidence in these Philippians.

We'll read it again. Oh, I lost it. Being confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

So, where does this confidence come from? Since it requires our involvement, is he, you know, looking into the future to see that, well, these Philippians, you're going to ultimately be sanctified in your life.

[20 : 51] Is that what he's doing? I think there's two reasons for his confidence. One is his confidence in the Lord. He knows that the Lord is committed to sanctifying his people.

As we just read in many of those verses. But then, two, he's also expressing a confidence that he has in the Philippians based on the last 10 or 12 years of them being faithful to the Lord and faithful to the ministry of the gospel of grace.

And I'd like to contrast this confidence that he has with the Philippians with a lack of confidence that he expressed to both the Galatians and the Corinthians. So, I'm going to read through a few more

verses.

Here's some verses, some things that he said to the Galatians. Verse 1-6, I marvel that you are turning away so soon from him who called you in the grace of God to a different gospel.

I can't believe it. Galatians 3-1 and then also verse 3, O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you? Are you so foolish having begun in the Spirit so you are now being made perfect by the flesh?

[22 : 06] Galatians 4-11, he says, I am afraid for you. That's the opposite of confidence, isn't it? I am afraid for you lest I have labored for you in vain.

And then Galatians 5-7, you ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? You were doing so good. And then this thing happened.

These people came in and you got, you went astray. And by the way, I don't think he's talking about them losing their salvation or anything like that. I think he's just saying, hey, you've gotten off the narrow path of living the Christian life, the way the Christian life ought to be lived.

For the Galatians, their big mistake was adding faith, or excuse me, adding works to their faith.

They got their doctrine wrong. For the Corinthians, their big mistake was carnality, sin.

He says this in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 1, And I, brethren, could not speak to you as spiritual, as to spiritual people, but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ, for you are still carnal.

[23 : 15] He says. In 2 Corinthians 11, 2, he says this, I am jealous for you with godly jealousy, but I fear, not confidence, I'm afraid, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.

And in 2 Corinthians 12, 20, he says this, for I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, lest when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have not repented.

And so there's this contrast with the Galatians, with the Corinthians. He expresses fear, not confidence, but not because the Lord isn't interested in their sanctification and their spiritual growth, but because it seems like they're having problems.

They're not doing what they ought. So with these kind of warnings, with what we see, with what's going on in Galatia and Corinth on the negative side, and then what's going on with the Philippians on the positive side, how do we make sure that we as believers are growing, are being sanctified, that we don't follow the example of the Galatians and the Corinthians?

Well, here's what Paul says a little bit later, and we're going to dig into this deeper in the next few weeks, but in Philippians 2, verse this, excuse me, Philippians 2, verse 13, Paul says this, for it is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

[25 : 04] So it's God that does the work in us to sanctify us. But we also looked that Paul says, well, you need to be involved in this as well.

So maybe that's the teaching. God has to do his work, and then we also have to do work. In fact, isn't there a Bible verse that says God helps those who help themselves?

No, that's not in the Bible, is it? Actually, God helps those who are helpless. He helps the helpless ones, the ones who are weak, the ones who don't have the strength or the fortitude that they need.

So it's not that God works some, and then we work some, and combined together, then we grow and we're perfected. That's not how it works. Now, we do have something to do, but it's not that working.

It's not the same thing as the Israelites had to do under the law, where they had to do, do, do the things in the law in order to have life, in order to be part of God's covenant in his family.

[26 : 18] But I'll tell you, this is the work that we have to do, and this is the theme of Philippians. our job is to get out of the way. To get out of whose way?

To get out of our own way. As we, we need to grow in the Lord, and we have to avoid, as the Bible calls it, our flesh getting in the way, so that we can allow Christ to work in us.

that his life would be lived through us. This is one of the things that Paul got to when he was talking to the Galatians and telling them, you guys are going to circumcision and keeping the law, and that is a bad road.

It's not going to lead to sanctification. It's not going to lead to anything good. And he said this in Galatians 2.20. He says, I'll tell you how this is done.

I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.

[27 : 30] So the life that we're living is not a life of doing, though we do things, right? But we're not doing things to earn something or to avoid something.

In Romans 6.11, Paul gives this way of living the Christian life. He says this, Likewise, you also, you need to reckon or consider yourself to be dead.

That's how you live the Christian life. Reckon yourself to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Later on in Philippians, Paul is going to give this big contrast between how we live the Christian life under grace and to avoid how it was lived under the law or how the believer was supposed to live under the law.

In Philippians 3.3, he says this, For we are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit. We rejoice in Jesus Christ. See that word again? Rejoice in Christ.

And we have no confidence in the flesh. And then he goes on to list all the reasons why he, of all people, should have reason to put confidence in his flesh through the works that he does.

[28 : 52] But he says, don't do that. It's a mistake. And we might think as believers, well, you know what? God started this work and it's a work of grace.

We're saved by what? By grace through faith. Ephesians 2.8 and 9. We're saved by grace through faith. And we might think, well, now that we're saved by grace, now it's my turn to perfect the work that God started and I'm going to do a bunch of works in order for that work to be completed in me. And you know that Paul spoke to that idea directly. Galatians 3.3, he says this, Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?

That's not the way this works. God started the work and who's going to complete it?

God is. He's going to do it in us. But what can we do to allow him to complete that work in us?

[30 : 04] And like I said, that's the theme of Philippians. If we want to grow in Christ, here's what Paul says over and over in this book of Philippians, in this letter to the Philippians.

He says, Rejoice in the Lord. We need to take joy in our salvation. To look to him, the author and the finisher of our faith.

To enjoy our relationship with him. To grow with him. And we can have confidence in our relationship with him because he already started a work in which he did what?

He took all of our sins out of the way. Every sin that we might have committed, all of it is forgiven. Every single one. Not only that, that's the past, right? But the Bible says that he actually took the law out of the way.

So that law that would condemn us, that tells us right from wrong, which is good, right? Paul says the law is holy, righteous, and good. But he took it out of the way so that it would no longer have any condemning power over us.

[31 : 08] So that there would no longer be anything that would separate us from the Lord. You know, I said that this passage doesn't, I don't think, directly teach eternal security.

But I think that that doctrine, that idea, that's somewhat controversial among Christians, is important to how we live the Christian life. Because what God wants us to do in order to grow in Christ, in order to grow in our maturity, in order to be sanctified, is we need to live life with him.

We need his life coming out of us. and that requires our unity with God, going to the Lord day in and day out, enjoying our life with him, enjoying our salvation.

But if we don't have confidence that we live in his love, that we are a part of his family, even when we fail, if we don't have that confidence, we are going to do the same thing that Adam and Eve did in the very beginning when they sinned.

And what did they do? They ran from him. Right? Because of the guilt and the shame that came.

And under grace, God wants us to do what?

[32 : 35] To run to him. When we fail, when our sanctification is faltering, he wants us to run to him and know that we can have confidence that because we are still in his family, that we can do that anytime we need.

And that's what it says in Hebrews, right? I didn't have this written down. But we can go boldly to the throne of grace in our time of need. Temptation, failure, whatever it might be.

We can go boldly to the throne room of grace because of what he has accomplished and promised to us. But that doesn't mean just because God, because we are eternally secure that we will live a faithful Christian life.

Paul, in addressing the Corinthians, talks about a failure to live a mature Christian life. In this passage, this is 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 9.

1 Corinthians chapter 3 verse 9. He says this about the Corinthian believers or believers in general. He says, for we are God's fellow workers.

[33 : 51] You are God's field. You are God's building. Fields ought to grow and be fruitful. According to the grace of God which was given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation and another builds on it but let each one take heed how he builds on it.

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the foundation of our lives, of our Christian lives. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear.

For the day, the day that's coming, will declare it because it will be revealed by fire and the fire will test each one's work of what sort it is.

If anyone's work which he has built on endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss but he himself will be saved yet as by fire.

Saying, listen here, I've built a foundation for how to live the Christian life. Jesus revealed this personally to me through revelation, dreams, visions.

[35 : 07] God came to me. He told me how to deliver this message to you of how to live the Christian life. And I've laid the foundation. It's your job to learn how to live it. And some will build that life with gold and silver and precious things and others with hay and stubble.

And there will come a day when everyone's work will be revealed, how they live the Christian life and some people, all the things that was in their life, how they live their Christian life will just burn up because they didn't live their life for eternal things, they lived their life for temporal things.

For pleasure, for enjoyment, whatever it might be. But we can have confidence that eternal security, those people who never grew in their Christian life, they'll be saved, they will be, but it will be as if they escaped the flames of a great conflagration.

And is that how we want to end our Christian lives? As though we were escaping a burning building? or do we want our lives to be victorious, taking advantage of everything that God gave to us through the cross to live our Christian lives to honor and glorify Him?

We don't want our lives to be marked by this example described here. But actually, we want to be those that Paul says will be presented to the Father, that Jesus will present His church to the Father, those who are blameless and pure.

[36 : 49] But you know what? If you're not confident in your salvation, if you don't know that regardless of how well you do or don't do, if you're questioning, does God really love me?

Am I really saved? Is my faith really real? If you believe that your sin, whether it was from ten years ago or two days ago, is separating you from God, then you are not going to run to the Lord.

You're not going to get that help that you need to grow in your Christian life. By the way, what is this day of the Lord? That's part of this verse that what does it say?

Being confident of this very thing that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. Well, what day is that? Well, there's two possibilities. One is the rapture when Jesus returns for his church and the second is the second coming when he comes to establish his throne on the earth after that tribulation period.

I think he's talking about the rapture but that's not really too relevant. Those two events are pretty close together and so I don't think it's too relevant. But let's continue on in verse 7.

[38 : 05] Just as it is right for me to think this of you because I have you in my heart in as much as both in my chains and the defense and confirmation of the gospel you are partakers with me of grace.

He's saying, listen, this is right, it's appropriate, it's suitable, it's proper for me to think this of you because I have such tenderness of heart towards you.

I love you guys so much. you've been so precious to me all of these years. And so it's right, it's appropriate for me to have this vision, this hope for you, for your growth all the way through your life.

And by the way, you know, he says until the day of Jesus Christ and that's either, you know, if Christ comes before our death or it's just through all our earthly life.

He says, I have you in my heart in as much as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

[39 : 05] He's saying, listen, the reason you're in my heart is because you guys have been so faithful to whether it's in my, you know, even when I was in prison, and by the way, Paul's writing

this from prison, I don't think we talked about that yet, but he's in prison right now in chains writing this letter.

And he's saying, you know, he talks about it in some other point that some people kind of abandoned me when I went to prison. But you guys have remained faithful. And so he's so grateful for them because they have remained faithful to him through thick and thin.

He says, you all are partakers of me. That's that partakers, it's the same root word as fellowship. You have been co-workers with me of grace. And when he says of grace, actually, in the Greek there, it's of the grace, of the grace.

What's the grace? Well, it's what Paul calls in, I think it's Acts, he says, the gospel of the grace of God given to me for you.

It's actually Acts 20 verse 4. The ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus does testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And they have been part of his mission to get the word out about the gospel of grace.

[40 : 16] Verse 8, for my God is my witness, excuse me, for God is my witness how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. Why does he say God is my witness? I think he's just trying to make a point.

You know, it's easy for us sometimes to just give platitudes. We just say nice things just because you're supposed to. He's saying, hey, listen, this is for real. I'm not making this up.

I'm not just trying to be nice. He said, for God is my witness how greatly I long for you with the affection of Jesus Christ. He truly loves these people.

And it's not an affection that he just pulled up out of his own heart. He's saying, this is the affection of the Lord, that the Lord has worked in me.

And really, the Lord works in all Christians because he first loved us. And that love that he shed abroad in our hearts is reflected and displayed towards others.

[41 : 12] Verse 9, and this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment. So he's now getting into the details of what his prayer is for the Philippians.

This is his prayer. So the first thing is that your love would abound. And by the way, I think I mentioned this before, but whenever we see a prayer in the Bible, a biblical prayer, you know that you can copy other people's prayers?

That's totally allowed, by the way, especially if it comes from the Bible. So Paul's praying for the Philippians, and we can copy that prayer. Not that we should necessarily need to recite it word for word, but the thought, the idea.

We can do the same. We can pray for ourselves the same thing, that our love would abound, and so on to what Paul's praying here. And we can also use this and pray for others.

People in our church, people in our family, parents can pray for their children, that their love would abound. In fact, I would say these are the kinds of, these are the most important things that we ought to pray for our children.

[42 : 20] Sometimes we might pray for their success in life, you know, that they would get a good job or something like that. You know what? That actually isn't that big of a deal. That doesn't really matter all that much, whether they get a good job or not.

It just does not matter in comparison to these eternal matters. we want to see our children abound in love.

And why does he say abound in love anyway? You know, love is the great motivation behind the Christian life. That is how the Christian life ought to be lived.

And it should be contrasted with the law of Moses and how things worked under the Ten Commandments and the law with Israel.

What is the motivation of the law? Fear or reward, right? I'm afraid of punishment because what's the other side of the law?

[43 : 21] If you do these things, you will live. If you don't do them, you will die, right? So I'm going to do these things to avoid death, to avoid punishment. Or maybe, hey, there's some rewards that I can get by keeping this law.

And that's under the law. We are motivated by fear or by seeking a reward. Paul talks about the reward. He says, you know what?

Under grace, boasting is taken away. There's no reason to boast because there is no earning of a reward anymore. love. And so the motivation under grace is just love.

The reason we do what is right, the reason we do what is good, the reason we assert ourselves and pursue a God-like or Christ-like life is because of love.

love. But, as he says here, that love should be with knowledge and discernment. I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment.

[44 : 30] And, you know, everybody everybody loves people, right? Or loves things. Love is in every country song ever written, right?

Almost every song, you know, of any genre is love. But those songs don't always have knowledge and discernment involved.

In fact, many times, especially in our culture, love is this perverse thing. And so we ought not to learn love from the culture. We need to learn it from the scriptures.

scriptures. Today there's this phrase, I see lots. And I see it not only in the culture, in the godless culture, but even in the church. Love is love.

Have you ever seen that? Love is love. And so, hey, we just need to allow anybody to love anybody. And is that true? Obviously, it's true. Everybody should love everybody else.

[45 : 34] But what are they talking about? They're talking about romantic love. Oh, any two boys should be able to love each other. And that's perversion. You know, obviously, two men can be friends, but they're talking about a different kind of love, aren't they?

And they're trying to confuse people into following their perversion. But our love needs to be grounded in truth, in scripture, and in a real true concern for others.

In Ephesians, when Paul wrote to the Ephesians, he said this, Ephesians 4, 17, I don't want you to any longer, excuse me, no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk.

You had a path of life that you walked. Don't walk that way anymore. In verse 20, he says, because you have not so learned Christ that way.

So, we need to learn a different way of love from the love of the world. Not get our definition of love from a country song. Verse 10, that you may approve of the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.

[46 : 45] We need to approve of things that are good and not evil. We need our life to be sincere. This word sincere is interesting. Some translations say pure, that you may be pure and without offense.

The word literally means judged by sunlight. Judged by sunlight. So, our lives, the lives that we live, our behavior, should be things that when the light is shown on them, they will be seen to be pure.

We don't want to be doing things in the dark that we don't want people to see. And then, without offense. Without offense towards man, but also without offense towards God.

And again, he says again, until the day of Christ. So, throughout all of your life. Either until Jesus returns or you go to meet him. And then verse 11.

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. You know, Paul tells us in Romans and other places as well, that when we trust in Christ, that we have righteousness imputed to us.

[48 : 05] It's a doctrine called imputed righteousness. That God declares us righteous. Regardless of what we've done in the past or even what we're doing right now. He declares us righteous.

So that the law and sin is no longer a hindrance to us having a relationship with God. But what he's talking about here is not that imputed righteousness.

He's talking about the fruits of righteousness. Living a fruitful life in which we do the right thing.

Have righteous behavior. He says this, the fruits of righteousness which are by Christ Jesus.

Again, he's repeating this over and over, even just in this passage. And all throughout Philippians will do the same thing. These are the things that we can benefit from by living a life in Christ.

Trusting in him. Jesus actually talked about living this life in his earthly ministry. He said, you know what? Here's how you ought to live your life believing in me.

[49 : 06] He said, I'm the vine and you are the branches. Right? You need to live your life in me. And he finishes up with this, to the glory and praise of God.

Because when we live a sanctified life, when we live a life that is pleasing to him, that is honoring to him, our godliness is glory and praise to him.

A lot of times these days we think about glory and praise as what we do during a worship service, a song service. We're praising the Lord, we're glorifying him, raising our hands, all that stuff, all that is wonderful, obviously.

We ought to do those things. But this is the stuff that can really praise and glorify the Lord, that really, truly matters.

When we live a life of godliness that will glorify and praise him, being faithful to him, living every day a life, not by trying to work it out in our own flesh, but by living a life in which we enjoy the Lord, we enjoy our relationship with him because he has made us righteous, forgiven us all our sins, blessed us with every spiritual blessing, living a life of grace, we can enjoy him and because of that, because of that relationship, that joy we have with him, we can have our lives transformed and he can do a work in us because we're getting our flesh out of the way and we're just enjoying him and seeing him glorified in that.

[50 : 47] Let's pray and ask like Paul did for God to do a work in us. Father, we pray this morning just as Paul did for the Philippians that you would do this work in us.

You started a work and Father, we want, we need you to continue to do that work throughout all of our lives until the very end, whether until that time when you return and take us away or we breathe our last breath in you.

Father, do a work in us. We don't want to be like the Galatians. We don't want to be like the Corinthians. We want to grow. We want to be mature. We want to live lives that are honoring to you and that reflect your glory and are a praise to you that others would look at how we live and say that is a true, genuine Christian.

We ask that you do these things in us in Jesus' mighty name. Amen. All right. Thanks, everybody.