**GREETINGS, THANKSGIVING, AND PRAYER**

Philippians 1:1-11

Key Verse 6

 **“**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.”

**Introduction**

 The Philippian Christians were active in their support of Paul, and this letter is a missionary letter, thanking them for their support, and reporting on his work. He wrote this letter to his close friends, the Christians in Philippi, from his Roman house arrest described at the end of Acts ([Acts 28:30-31](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2028.30-31)) as he waited for his court appearance before Caesar (around A.D. 61). Even though he writes from prison, he is full of joy and thanksgiving. Today’s passage shows Paul’s thanksgiving and prayer for Philippian believers and his faith in the gospel of God.

1. Read verses 1-6. Who were the senders and receivers of this letter? (1) Describe Paul’s greeting (2). What made Paul give thanks and always pray with joy? (3-5) What can we learn from Paul who was confident about God’s good work? (6)

1-1, Read verses 1-6.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: **2** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **3** I thank my God every time I remember you. **4** In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **6** 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.

 1-2, Who were the senders and receivers of this letter? (1)

 ***Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:***



* The city of Philippi was a Roman colony and the chief city of Macedonia (Acts 16:12). The people that live there were Roman citizens, receiving all the favor of Rome. There were very few Jews in Philippi, and no synagogue with a “place for prayer” by the river (Acts 16).
* Paul established the church in Philippi while he was on his second missionary journey, just after he had been in Troas and had received the “Macedonian call” (Acts 16).
* The Church of Philippi was the first church to be established in Europe, and it had a reputation of being very generous in their support of Paul’s work (2 Cor 8; Phil 4:15-19).
* Paul was the author of Philippians. He names himself and his style and personality shows through.
* Philippians was written from Rome during Paul’s first imprisonment, about 62 AD.
* Paul wrote with Timothy as co-author of this letter. Through Paul’s Bible teaching and shepherding, Timothy became a Christian.
* To Paul, Timothy was his spiritual son. However, Paul regarded Timothy with respect as a precious co-worker.
* Paul and Timothy also introduced themselves as servants of Christ Jesus. To the people of the world in Paul’s time, Jesus was known as a notorious criminal crucified on the cross under the Roman law. So being a servant of a notorious criminal might have seemed unthinkable.
* But Paul and Timothy confidently and proudly identified themselves as servants of Christ Jesus.
* This meant that they committed their lives fully to Jesus Christ and his work. As servants of Christ Jesus they were ready to humbly do whatever Jesus would tell them to do. They were willing to live and die for Christ Jesus.
* In Christ, the young and the old, or the baby boomers and millennials co-worked in one heart and mind as partners in the gospel.
* We should have the same vision in LA UBF to have a dream team between young believers and older generations.
* This meant all the Christians in Philippi. All Christians are holy people in Christ Jesus.
* To the overseers - The ancient Greek word was used to describe general leadership.
* To the deacons - Those who had recognized positions of service like committee/fellowship leaders in our church.

1-3, Describe Paul’s greeting (2).

  ***Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.***

* Paul gave his familiar greeting of grace and peace, recognizing that these come to us only from God our Father and through the Son.

1-4, What made Paul give thanks and always pray with joy? (3-5)

 ***I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,***

* Paul was very thankful to God for them. He also prayed for all of them with joy.
* Paul thanked God and prayed for them with joy because of their partnership in the gospel.
* A partnership is an arrangement where two parties agree to cooperate in order to advance their mutual interests.
* In a company or corporation, each partner shares equal responsibility for the company’s profits and losses, and its debts and liabilities.



* But partnership in the gospel is different from a business partnership. Partnership in Greek is “Koinonia” meaning “communion, fellowship or joint participation.”
* A partnership involves a relationship established for the achievement of a specified goal. This relationship comes with mutual cooperation and responsibility.
* As we’ve studied in Ephesians, the Christian church is the body of Christ that is the fellowship of believers who have intimate fellowship or partnership with Christ.
* Christian partnership must be vertical first with God and Christ, and then horizontal with other fellow believers based on their intimate fellowship with Christ.
* We know that even unbelievers have fellowship, such as Pinera’s fellowship, book fellowship, or golf fellowship on the weekends.
* People want to get together with people of similar background, based on social, educational, or financial status.
* But Christians have fellowship in the gospel. There is no discrimination among partners in the gospel.
* The Philippian church was founded by God who called a business woman Lydia, a slave girl from whom Paul drove out an evil spirit and a tough warden and his family.
* These people shared nothing in common to human eyes. But they had beautiful fellowship in the gospel and the church grew very fruitful and healthy spiritually.
* They not only accepted the gospel from Paul, but also had one heart and mind with him and other church members and served God’s salvation work together.
* They opened their homes and welcomed others for fellowship. They supported Paul by praying for him, sending materials for him, and suffering together with Paul.
* If you are saved by Christ and are having intimate fellowship with Christ, you are to have partnership in the gospel with other Christians.
* Living in our daily, busy lives, we can become self-centered or family-centered and lose our partnership in the gospel.
* But we are to build up stronger and deeper fellowship with Christ and with other co-workers.
* We know that God put us together here as his church, the body of Christ. We are partners in the gospel to build up Christ’s church.
* Our missionaries and shepherds, young believers and students may become one in heart and spirit as partners in the gospel.
* We proclaimed the gospel to students on campus together as partners in the gospel, let the world know that we are disciples of Jesus Christ! This is why we are called “University Bible Fellowship.”

1-5, What can we learn from Paul who was confident about God’s good work? (6)

 ***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.***

* Paul’s imprisonment could not break his confidence because he believed that God who began his work in the Philippians would faithfully carry it on to completion.
* Paul was the powerful and fruitful gospel worker and missionary who had preached the gospel through his missionary journeys and founded many churches.
* But Paul knew that God opened people’s hearts toward the gospel, convicted them with his Spirit and helped them to repent of their sins and to accept Jesus.
* Paul knew that God sent him to Philippi, while he was preaching in Asia. Then God touched Lydia’s heart and raised her as a first convert. God opened the prison door through a violent earthquake to save the warden and his family.
* In such ways, God established the Philippian church. Paul was just God’s servant who humbly obeyed and followed God’s leading and witnessed God’s work.
* He knew that God who began his work in his definite purpose would somehow finish it. Humanly the future of the Philippian church was uncertain.
* The Philippians were still not spiritually mature and the church had dissension, envy, rivalry, false teachings, and some anti-Paul faction.
* Paul was confined in prison and could not visit them and strengthen them. Yet Paul was confident because he had faith in God who would carry his good work in them on to completion.
* Sometimes, we start to serve God’s work with great vision. But as we face difficulties and challenges we get discouraged, and lose confidence to continue to do the work.
* But we must know that our God carries what he starts on to completion. He never starts something and then gives up.
* God has begun his good work in each of us and in LBCC and CSULB campuses and He will complete it in his faithfulness.
* Being confident of this let us serve the gospel work with joy and assurance.

2. Read verses 7-8. How did the Philippians share in God’s grace with Paul? (7) How did Paul feel about them? (7, 8) What can we learn from their fellowship in Christ Jesus?

2-1, Read verses 7-8.

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me. **8** God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

2-2, How did the Philippians share in God’s grace with Paul? (7)

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

* When Paul was in chains, the Philippian believers didn’t fall into doubt about the gospel Paul preached or Paul’s leadership and lifestyle.
* Instead, they loved Paul and had confidence in him. They encouraged Paul and participated willingly in Paul’s gospel work as hearty partners.

2-3, How did Paul feel about them? (7, 8)

  ***It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God’s grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.***

* Paul was a man of intellect, but he was also a man of heart, and the Philippian Christians were in his heart.
* He could even call God as his witness who would testify about his affection for them.
* His words could be paraphrased as the following: “I call God to witness that I have the strongest affection for you, and that I love you with that same kind of affection with which Christ loved the world when he gave himself for it.”

2-4, What can we learn from their fellowship in Christ Jesus?

 ***It is right for me to feel this way about all of you***

* Paul was greatly encouraged by them and the affection of Christ burned in his heart. His heart longed for all of them.
* It was truly a beautiful partnership between Paul and the Philippians. In Christ’s love and grace, they become one and served the gospel work together.

3. Read verses 9-11. How did Paul pray for the Philippians to grow in their love? (9) What else did Paul pray for them on the day of Christ? (10) How can we bear the fruit of righteousness? (11)

3-1, Read verses 9-11.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

3-2, How did Paul pray for the Philippians to grow in their love? (9)

 ***And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,***

* So far, Paul mentioned that the Philippians had a lot of love, and they truly showed it to Paul. Yet Paul didn’t hesitate to pray that their love may abound more and more.
* It doesn’t matter how much love for others we have; we can still have more in God.



* It may be like recent So. CA rain, that continues to swell and increase to full capacity, then floods over the adjacent plains.
* Paul’s prayer topic for them was that their love might abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.
* Christian love should be accompanied by knowledge and depth of insight. Love without knowledge and insight can harm others instead of building them up.
* That is why we must have deep Bible study and learn how God loved us.

3-3, What else did Paul pray for them on the day of Christ? (10)

***10 so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,***

* The Philippians should not remain as spiritual infants who would be easily tossed away by false teachings and internal conflicts.
* So Paul prayed for them to grow mature in knowledge and become independent gospel workers with deep spiritual insight and discernment.
* We may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless through knowing our Lord Jesus Christ.
* He loved people in full knowledge and discernment. In his love He loved Nicodemus at night and called a tax collector Matthew as his disciple.
* Jesus’ love is holy love that hates sin but loves sinners. Jesus’ love is spiritual love that disciplines a person into a useful man or woman of God.
* When our love grows in knowledge and discernment, we can discern what is best and become pure and blameless filled with the fruit of righteousness.

3-4, How can we bear the fruit of righteousness? (11)

 ***filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.***

* Bearing fruit is always the result of abiding in Jesus. As we abide in Him, we receive the life and nutrients we need to naturally bear fruit to the glory and praise of God.

John 15:4-8 reads,

 “Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

**Conclusion**

 In today’s passage, Paul was thankful for the beautiful fellowship and partnership with the Philippians in Jesus Christ. In our profit-seeking society, it is not easy to find such fellowship. As we study the Philippians, we may revive our fellowship in Jesus so that we may be a fragrant offering to our God. Our God is faithful. Our God who starts something will not stop or give up before finishing. God finishes fruitfully what he starts. God who started his good work in each person’s heart will carry it to completion. God who started his good work in our church will finish it with rich spiritual fruits. Our God is faithful. Our God never fails. Paul’s confidence was not based on his own willpower, feelings, and experience. It was based on God’s faithfulness, God’s unfailing love, God’s sovereign power, and God’s good purpose. This confidence in the Lord enabled Paul to pray for them with joy with full confidence to bear fruit for God’s glory.

**One word: Your love may be abound more and more!**