

Philippians 1.1-11

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Main Point – Being saved in Christ results in love, joy, partnership and prayer

When we think about the Christian life, or what God asks of us, I think we often picture it like this...(SLIDE)

We can think living the Christian life, living as followers of Jesus, is like running on a **treadmill**.

We have to run hard, work hard, keep striving with all our effort, and not stop.-----

Or else God will not be pleased with us, he will not approve of us, and we'll fall short.

We too often picture the Christian life as one of rules, obeying the rules, maybe burdensome rules; and striving in our own strength.

And what I love about this book of Philippians we're starting today is that it helps to see Who we are in Christ.

And all that comes in him and through our living relationship with him.

Maybe we're better off picturing the Christian life like this...(SLIDE)

like Eric Liddell in Chariots of Fire, running hard but looking up.---

In the film he says, 'God... made me fast and when I run I feel his pleasure'.----

I pray that even through your sufferings and trials this book will deepen your joy, your love, your desire to serve one another and our Saviour, who gives us all we need to follow him.-----

Philippians is a joy-producing book.

We live a world of stress and anxiety, and God in this book speaks to us.

I pray we'll all be captivated by Christ and JOY will flood our souls.-----

With the reading of the whole letter, I have a much shorter sermon today on vv1-11.

I have **3 points(SLIDE), and the first is, Written to Who**, Who's the letter written to.---

It's written by Paul and Timothy to the church in Philippi.(SLIDE)

That's there in the top-centre of the map, in Greece.-----

Acts ch16 tells us the apostle Paul first went there on his 2nd missionary journey.

It was called 'Little Rome' and was filled with Roman citizens.

Paul, Silas and Timothy, in about AD 51 went outside the city to a place of prayer, and the woman Lydia was the first Philippian to believe the Gospel.(SLIDE)

The Philippian church was surely built around her household and that of the Philippian jailer who also believed in the Lord Jesus to be saved. [16.31-34]

Paul & his team planted the church, and returned to strengthen them in Acts 20.

Now Paul likely writes from prison in Rome, about 10 years after his first visit.-----

But more importantly than who they write to geographically, is who they write to spiritually.

V1, 'to all the saints in Christ Jesus'.

Saints are God's holy people, all believers who've been set apart by God from the kingdom of darkness, to be in close relationship with him.

And their location positionally is, '**in Christ**'.

They are in Christ spiritually, joined to Jesus by the Spirit.-----

When anyone trusts in the once crucified now risen Jesus, they get their sins forgiven, get reconciled to God and join God's people, God's family.

God's Spirit works in us and comes to dwell in us, through faith in Christ.-----

So amazingly, Christian, you're in him, and he's in you.(SLIDE)-----

The Spirit gives a vital and living connection between Jesus and his people.

All believers are new people, with new life, and a new way of looking at life.

As we go through the book we'll see that being in-Christ, affects everything.-----

For He gives us our identity; a new identity.-----

So Paul n' Timothy write to the Christians and their church leaders who are in Christ, in Philippi.

Next point, Paul is Thankful for what?----- (SLIDE)vv3-8-----

V7 makes clear that Paul writes from prison.

And he thinks of the Philippians often and, **v3** thanks God for them.

There is authentic Christian fellowship between them.
 They are people he really cares about – v7, ‘I have you in my heart’.
 He deeply misses them, v8.
 He is truly thankful for the relationship they share and the encouragement they are to him.
 V3, v4, v7 v8 all communicate Paul’s love for them, and so he’s thankful for them.---
 And I find that a challenge, for loving other people, relating to other people can be draining
 hard work.
 But Paul is not staying distant from people, he is really invested, really cares, and is really
 blessed by them in return.
 May God bring such closeness more and more in our relationships with one another.

Paul’s thankful for his Philippian friends and thankful that what God has started in them, God
 will finish, **v6**.
 The Gospel has been bearing fruit in their changed lives, in their faith, love and generosity. And
 God will complete what he started.-----
 This says we don’t work to save ourselves, or for God’s acceptance, God does it.
 The outcome is guaranteed not cos we run on the treadmill hard enough or long enough, but
 because God does it.
 God works in and through his people by his grace.
 The Philippians’ good works are God enabled, so Paul thanks God.-----
 And **v4** every time he prays for them it’s with **joy**.-----
 And what prompts his joy over and over?---
 ‘your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now’.-----
 Ever since they’ve known Paul, ever since they’ve been followers of Jesus they’ve partnered
 with Paul in his ministry.
 Ch4 v15 tells us that from the start they financially supported Paul’s Gospel ministry.
 Surely that was because they’d been saved by God through Christ and they wanted others to
 experience that too.-----
 Then when the Philippians heard of Paul’s imprisonment and need, they sent Epaphroditus to
 him with a generous monetary gift, 4v18.-----
 In **2 Corinthians 8**, writing about 5 years earlier, Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, about
 the Macedonians, who included the Philippians.(**SLIDE**)
 Paul spoke of their severe trial and extreme poverty, which didn’t stop them giving.
 They gave joyfully and generously to the Jerusalem believers suffering famine.
 So the Philippians were poor n’ suffering but wanted to give to others in poverty.
 Their generosity flowed from generous hearts changed by the Gospel.-----
 The partnership was multifaceted. It involved love, care, financial support, prayers, even
 sending people - Epaphroditus, one of their leaders to partner with Paul.-----
 Their partnership enabled and facilitated Paul to do his ministry, and Paul taught, blessed and
 encouraged them in return.-----
 V7, they were partners with Paul in grace, because God’s grace enabled all of them to do what
 they did, as they sought the message of God’s grace in Jesus to go out and save and
 transform others.----
 In fact, the defending and confirming the Gospel, the standing up for the truth of the Gospel
 wasn’t just something Paul did, it was something the Philippians did too.
 The partnership of support & encouragement really went both ways.-----

I love the language of partnering with people in Gospel ministry.(**SLIDE**)
 That really comes out in many of the prayer letters we read from **missionaries** and Gospel
 workers we support.
 I think of those in AFES here, or Nat and Warwick Short when they served in West Africa, and
 the many times they expressed their appreciation of others’ partnership.
 Many of you enabled them to do their ministry.-----
 A couple from a Mission organization I’m involved with recently wrote(**SLIDE**)

We cannot do this alone and so we ask you, our brothers and sisters in Christ, to join us! There are several ways we can partner in this gospel work, using our various gifts to see God's kingdom come. Would you prayerfully consider sending and supporting us long-term in some of the following ways:

- Prayer: 'holding the ropes' to sustain us and see hearts change
- Financial: recurring and once-off support frees us to be fully engaged in Central Asia
- Encouragement: help us keep our eyes focussed on Jesus' priorities; call, message or visit us, send videos or gifts to our kids
- Logistics: help plan home assignments such as accommodation, cars, church meetings
- Communication: represent us to others, like your church, bible study or Yth Grp.-----

And I hope whether you're 7 years old, 17 or 70, you can do some of that, to partner with one or more Gospel workers serving in Australia or overseas?-----

It's makes a huge difference to them and to us.-----

When Jesus' salvation has given us Joy, we want others to have that too, don't we?---

Can I say though, that I also feel joy when I consider the many of you here who partner with us in **Gospel ministry at Bundy**.

So many of you pray, encourage, give financially, help practically; you voluntarily lead and love and serve, as we seek to reach our community and grow in Christ.

And I thank God for you all.-----

I pray we will continue unified in Gospel partnership at Bundy for the glory of God.

And if you're committed to this church but not partnering with us in making disciples, please join us.----- Talk to an elder or pastor.-----

Final point is, Praying for what?(SLIDE) What's Paul praying for them? V9-11.-----

Firstly that their love will keep on growing.

Surely it's their love for God and for others - the two greatest commandments.[Mt22.37-39]

And the more we love God the more we will have capacity to love others.-----

But notice what Paul actually prays is that their love 'will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment'.

We need God-given insight to know how to love people helpfully in their situation, according to their needs, not in whatever way we think best.

I might think a sad person needs a hug, but that might be the last thing they want from me. I know Neil doesn't like hugs.-----

So Paul's praying they will know how to love.-----

And he prays that growing love for God and others will result in them living lives that are pure, blameless, righteous.

That is all describing inner and outer holiness.

Moral integrity and purity, living lives that please God.

Keeping on growing in sanctification until Christ returns, for the glory of God.-----

What a great prayer for us to pray for one another too.-----

And **how** do we live this out?----- How can they or we live and love like this?-----

V11, again it's not in our own strength, it comes 'through Jesus Christ'.-----

Love is a fruit of the Spirit, God's Spirit, Christ's Spirit working in us.

And we'll grow in our love, knowledge and holiness as we gaze upon Jesus.-----

Kids, I love the story of **Basil the Branch.(SLIDE)**

Over and over Basil tries to produce fruit by trying harder, n' straining harder.(**SLIDE**)

Then, like Jesus is the vine in John 15, the Vine says to Basil the branch, 'you cant produce grapes on your own. Stop straining and just stick with me.'

So Basil focused on the vine,(**SLIDE**) and over time a beautiful bunch of grapes grew.----

Keep focused on Jesus if you want to grow.-----

Keeping thinking about the glory and goodness and great work of Christ.-----
 And prayerfully seeking and relying on his strength.-----

As I conclude I ask, How are you going at loving those you live with, and your brothers and sisters here?-----

I think this is a prayer we all need to pray for ourselves and for one another.-----

We have been given an example of someone who was suffering in prison, yet he's expressing his thanks for what God is doing in others, and praying for them.

What an example for us.-----

When praying for others we get diverted away from our own problems.

This selfless praying is good medicine for our own troubled souls, because it takes our gaze off ourselves, and refocuses it on others, and what we have in Christ.-----

When we are saved by Christ and in him, it results in love and joy, thankfulness, partnering and prayer.

Pray those things will grow in your life; and others.-----

Let's pray now.