

Grace And Peace

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The fullness of an individual's life does not depend upon the things he possesses, the people around him. It depends in the fullness of the stature of the amount that we receive God's grace and peace. An individual who receives God's grace and peace is a satisfied and secure person when we receive from God. And so Paul in Philippians is writing a letter to us that we might receive grace and peace. We're going to look at today that still in the introduction.

But there is a level of authority within the christian church. John talks about fathers and young men and children, and there is a nature in the christian church levels of maturity that help everyone receive to the maximum potential as possible that grace and peace. And so Paul as a father is writing to us out of the heart of a father, that those individuals to whom he has some authority over might receive to the fullest extent possible that grace and peace. And so I believe you and I would also be in that position, that here we are having someone write to us, Paul writing to us from over 2000 years ago, around 2000 years ago. But the goal is still the same, that he's writing to us as individuals, that we might receive grace and peace, God's heart, through Paul to us.

So we're going to be in verse, verse three, verse three through seven or so. Yeah. Chapter one, chapter one of Philippians three, seven. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine, making request for you all with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of

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Jesus Christ. Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.

Inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers with me of grace. So let's pray together.

Oh father Lord, this life is one of difficulties and trials. O Lord. Lord, I pray that we would be a people that even in those trials, through that groaning and even as a result of that growing, might participate more fully of your grace. Lord, I thank you for this structure, Lord, of this authority in our lives. I thank you for this letter.

And I pray that we would just receive from it. I ask in Jesus name, amen. Amen. So our goal is to take that writing, this writing from Paul, and put it into a perspective that we can understand here. So that's the goal, to take it and look at it in a simple way that we might actually benefit from it.

First of all, we see the heart of God shining through Paul towards the Philippians. These are people who are not related to him, had not had any interaction with him, would not have been associated with Paul in any way. This are people, just as even now we see that the Jewish people in Israel don't have a lot of connection with the countries around them in a positive way. Right. There seems to be something, some animosity that's kind of developing over there.

Well, that's always been the case to some degree or another. But here we see that Paul is writing to these people that would have had some degree of hostility towards him as a person. But yet now we see a heart for these people who may have been his enemies without the gospel. Now he is interested in their lives, and he says to them, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always, in every prayer of mine, making requests for you all with joy. First, the thing that we need to look at, that when you enter the kingdom of God, you enter a family.

And in that family, people are concerned about each other. I'm sure everyone else has the circumstances.

An unnot expected encounter with an individual where you hear them say, I've been praying for you and you're kind of bewildered. I don't have anything to do with you except a relationship with you through Jesus Christ, except that we both serve the same God. I see from my children and for my own lives, people praying for me that I would have no interaction with otherwise. When you enter the kingdom of God as a family, you enter in and people care about you. There is a love displayed for people.

We had some individuals visit the church this year, I believe, and they were from, I think one from Ukraine and one from Russia. And they were married and had a couple children. And they came into our house and there was just a communion and a fellowship with them that was based solely upon their relationship with Christ and ours. There was a communion with them that came as a result of being part of God's family. It's an amazing thing to be a part of the family of God.

I see it strangely in the lives of my children that people in this church are concerned for my children. Someone the other day said, I was playing basketball, and they said to me, you know, what's happened to your kids? I don't hear them going by my house on their motorcycles anymore. That's how the world thinks. They get right on facebook and they're like, I saw this white bike, and it's like, coming by that's what they say.

But the family of God's a little bit different. They may be concerned about how fast they're driving, but there's more of a concern for the person themselves. And I thank God that people in this congregation and people I know have been willing to pray for my children. But it's not just my children that there's a desire to pray for other people in God's family. It's not based on how nice you are, how beautiful you are.

It's based on being part of God's family. And here Paul is expressing a real concern with joy for the people of God. That is a picture of real authority being demonstrated towards the Philippians. He says, always in every prayer of mine, making requests for you all with joy. The strange thing about the family of God is it's not one that's focused upon the negative things in a person's life.

When things are not spiritual, we tend to pick at things like those chickens that we have on our coop, and one gets an injury and starts bleeding, and the other start to show that chicken attention, but not the kind of attention you'd want.

In other situations, when a person falls, it becomes an opportunity to heap square scorn and abuse and harm on that individual. But in the family of God, there's a willingness to focus on the beauty of that person and to pray with them for joy. A longing to see the fullness of their relationship with Christ developed into maturity. That's a beautiful thing. Unfortunately, we may not be like chickens who just tend to pick at an injury, but sometimes we tend to see a display of non christian authority in our life where we end up picking through gossip and other things.

That's not what Paul is doing here. He is making requests for people with joy because he sees a beauty in that person's life. Dean developed, and he's thankful for it. That sacrifice that he is making on behalf of the other person is worth it. What a beautiful thing to see our kids mature in the same way and even more so.

What a beautiful thing to see people in the church once who were on the path toward destruction, once walking in the ways of the world, once having the curse upon their shoulders and making decisions that are damaging to them and their family. What a joyful thing to see prayers answered in the lives of people. Them start to change. What a beautiful thing to be a part of the family of God. So Paul is making every prayer and requests for you all with joy.

But we see that these requests for the Philippians are not just because they're Christians. That is a part of it. But there is a way in which they're walking that tends to develop this attitude in Paul. And I believe that you and I also, if we are to covet the prayers of other people and experience the blessing of God in that people's prayers are answered in our life, that we can put ourselves in a position that maximizes other people praying for us. Amen.

That there is a position we can place ourselves in. And these Philippians had found themselves in this position and therefore receiving the full benefit, benefit of Paul's

prayer life. Those people. This fellowship in the gospel is still available today. It's still here.

I hope that you are humble enough to say that you need people praying for you. I hope that you're not so blind as to think that you don't need people with spiritual authority caring for you. Some people think brazenly, like I used to, that I don't really care where the whole world goes. I'm going forward. I don't need anybody else.

Then when you stumble on that stone, you recognize it's good when two people walk together because one can pick the other up. Three strand cord is not easily broken. Having mature people to pray for you is important. By placing ourselves in positions within the body of Christ, it encourages this prayer life from God's heart for us, and I believe has an impact on our life, not because of who we are as people, our experiences, or something about us, but because of the person praying for us. Strange.

It's not about performance. Sometimes it's about someone with spiritual maturity praying for us. Okay, so what is it? We'll look in verse five. Verse five.

So, for your fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now, he is praying for these people fervently, with joy, because of these people's fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Now I'm reading in the new King James version, and I'm sure the word is different other versions, but I like the word fellowship. Fellowship is a word that in English can be broke down in two words, fellow and ship. Now, I've been on a ship before. Gabe went down to friendships, and Stacy and I worked with friendships for a while.

And my first trip on the ship was from Los Angeles to Roatan, Honduras. And we were on the ship together. Once we left the dock, there was really no option. We were there, all of us on the same ship together. You could go 300ft in one direction and 75ft in the other direction.

You could go down three flights of stairs but you were on that ship together, you ate together, you worked together, you lived together, you had problems, and you were

together. And at first, that seemed like a good thing, right? We're together. Beautiful thing. Missionaries going down to Honduras on the same ship together, right?

But as we got to Honduras, and as that four mile an hour ship chugged the way south, and the weather got hotter, and the seven year old ham got older, and the fresh fruit and vegetables ran out, and then ultimately, when we got there, the generator stopped together. Wasn't quite as beautiful as I thought. There was a lot of complaining. There was a lot of ugliness, there was a lot of back talking, but we were together. Fellowship is talking about doing life together.

It is not always pretty, it is not perfect, but done together, people working together, there is a beauty in it. This fellowship is a group of individuals heading somewhere together, together. But this fellowship is not just one of camaraderie. I have been in different groups. I played basketball, I was in school, went to college, was in a fraternity house.

And there is a certain togetherness regarding that, but it's limited in its scope and its attachment. But this fellowship is based on something different. This fellowship of people in the same group going in the same direction is based on the gospel. The reason Paul is praying so fervently for the people is because he is in this group, going a place together that's focused on the gospel. The gospel is the ministry of Jesus Christ, two people.

It is based on his statement that he says, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father except through me. He is the one who put his life on the line as a surety for your and I sins. He is the redemptive work that covers our sins, that purchases us out of a place of indebtedness because of our sin to the father. This gospel is the work of Jesus Christ.

It is different from any religion. This is a church, but it is not necessarily the fellowship of the gospel. It is a church building full of, I pray, people who are saved going in the direction. But there is a difference between a fellowship in the gospel and an organization. An organization has a group of leaders or a leader upon whom that

organization is dependent.

The church does not have one. The church is based on the foundation of Jesus Christ. In this church, we are not to call anyone teachers because one is your teacher. We're not to call anyone father because one is your father. In organizations, they have an elected person who directs outcome of that organization.

But in the Church of Jesus Christ, is not that way. There may be individuals, I pray, like you and I, who are walking with Jesus, who get to have fellowship in that gospel. But if we turn away, it says, if you deny me, I will deny you. There have been churches before us who walked with Jesus for a season but are no longer doing so. There are churches who have decided to move in a different direction.

There are organizations who have an elected official that they are accountable to a man. That's not true in the christian church. It is based on the work of Jesus Christ. This fellowship has always been consistent since that work which Jesus did 2000 years ago. He has always had a group of believers committed to walking with him together.

This work that's being done in verse five, it says, for your fellowship in the gospel. From the first day until now, Paul is praying for these individuals who have made a decision or been called to walk in the gospel. He is praying for them also because he sees the direction they're headed. How many people in here love geometry? Right?

Wait, Lawrence does. Kids, don't listen to that. That's close your ears. Right? Geometry is a beautiful thing, right?

And building houses, geometry is a very important thing. Right? But the simplest place to start in geometry is a point, right? A point is not a period. A period is a dot on a piece of paper.

A point is a infinitesimally small place that as you go further, it just gets smaller and smaller. An idea like zero, zero is a point, right? And that was the starting point in these individuals life with the gospel. It says, from the first day until now, you and I, if we're to enter into this kind of spiritual accountability and blessing and being prayed

for, it had to have a starting point. There had to have been a time in which an individual came to accept the gospel into their own heart.

Now, I recognize that some people, it comes upon them like a thunderstorm in which they were dry at one point and then immediately soaked. And they are. And know that from that point I am walking with Jesus. But others, it comes like a gentle rain, where they come to a point of recognizing that they are now saved and walking with Jesus. But whichever way that you feel you might have come, there are some things that have to happen.

It says that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, if you are in fellowship with the gospel and cannot confess the Lord Jesus, you should not consider yourself a follower of Jesus. Jesus says that if you will deny me before men, I will also deny you before my father in heaven, that there has to be a point in a Christian's life, where they come and make a public testimony that they not are only a Christian, but that they belong to Jesus Christ. They take that yoke upon themselves and they walk with Jesus. They know that Jesus is the source of their salvation, and they accept that on themselves. That is the point.

But as you go in geometry, it expands from there into a line segment, that that point starts and continues to a specific point somewhere off. And Paul says, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. And he says, look, I know that from the beginning until now, you have been walking. Now, I'm sure he could probably add not perfectly, but that you are walking in a way that is consistent with the gospel from the first day until now.

I'm going to go to Matthew in an understanding, because we are in the end of an age in which being a Christian is considered normal in America. And maybe that is changing, but we have to recognize that in every age, being a Christian has always been one of following this radical, world changing person called Jesus Christ. One of the things he says in chapter ten, verse 34 of Matthew, it says, do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter

in law against her mother in law.

And a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me. He who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.

The only fellowship there is as Christians is that which walks with Jesus Christ. And he is calling us out into a full commitment to him. Paul says that based on that, their fellowship in the gospel from that first day until now. In verse six, 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, that seeing their foundation, seeing their walk with the gospel, it even says in other places that seen that they have given up everything to follow. Jesus joyfully accepted the plundering of their goods.

He says in verse six that he is confident. Confident? Confident? What's he confident? He says, being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it.

Some of us are unsure of the way our future will go. Excuse me, but Paul here is speaking of a confident. He is praying for these individual and confident that that work which Jesus Christ wants to do in their lives will be completed. I'm not sure if you would answer for yourself. Are you confident of a work being done in your life?

Some people have desires for their own life, right? They're trying to improve themselves in some way. Right? But the strange thing is, they've been trying to improve themselves in this way for a long time. Sometimes our confidence begins to slip and we begin to wonder, you know, I'm not sure I'm ever going to accomplish that.

Now, as years go by in people's lives, you know, some people want this or that, and then you start figuring out, there's only so many years left. Hmm. I'm not sure I'm going to make it, and we have to give up on a goal. But here Paul is saying, I am confident. I am absolutely convinced because of the way I see your life going from the

first day until now, because I am in some way praying for you.

I am confident that that good work is going to be completed in you. I'll go to Hebrews in chapter ten.

There is a difference in individuals. We were talking this morning about Esau, right? And Esau had to make a decision. He was going through a groaning, and his decision making process was based on two things, and he placed them on a scale. One was his hungry belly, right?

And the other was his blessing. And he had to weigh those in the balance. And he was unsure. And there was a tipping point that was happening. And all of a sudden, in his mind, the tipping point went towards his belly, and he traded his blessing for a pot of lentils.

You and I go through groanings. Paul is confident that those groanings are going to produce in us an eternal weight of glory. But it has to be based on something in Hebrews, chapter ten. We talk about that in verse 33, in verse 32. But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings, partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions.

Companions of those who were so treated. For you had compassion on me in my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward, for you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise for yet a little while. And he who is coming will come and will not tarry now. The just shall live by faith.

But if anyone draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but those who believe to the saving of the soul. There is a coming king coming. This says that he has confidence that that work is going to continue in the day of the Lord. But that confidence, if we were to look at our actual

state of being, I think you would find us wavery, scared, hungry, challenged by the love of things and money.

I think you could say, you know, I need the confidence of Paul and of the Lord to bring me through. This says, we are not to those who draw back to perdition, but those who go forward to the saving of our souls, but those who believe to the saving of the soul. This confidence needs to continue in. Excuse me. In Ephesians, it says, verse six, 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.

This line that we're drawing, you know, starting at a point and ending at a segment in current where we are today, continues until the day of the Lord. This is the day in which Jesus comes back to gather his saints, to bring into his family and into that wedding feast those who are saved. But this day never ends. It says in revelations that there is no day, for the lamb is the light, that this day continues Forever being brought into that day of Jesus Christ. In verse seven, we'll finish off.

It says, just it is right for me to. For me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense of ConfirMatioN of the goSpel, you are all partakers with me of grace. Paul says that his perspective is correct. He says, because you've started this way and walked with the gospel, it is correct for me to think this you. But then he adds one more thing, that being a partaker with Paul also has benefits.

It said in Hebrews also that you endured suffering with him. We see that idea back in Matthew. Also see, where are we? Also in chapter ten, verse 40, it says, he who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward.

He who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly I say to you, he shall no means lose his reward. In closing, I want to say a couple things here and I'll go back to the Philippians.

This life that you and I walk is focused on different thing. It means something to walk in fellowship with the gospel.

I can't tell you exactly what that means, but I want to say two things. That is walking with other people in the same direction of serving Jesus Christ, of joining your life together with them in the service of Jesus Christ. You and I can point our direction, our lives, any directions we choose. Right now, it means something to make a decision and say, Lord Jesus, I want to point my life in the direction of your gospel. I want my life to be focused on your gospel.

I want to stand upon that foundation which your gospel brings. That is an important decision you and I have to make. Is that the direction I am going? It starts in a, in a place that's only between you and God, where an individual chooses to take a yoke that you didn't carry before and put it on yourself because you trust the other person who's carrying the other side. That is Jesus.

He said, come take my yoke upon you. I have a direction I am headed in which I am chief. I am the foundation. I am the ship. It always works in my house the way I say, and I want you to come with me.

That's an invitation to you and I to walk with Jesus. There are people walking that path in America. Some people bemoan, but we hear the words spoken to Elijah. There are still 5000 who have nothing bow the knee to Baal. There will always be a church of Christ moving forward.

No matter what happens to this church in Capelis, Jesus church will move forward.

It may be that those who are here today will be squirming about what happens here 20 years from now. But Jesus will always be moving forward and there will always be people moving with him. Our goal is if we are walking with Jesus. And the second thing is if we cannot do things ourselves. There is a call here to join ourselves to individuals who are walking that way.

It can mean a lot of things. It talked about resources and sometimes we tend to think about our money in opportune way. But I tell you what, a cup of cold water in a dry and thirsty land is worth a lot more than money. And here, if even a child can give a cup of cold water, we can give what Christ is asking us to do and that we join with them. But in that process, the beautiful thing is, is I am confident that we receive the encouragement and blessing of others around us to pray and help us on our journey.

And it's one of joy and peace. It is one in which God's grace and peace is flourishing in our lives. And so my encouragement to you is to know for yourself, do you follow Jesus? And number two, do you support those who do follow Jesus? And I believe then can say with Paul that I'm confident.

You might have lots of fears inside and out. But if I'm a person speaking to you today in the place of Paul, I can say to you, if you were my children, I'm confident you say you don't have resources. I'm confident you say you don't have friends. I am confident you say no one loves me. I say I'm confident that if you walk with Jesus, that if you fellowship with those who walk with Jesus, that he's going to complete that work.

I'm confident.

Father. Lord, we don't come to you, Lord, as people who know everything. But, Lord, our confidence is based on that which you've done, Lord. I just pray, Lord, in these people that we get to meet with, Lord, that you would continue that work, Lord, more and more experiencing your grace and peace, Lord, in Jesus name, amen.