

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11  
PAUL'S JOY AND PURSUIT OF UNITY  
CITY CENTER KAMPALA  
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For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

-- 2 Corinthians 5:21

The Gospel of Jesus in its very essence is a message of Grace... that by its very power when given liberty should transform our lives in such a way that we become different people. God himself gave that we might be made new and not only new but live the life of God.

*That our righteousness cost Jesus his own life. That he willingly and obediently loved God the Father and loved us through the obedience and submission to the will of God the Father.*

*So at the very core of the message we are to be new people relating to both God and others in such a way that displays the love of God in Christ. That our lives become the message of the Gospel to both the church and the world.*

*God by his grace has gave us Jesus...*

*In light of the work of the Holy Spirit in drawing us to God and our enjoyment of the relationship with Him should determine the way we live among others.*

~ *The two intertwine and can not be broken apart or separated in such a way that we enjoy one without the display of the other.*

~ *Jesus Himself said we are to love God and a direct result of that would be a love for others...*

#### **As we embrace the Gospel...God**

Therefore, since we have been **justified** by faith, we have **peace** with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained **access** by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we **rejoice in hope of the glory of God**. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because **God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.**

--Romans 5:1-5

#### **As we embrace the Gospel ... Others**

For through him we both have **access** in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are **no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow** citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, **being joined together, grows into a holy temple** in the Lord. In him you also are being **built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

--Ephesians 2:18-21

*These truths are so beautifully displayed in Paul's letter to the Philippians. Here is a church that had radically been transformed by the power of Grace. They were people who lived the message yet at the same time struggled in Joy and unity. Paul addresses these two truths in his letter to them .*

Paul and Timothy, *slaves of Jesus Christ,*

As he enters into this letter Paul uses a greeting that is different, and marks the level of both love and friendship he and this church had for one another. In other letters he opened stating his leadership in their lives "Paul an apostle..." but because of the love and trust the people of Philippi had for Paul and he for them, he leans into this view of himself in relation to Jesus. That because of Christ he was their slave. He willingly and obediently recognizes that at the very core he is the possession of Jesus Christ. That he lives under the authority of Jesus. His life and the character of his life in Christ demanded different.

When we see ourselves in this light - servants of God - and in relation to others it drastically alters the way we interact with them. Our words, actions and attitudes take on a whole new formation. They are thought through and lived out in light of our representation of Jesus since we are to be a reflection of his life. Paul's life was lived in such a way that his desire was not authority over others but a loving display of Jesus Himself. He was determined for others to see and grow closer to Jesus and he knew that others' view of Jesus was shaped by his character and actions.

It is so vital that we grasp this thinking Paul is speaking of here. That we determine that others would see Jesus in us. That our lives by their very nature and display honor and draw others to Jesus.

To be in and of Christ was the very nature of Christianity and to live in the very atmosphere and Spirit of Jesus was a direct result.

...write this letter to all the *saints* in Philippi who are *consecrated* to God *because of their relationship to Jesus Christ*, together with the overseers and the deacons.

So when Paul speaks of the saints in Christ Jesus he speaks of those who by their very nature and character are different from other people, and who are consecrated to God, because of their special relationship to Jesus Christ - and this is offered to all people.

Paul initiates the letter by recognizing we are each at the very beginning equal in light of the relationship with Jesus. That when we are all examining our lives in light of the cross there is not partiality and these truths are for all people equally.

**V. 2...** Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Out of this new found relationship of the church and its people to Christ, Paul offers that which he himself has received both grace and peace. He willingly distributes and invests in them both the grace and peace of God. We also have the privilege of freely reviewing and distributing the gifts and graces of God through Jesus. Paul personally experienced both of these.

Grace is the beauty, favor and free gift that was offered them that drew them into salvation in Christ. Paul in essence reminds them of the very beginning of this relationship born in the grace of God that allowed them to no longer be victims of the law and sin but willing participants in the grace and love of Jesus. It's when we understand and appreciate Grace that we truly begin to live at peace with God and others. That we have received that which by no means deserved.

Do you and I recognize that it was by Grace we were saved and continues to transform us. When we recognize Grace it humbles us.

He also addresses them in Peace.... Peace as Paul here uses it is that which connected them to both God and Paul and it has to do with personal relationship. It carries the idea that because of Christ they are now able to experience peace with themselves, others and God. A peace born out of and for the result of reconciliation.

When Paul prays for this grace and peace over the church his desire is that they know the joy of knowing God as their father and the peace of being reconciled to God, and their fellow men - a grace and peace experience that can only come through the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer because of Jesus Christ.

**V. 3-4...** In all my remembrance of you I thank my God for you, and always in every one of my prayers, I pray for you with joy,

Paul looked through the lens of Grace and Peace he remembered the church of Philippi with such gratefulness. He saw them in light of the Gospel and the possibilities of God. It brought about joy in his heart as he considered them, and it drew out a thankfulness to God. He saw God at work in their lives. He was able to identify evidences of Grace and determined not to dwell on those things that were not yet... Or those things that that may have done that disturbed him.

Paul in his maturity looked back and recognized it was God who was and is at work in the lives of the Philippians. That the work of God individually and in the church was a direct work of the Spirit and Paul appreciated and enjoyed the goodness of God in the lives of the Philippians as he watched them change and evidence Christ.

... He remembered how God brought him to them. That is was a divine calling and a direct result was that people were converted... As God opened their heart... Even in the difficulties he rejoiced... that his time in prison resulted in the salvation of Cornelius and his whole family and he saw the Holy Spirit fall on them.. He remembered the demon possessed gal that received Christ and was freed... Paul remembered God... Not the negative or the faults of these people but the sovereign display of God work in the Spirit.

He did not criticize but he celebrated the work of God in their lives and it drew out worship... Something spiritual happened between them. And we are faced with this challenge and responsibility.... To recognize Grace and pursue joy and peace with others.

So many times in the body of Christ if we are honest lack this gift of Godly forgetfulness... We tend to become set on the wrongs or concerns we have for others and our seeing Christ in them gets clouded. Holding to negative experiences or the he said she said... I was hurt when... We become familiar with un-forgiveness and one another and we forfeit the possibility of enjoying the beauty of what God is doing in another. We toss away the possibility of God using another in our lives and we begin to be angry and bitter towards others and we truly do not display a fear of God or a love for others.

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **-- Romans 15:5-6**

Paul, refused to let anything between he and them... He so wanted to draw closer to God and the church in fact the very thing that drew him closer and deeper to them was prayer. He carried them to God in prayer. He stood between them and God in thankfulness and intercession for their faith.

It has been said you cannot truly pray for another and carry anger or bitterness in your heart... Prayer... true, honest prayer for another is the cure to anger and un-forgiveness. In fact it says in Hebrews... that Jesus himself is always interceding for us and in that he is our example... And He holds no anger and bitterness towards us.

Paul did all of this because of the work of the Spirit in his own life... It was evidence that He himself was walking in the power of the Spirit of God and bearing fruit of the Spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5. He both loved and displayed joy for them...

When you and I see or think of others do their lives bring about a greater joy and a deeper love. This is the very core of our faith being love! We need more of this supernatural work in our lives. A work of recognizing that because of the Cross, we have been forgiven and have been freed to love, forgive and enjoy others.

**V. 5-6** ... because you have been in partnership with me for the furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now, and of this I am confident, that he who began a good work in you will complete it so that you may be ready for the day of Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on to say that he loved them because in the fight for the Gospel they were not consumers or ones looking on from afar but were truly partners. Participants and investors. They truly shared in partnership and fellowship in this mission. Through the common gift of grace they shared a common goal of mission. They engaged Paul and they themselves were on mission with him. And this brought joy to Paul.

It increased his confidence in the depth of the work in their lives. Through their lives Paul truly saw a work of the Spirit. And Paul had every right to examine them to determine if they were truly in Christ. They had been transformed in such a way they themselves felt compelled by the love of Christ to be on mission. To share this gift of Grace with others.

And his confidence was found in both the establishing and finishing of their faith. These people were truly believers in Jesus. The picture Paul uses here in the words he uses is that of the burnt offering. In the Old Testament the burnt offering spoke of a complete surrender and commitment to God. It was from the beginning to end completely God's. The whole of it was consumed.

Paul saw every life as a sacrifice prepared to offer one day to Jesus Himself. This picture that he draws out in Romans 12:1-2.

This picture should cause us to in each moment recognize that we are a living sacrifice and should display the life and character of God ... To present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable which is our worship.

On the day Christ returns for us it will be a day of the coming of a King and the rightful response will be to offer gifts to mark our love, loyalty and gratefulness.... The only gift that Jesus desires and is looking for from us is our lives. So then it is the supreme task of our lives is to prepare to offer nothing less than lives that honor and bring glory to Him. Lives pleasing to God.

***His concern will not be our righteousness but His and if we loved him and others...***

.... And it is right for me to feel like this about you, because I have you in my heart, because all of you are partners in grace with me, both in my hands, and in my defense and confirmation of the gospel.

These were people that Paul not only felt confident in but he sincerely and genuinely had them in his heart. That his ministry was from a pure heart, a good conscience and a sincere faith. There was no hypocrisy in his love. That the things he taught and spoke he displayed in action.

He gave them no room for questioning. Unlinked the Corinthian church which he said...

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. In return widen your hearts also. --**2 Corinthians 6:5-7**

His relationship with the Philippian church was not a challenge or fight.

And the things that he took joy in is that as they saw his example they themselves internalized it and imitated Him as he imitated Christ... As he would mention later in the chapter whether he was present or absent. It was a deep real work of God.

Not only this but they became intentional to go out and defend and share the Message of Jesus as well as live out that message amongst each other. Their way of life with one another was a confirmation to the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

They built up and strengthened one another and the church through edification and encouragement of each individual. As Paul mentioned in **Ephesians 4...** that they spoke love, edified and grew together, that they might encourage effective growth and be an honorable witness.

.... God is my witness how I yearn for you all with the very compassion of Christ Jesus.

Paul ultimately pointed them to God as his witness... We cannot truly judge the heart or know exactly what goes on in another so Paul placed his word on God himself. He in effect said let God judge me if my heart is wrong. But never the less I love and long for you. I enjoy being with you and wish we could be together again. That when I am away from you... I think of you and honestly love you.

The love Paul had for the church was with the very love of Jesus Himself. When we are really one with Jesus and there is a genuine work of the Holy Spirit... his love goes out through us to others, the people He loves and whom he died for.

**V. 9-11.** And this I pray, that your *love for each other may continue to abound more and more* in all fullness of knowledge and in all sensitiveness of perception, that you may test the things which differ, that you may be yourselves pure and that you may cause no other to stumble, in preparation for the day of Christ, *because you have been filled with the fruit which the righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ* produces, and which issues in glory and praise to God.

And Paul's heart again is displayed through prayer. He sought to move people not by word only but by the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer. We have that privilege of furthering the work of God through prayer. And at the very core of His prayer is that these people would grow deeper and abound more in the very foundation of our faith the virtue of Love.

Love is the very mark of the Christian.

That it would be a love that increases and abounds to point of over flow. A love that is sensitive and discerning to all situations and displays itself perfectly in application. Not an emotion but a duty. Because we have experienced such deep and selfless love in Christ that we should in humility selflessly sacrifice our lives for one another.

And this was not only so these people would grow but that others would not be whether in or outside the church be stumbled. And that the goal would be our appearance in that day of Jesus. Out of a fear of God and a love for him and others, because we have been given the possibility and the fruits of Righteousness and the power of the Holy Spirit we should live in such a way that we love other and honor and please God.

Peter say in his epistle that since we have been given everything for life and Godliness we should grow in ... Love

Loving God and being so satisfied in God and so delighted in all that He is to us that His commandments cease to be burdensome. We live a life life that affirms that which we believe.

Paul later writes... V 27... *Live in a manner worthy of the Gospel* ... that their whole life in conduct, word, and character would display and be to the honor of Jesus. That as we delight in God the result would be that we were live radically different lives. That as others observed them there would be a noticeable difference in them. That as much as they were citizens of Rome and it would be they duty and demand to live as citizens of that Kingdom Paul reminds them that above all they are part of a greater kingdom.

That the life of the Philippians would be so caught up in this joy of knowing and living for God that the results of Grace would be absolutely infectious.

As we close I want to end with the first 4 verses in Chapter 2.... How do we find this joy and pleasure in God... By knowing Jesus through radical belief in God and self forgetfulness.

If the fact that you are in Christ has any power to influence you, if love has any persuasive power to move you, if you really are sharing in the Holy Spirit, if you can feel compassion and pity, complete my joy, for my desire is that you should be in full agreement, loving the same things, joined together in soul, your minds set on the one thing. Do nothing in a **spirit of selfish ambition**, and in a search for **empty glory**, but in humility let each consider the other better than himself Do not be always **concentrating each on your own interests**, but let each be equally **concerned for the interests of others**.

*--Philippians 2:1-4*

*What is the mark of your life? What is the mark of this church? It is our great privilege that we might love God in such a way that Love is what people see.*