

Three Marks of a Person Living for Christ

Our Life in Christ

Philippians 1:1-11

Joe Bartemus

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Christ Jesus. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.
Philippians 1:1-11 (ESV)

Introduction (Phil. 1:1-2)

Today we begin a 15-week series on the book of Philippians. Pastor Mark will pick Romans up again in the fall. The title of the series is "Our Life in Christ." Several staff men will be bringing the Word to us in these weeks, and the prayer is that we will hear from the Lord from this great little epistle and from the people God has appointed as his ministers for this season. Please bring your Bibles and hearts, desiring to hear from God in His word (as you usually do). This manuscript will be short and will be more like an expanded outline. Pray with me that God will use this little epistle in the life of College Park this summer to grow us up in maturity for the ministry He desires from us.

When looking at Philippians, there are many great verses showing the importance of the message.

Some of those verses are:

- 1:21 - "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain"
- 2:8 - "He humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross"
- 2:12 - "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"

- 3:10 - "that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering . . ."
- 4:6 - "Be anxious for nothing . . ."
- 4:13 - "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"
- 4:19 - "My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

It is a treasure to the church and is worth our time in delving deeply into its wealth of insight.

Specifically, the first two verses in Philippians help us to see an introduction to the book. A whole sermon could be delivered on these verses, but there are three important items to notice in this salutation that will give us some background to the book.

1. Paul is the writer and a servant (slave, doulos)

Paul is readily accepted as the author of the letter. Timothy was his student and companion. Paul was one who knew he was a slave to the Lord Christ Jesus. He was not his own. He also saw that as a privilege

Paul was in prison (1:7) as he wrote – probably in Rome. These are words from a man in prison. It seems wise to listen to a person who embodies "for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF AN APOSTLE IN PRISON!

2. To the saints in Christ Jesus (church)

Holy ones are set apart to the Lord. The church is made up of saints, and Paul is writing to them to encourage them in a difficult time and to give them direction to change what is not helpful and to continue to move forward to the day of the Lord.

The specific location of this church was in northern Greece, in a city called Philippi. Acts 16 speaks to Paul's experience there as he was imprisoned and saw the conversion of the jailor. The church there seems to be growing, with some challenges in terms of unity and trust. Paul writes to help them to persevere and do so with joy.

3. Jesus is the focus of the epistle. The names Jesus, Christ, or a combination of the two is used about 44 times in this epistle. The title of this series is "Our Life in Christ," and if we can see Jesus better by studying this letter and then become better followers of Jesus, it will be time well spent. I pray that we will have a renewed vision and love for our Lord Jesus Christ through God's Word in Philippians.

Three Marks of a Person and the Church Living for Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:3-11)

Mark #1: Crown of/with Christ - Victory Assured (1:3-6)

Paul begins the body of the letter with a prayer or wish for the church. In verses 3-4 he thanks God for his memory of these people and says that he prays regularly for them. It makes me wonder who I pray for regularly and how I should do that more often. I pray for my family and those in immediate need regularly, but Paul helps us to see the value of prayer for many on a regular basis. Paul's prayer was not merely obligatory, but it was done with joy. The cause for his joy was that the church in Philippi had partnered with him in the proclamation of the gospel and continued to do so. It looks like they at least sent funds to help Paul (4:15) and also continued Paul's work of the gospel on their own in their city of Philippi. That caused Paul much joy.

The key verse to the first point is in verse 6. What an encouraging and exciting verse. Here Paul asserts his confidence (in a tense that demonstrates completion—he is already confident). His confidence is in the Lord Jesus Christ, who began a good work in the people of Philippi. This good work could be their good deeds to Paul but is more likely the good work of God (not them) that brought them into the family of Christ in salvation. He began that work in them and then Paul affirms his confidence that Christ will bring it to completion. He will not stall out or quit. He will bring it to completion right up to the end—to the Day of Jesus Christ.

That day is the final day. It is the day when Christ, the conqueror of death and hell, will receive the crown and will be the unquestionable ruler. Christ's lordship (crown) is already evidenced in the cross/resurrection (2:10-11) and in the future (3:20-21). We share in that crown as we press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (3:15). Paul wants his readers to share in his confidence that Jesus, who started this work of salvation in them, would be there to finish it up, and that is the promise of a future with the King and therefore a crown.

Application: Jesus is King - so what?

1. Jesus - A mark of the church is having Jesus as the center – our hope is in Jesus Christ. It is about His day – He is king and He will rule. He is the king of kings and Lord of lords. When our faith is challenged, remember "On Christ the Solid Rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand." He wears the crown. Find joy in life in Christ the king.

2. Confident/secure—A mark of the church of Jesus is that our security is in Christ. I know there is debate concerning the security of the believers. This verse affirms the reality of

our security in Jesus. Paul realized this church is not perfect, but the king of the church is holding His church. This world offers security in 401(k)s, jobs, insurance, friends, government and more. Our security comes from the Lord. He began with us and will finish with us. The day of Jesus Christ is the day of His final inauguration when we will reign with Him because He said so (2 Tim. 2:12). Joy in our security, but also hear Paul well. In chapter 2:12 he says we have responsibility – “work out your own salvation.” The church will not abdicate our responsibility to live out the salvation worked in us. To live otherwise is to deny the king that bought us. Confidence is in Him, and we must live out His good working.

3. Eternal perspective - A mark of the church of Jesus is that we live for that day. We have an eternal perspective. As we minister in this world, the Day of Jesus Christ is our goal. That will change our view of worship, evangelism, our jobs, and our family decisions. Do not live for today only, but live with eternity's values in view.

4. Finally - This verse necessitates the question: Has he begun a good work in you? Are you a believer in Jesus? The call is to trust in Him. He has the words of life and desires us to be with Him on His great day of victory.

Mark #2: Chains - Suffering in the persevering community of faith (1:7-8)

In verse 7 Paul amplifies the reason for his thankfulness for the partnership with the people of the church of Philippi. They were partakers with him in his imprisonment and in his defense and proclamation of the gospel. He sensed a connection that went beyond merely social acquaintance. They were with him in his biggest passion – the proclamation of the gospel. They were also willing to do it no matter the cost. He partnered with people who were not afraid of chains or other discomforts for the biggest mission – telling the good news of Jesus.

Application:

1. The church is to be a group of saints who are so committed to Jesus that we would say with Paul, “for to me, to live, is Christ and to die is gain.” As we are in community, this is serious and demands our lives, our all.

2. Church is not for those who are looking for the easy road. It is for those who are, like Paul and the Philippians, willing to encourage and support each other in the tough challenges of life and in living out the gospel. We want to be in church with people who live and die for their faith. There is confidence that we will inherit a crown, but we will also live in a fallen world, and the chains are a part of Christian living today.

Mark #3: Prayer – The Action of the Victorious/Suffering Church (1:9-11)

The end of this section (verses 9-11) records this conclusion, and Paul demonstrates good, biblical prayer. I think that we do well to imitate Paul in this prayer form. It misses what many of our prayers focus on (namely health, wealth, prosperity). This is not all we pray for, but if we followed this prayer for ourselves, our family, our church, and our government, we would find great blessing as a church and as followers of Jesus. The prayer divides into three parts, which I will summarize below (the three sections of the prayer are introduced by “that,” “so that,” and “so”):

a. Heart—“that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment.” Paul is praying for the believers to have abounding and ever increasing love. The word “abounding” is a great way to describe a healthy church, full of people with love abounding. Love is a word that implies action for the good of another or in proper response to others. We are to increase in our love to God and to others. Would it not be wonderful if we all prayed for ourselves to increase in our love? Paul adds “with knowledge and all understanding.” Love is not merely a mushy word. It is one based on study and awareness and intentionality.

b. Head—“so that you may approve what is excellent.” The church should pray for each other that there is God-given wisdom to approve the excellent way. Paul speaks to this in 4:8, as he admonishes the readers to put their minds to things that are excellent, and he even mentions some of them. The head makes volitional decisions, and the goal is to do that in an excellent way. The pitfalls of this prayer could be for some to pursue a perfectionist view of the world (it will not be perfect until the resurrection). Another pitfall is to give up and say there is no need to pursue excellence. The prayer is that the redeemed will work hard to strive toward excellence as love is abounding.

c. Hands—“so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ—filled with the fruit of righteousness—that comes through Jesus—to the praise of God.” This string of four clauses or phrases is the assignment of the church (people of God). We need to pray for each other that we will strive to be pure and blameless until the end. That will be seen in fruit of righteousness. We love that Jesus will keep us until the day of Jesus, but we are called to be pure until that day. We are responsible and need to pray for each other. It all is done through Jesus (but we need to do it), and it will conclude with the praise of GOD.

What a prayer. I have prayed this prayer often these days as I studied this text. I pray that I will keep it up.

So how can I demonstrate these three marks as one who desires to live for Christ?

1. SEE JESUS: Live life in light of the eternal plan of God – live in confidence in the Lord. Live like those who know the power and victory of the resurrection today.

2. SEE JESUS: At the same time, live life in light of the present, and get in fellowship with those of like faith who see Jesus as so important that we will die for our faith. Live like one who understands the resistance of the world, and join with others who follow Jesus anyway.

3. SEE JESUS: Get on your knees and be praying like Paul for yourself, your family, your church, the world, and for anyone else. The goal and finish line is the day of Christ, and we live to the “glory and praise of God.”

Let the crown, chains, and prayer be seen among the people of College Park as they were seen in Philippi two thousand years ago.

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