

Thanksgiving And Prayer

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[0 : 00] Starting at verse 11, if you've got a page number. All the ones, four ones. So Acts chapter 16, starting at verse 11, and it's on page 1111.

Let's hear God's word. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis.

From there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony, and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

On the Sabbath, we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there.

One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.

[1 : 38] When she and the members of her household were baptised, she invited us to her home. If you consider me a believer in the Lord, she said, come and stay at my house.

And she persuaded us. I'm going to invite Jonathan, who's going to come and speak this morning. Thanks, Jonathan. If you still have Acts chapter 16 open, please keep your finger on it.

But at the same time, with your other hand, turn to Philippians, which if you're using the Red Bible is on page 1178. And we're going to read the first 11 verses of that as our text this morning.

Starting in verse 1. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.

To all saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 56] I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, I've been confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

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

God can testify how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best, and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Let's just commit our time to the Lord in prayer. Father, as we have read your word, we are excited at the thought of what you will teach us through it. Father, we want to become students of your word, people who put your word into practice in our lives.

We thank you for Jesus. We thank you for our salvation. And we thank you that we can grow in our salvation by learning about you through your word. We do want to commit this time to you.

[4 : 26] Open up our hearts, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen. Has this ever happened to you? You want to send a greeting card to someone.

So you go down to the shop, and you start picking through the cards to say exactly what you want to say. So you pick up a card, and you read it, and you think, that sounds all right, but it's not really what you want to say.

So you pick up another one, and you think, well, most definitely I'm not going to send that to my loved one. And eventually you go through all the cards, and at the end you find there's nothing in any of these cards that I really want to say to my loved one.

So you decide you're going to buy a card with a blank message. So you take it on home, you sit down at the table, and you start writing a personal message. For after all, what you want to say to your loved one is something that you have in your own heart to say, rather than some standard

message that is on a card.

But excitedly, you put it back in the envelope, you either post it or hand it to whoever you want to give it to, they open it, and they're so excited, because do you know what? It was exactly the message that they wanted to hear.

[5 : 32] So the message you wanted to say to them was exactly what they wanted to hear. Well, in Paul's time there was no hallmark, there was no card shops, but he had a very personal message that he wanted to say to the people of Philippi.

He didn't want to say something standard or just write down some standard comments, send it off, and thinking, yeah, they'll be happy with that. No. When he wrote his letters to the Philippians, he had this personal message of joy.

And as we read the letter, you'll actually see that coming through the letter. He's so joyful and so happy to be writing to these Philippians. For the next eight weeks, we'll be going through the book of Philippians, and I would encourage you to read it.

Perhaps this week, find the time to read the book, the letter, so that you're familiar with it before each sermon. A few minutes ago, we were reading from Acts.

And the reason we start there is because that is where Paul came across the Philippians. You might wonder, where is Philippi? After all, it's not a name that perhaps we're familiar with.

[6 : 39] Well, just looking at the map here, you'll see that Philippi is right here in northern Greece. Many of us have been on holidays in Italy or in south Greece, but Philippi was over here.

So we could turn to Acts 16, where we had started from verse 5. We see that Paul was on his second missionary journey.

And Paul had this idea. He wanted to travel all around Asia and up here into Asia. But something happened to him. If we start in reading from verse 1, we'll find he was prevented from going into Asia.

He wasn't actually sure what he was supposed to do. And one night, he had a vision. He had a vision of a man from Macedonia, which is our area here, which said, and the man said to him, come over to Macedonia and help us.

Paul, the very next day, thought, you know, this is where God wants us to preach the gospel. So the gospel started coming into Europe for the first time. Now we read in verse 5 that from there we travel to Philippi, a Roman colony and leading city of that district of Macedonia.

[7 : 54] Now, if you're interested in history, you might have heard of Alexander the Great. He was this great king of the Greek Empire. Well, his father's name was Philip, King Philip.

And he founded this city called Philippi. Now you might think, well, he must like the place. Well, it's more to do with the fact that there was gold around it. So he named it after himself, Philippi, Philip. But as what happens in the ancient kingdoms, it was taken over by another kingdom. And this kingdom was the Roman Empire. So they took over Philippi and they made it into a Roman colony. Well, what does that mean? Well, it means that Philippi was like a mini Rome. The people living there considered themselves as Romans. They had the rights of Roman citizens.

And they were very proud of that citizenship. They also, it was also on the way to Rome. So it's a very important place. And as we read through Philippians, you'll actually find different references that make sense of that very fact.

[8 : 59] And we'll see some references to Rome are the way the culture think at the time. So just looking at Acts, we find that he stayed there a few days from verse 12.

And on the Sabbath, he went down to find a place of prayer. And he met some women there. And he preached to them. They heard his message and believed. And a woman named Lydia and all her family were baptized.

And he invited, they invited Paul and his friends to their house. And if we continued reading in Acts, we'd find the very famous story of the Philippian jailer. And by the end of the chapter, we find that there were different brothers there.

So the colony of believers was now formed in Philippi. There was a church, a community of believers was being built there. And Paul, as he was on a journey, moved on and left them.

And if we continue to read in Acts, we'd find that he'd visited Philippi at least once, if not twice. So before we look at what Paul had to say to them, let's just take a big picture approach.

[10 : 00] And just to see exactly why Paul wrote the letter. Well, first of all, he wanted to give his gratitude to the people. You see, by the time we get to chapter four, we read that the people in

Philippi had not forgotten Paul.

Even though he wasn't there for very long, they had sent him gifts when he was in need. When he was in Macedonia, they'd sent him gifts. And now that he was in prison in Rome, they'd also send him gifts.

But not only that, but they'd also send a man by the name of Epaphroditus to him to give him the gifts and to take care of his needs. But unfortunately, Epaphroditus got sick and he was sending him back to the Philippines.

And he wanted to say, you welcome this man back because he was somebody who served God well. But Paul also wanted to give spiritual guidance to the church.

And as we, over the next few weeks, we will see that Paul wants to encourage them in the whole area of unity, of imitating Christ and also growing in their spiritual lives. And thirdly, Paul writes this letter because he wants to give them a spirit of joy and gladness.

[11:07] Not a false joy or pretending, oh, I'm happy all the time, but a joy that comes from the Lord. He'll say to them, rejoice in the Lord. So with that in mind, let's turn to the first two verses of Philippians.

And here we read the standard opening of Paul's letters. You'll see that Paul uses the convention of his day, who wrote the letter, who it was to, and a greeting.

And first of all, we read in verse one, Paul and Timothy. Now you might think, oh, well, maybe Paul and Timothy wrote the letter together. Well, as we read the letter, you'll notice that Paul always uses the first person.

So if you look down in verse three, he says, I thank my God. And in verse four, in all my prayers. So it's Paul himself is doing the speaking. In fact, by the time we get to chapter two, he refers to Timothy when he says to send Timothy to you soon.

So Timothy couldn't have written the letter, but he was a companion of Paul. In fact, in Acts chapter 16, we have it recorded that this is where just before he went to Philippi, he'd met Timothy and Timothy joined him on his travels.

[12:20] So after Paul introduces himself as the writer, he then describes himself as a servant of Christ Jesus, or in some translations, it will say a slave. Now you might think to yourself, well, why would you write to these Roman citizens and call yourselves a slave?

After all, in Roman thinking, privilege and status was very important. So you always want to build yourself up and you certainly wouldn't want to describe yourself as a slave or a servant.

But you see that Paul wanted to show the people what his position in life was. And that was as a servant of Jesus Christ. He wanted to exalt Jesus, whereas bringing himself down to state where his true position was.

And then he writes, to all the saints in Christ Jesus. And we think of the word saints. Obviously, we have this concept in everyday language of someone special or holy or someone privileged.

After all, when we think of the different names of schools or hospitals, we think of St. Luke's or St. John's or St. Mary's. In fact, what we might say is, well, maybe the modern way of writing it would have been St. Paul to all of the Christians who lived in Philippi, rather than saying slave Paul to all the saints.

[13:40] But that doesn't accord with the biblical meaning of the word saints. Some translations will say to the holy people of Philippi. And that's what saints means.

Those who were set apart for God. When Paul wrote to the Romans, he spoke of those who are loved by God and called to be saints.

So saints were those who were loved by God. And when he wrote to the Ephesians, he said, described them as those who are faithful in Christ Jesus. In fact, actually, the word saints is used over 60 times in the New Testament and always refers to believers.

So when Paul says to all the saints in Christ Jesus, he was referring to them as believers, as holy people. But notice that they're not holy in their own right.

They didn't just become holy because of their good living. It was because of Jesus Christ. Just like Paul, they were believers. Let's just pause there for a moment because it's very easy for us to read over a verse like that and pass over.

[14:47] I'm thinking too much about it. He says, to all the saints in Christ Jesus. And wherever we see in Christ Jesus or of Christ Jesus or from Christ Jesus, we should really pause to think, what is actually Paul trying to say?

After all, when we think of some of the great truths of Scripture, it refers to them as being in Christ. In Christ means a union with Christ. Just like Paul, the Philippians had a union with Christ.

If you think of some of the great truths that we hold dear, you think of Romans chapter 8, verse 1. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Or in Ephesians, when he spoke to them about spiritual blessings, he said, believers have every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. Or in Corinthians, when he wrote to them, he said, if you are anyone who is in Christ, it's a new creation.

So what Paul was trying to get across here was, these Philippians, they are defined not by the fact that they're nice people or they're people that he met on his journey, but instead by the fact that they're believers in Jesus Christ.

[15:55] In verse 2, he then gives them a greeting. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace is that foundation of our faith.

For it is by grace we are being saved through faith. That's what starts off our faith. And one of the first fruits of grace, of salvation, is peace. After all, when we are saved, we are freed from the penalty of sin and we have peace with God.

But it's more and deeper than that, in that we now in our very lives have a peace that can only come from knowing Christ. So what's Paul saying here? Is he saying, oh, well, I'd like you all to be saved and Christians again because that would be a good thing.

Well, no, I think what he's doing is he's trying to remind them that God hasn't changed, that grace and peace still comes from God. And note that it comes from God and the Lord Jesus. He then gets into the meat of his passage in verse 3.

Let's just read that section again. And as we read it, note the number of references that Paul makes to his affection or love for the Philippians.

[17:10] He says in verse 3, In verse 7 he says, It is right for me to feel this way about you all.

And verse 8 he says, Notice how in verse 3 he says, every time he remembers the Philippians, what's his reaction? To thank God.

So you can imagine Paul, here he is. He's travelling throughout Europe, preaching the gospel, but he still remembers this group of believers that he met on his way into Europe.

He said, I thank my God every time. So each time he remembers them, he's thankful to them. And then in verse 4 it tells us that he prays for them in all my prayers for you.

Now you might think, well, perhaps his prayers are built out of a sense of, say, frustration, or perhaps he's crossed with them, or he really wants to teach them something.

[18:08] But no, his prayers, as he says, is always praying with joy. When he prays for the Philippians, it's a joyful prayer. That's what he, that's his uttermost feeling when he thinks about them.

So why was he joyful? Well, he tells us in verse 5, it is because of your partnership, or fellowship in the gospel, from the first day until now. So even though the Philippians were over here, and Paul was now in a jail in Rome, they still shared with him, even though they were so far away.

Well, how do we know that? Well, we know it because they gave to him financially. As he said, that was recorded in verse 4. However, they continued their concern for him, even though they were so far away.

But not only were they willing to write a check to him, or pass on gifts, but they were also willing to give of themselves by sending one of their own. And isn't that a lovely picture of partnering with someone in the gospel?

For when we start supporting people, or supporting or having concern for those who are preaching the gospel, it's very easy for us to, well, I'll write a check, and I won't feel guilty anymore, and I just send off the check, and then don't think about them again until we get another prayer letter, or when they visit the church, or whatever.

[19:28] But instead, we get a beautiful picture of the Philippians partnering with Paul. So even though they are far away, they still are concerned with Paul, concerned about the gospel, and they want to support him by not just giving him of their gifts, but also sending one of their own to give support to him.

They have this desire to support him and see the gospel continue to be spread. And in verse 7, we see that Paul says it is right for him to feel this way.

It's right for him to be thankful and to be joyful, because he has them in his heart. And whether he's in chains, which he is at the moment, or whether he's outside defending the gospel against those who would dispute with him, he knows that they all share in God's grace with them.

He knows that they are with him. As fellow believers, they are with him, even though they're very far away. And verse 8, concluding that section, says, God can testify, calls on God, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this longing that Paul has, he just doesn't say this at the start of the letter, he also says it in chapter 2, where he again repeats that he'd like to be with them, and he longs for them with the affection of Christ Jesus.

[20 : 46] In other words, he wants to imitate Christ's love for the people in his own life. But have we missed something? I mean, after all, we've just read a number of verses that speak about his affection for the Philippians, about his love for them, and his long for them, and the reason for that is their partnership in the gospel with them.

But did we miss something in verse 6 that is on a deeper level, something that really is a foundation for Paul's joy for the Philippians? Let's read verse 6 again.

He says, Being confident of this, that he, being God, who began a good work in you, will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ. Now remember, Paul was there when the church was founded. He saw the first believers opened up to the message about Jesus. And what he's saying is, I am confident that it was God who began the work of salvation in their lives.

And we see a beautiful picture back in Acts chapter 16 of that. Do you remember when we read about Lydia? Well, Paul went out into the riverside, he started preaching the gospel of Jesus to the people, and Lydia heard the message.

[21 : 59] But did you notice when we were reading it, who caused Lydia to believe? It says that the Lord opened up Lydia's heart to hear the gospel. So even though it was Paul preaching, and it was Lydia listening, it was actually God started the work of salvation in their lives.

I think that's a beautiful picture of what God does. He says, I am confident that he who began a good work in you, and Paul could testify that, because he saw the work that was began. And for us as believers, it was God started that work in us.

He was the one who chose us, and we believed. It wasn't that there was anything in ourselves, or because of our cleverness, or whatever. It was because of God.

But Paul is not only confident that God was the one who initially saved them, but he's also the one who's going to continuously sustain them. Listen to what he says.

He who began a good work in you will carry it onto completion. In other words, these believers in Philippi are still in the hands of the Lord, and they will be right up until the end.

[23 : 15] He speaks of the day of Christ Jesus. We live in a very privileged time. We live in between the first coming of Christ and the second coming of Christ.

You might remember a few years ago, we were looking at Thessalonians, and that was encouraging us to look ahead to the day of the Lord. And what Paul is saying is, I am confident with you, Philippians, that God, who started the work in you, will carry it onto completion, and by the time Christ comes back and you receive the full, all the full promises of your salvation will all be fulfilled, that God is the one who will do that.

You might even remember the verses that were up on the screen right when we came in first, that Johnny preached from, or Johnny referred to, John chapter 10, that when we are in the Lord's hands, nobody can take us out.

And Paul was confident of that. So when Paul is saying that he is joyful and thankful for the Philippians, yes, he is thankful for the immediate reason being that they're partners within the gospel, but also because he's a deep confidence that it's God who's doing the work in them. They're not false Christians. They are God's people, and God will take care of them. So you might think, well, if God is the one who starts salvation, and God is the one who continues it, and God is the one who finishes it, maybe we could all sit back and do nothing.

[24 : 43] After all, if it's all of God, it's nothing to do with us. But I think we'll find, when by the time Paul gets down to his prayer in verses 9 to 11, that we also have a part to play.

So let's move to verse 9. And this is my prayer. Now, Paul is after already telling them that he's praying for him. Back up in verse 4, he says, in all my prayers for all of you.

It's nice when people tell us that they're praying for us. We don't always know what they're praying for us, but here, Paul is specifically telling the Philippians what he is praying for.

He says, in verse 9, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. Abound more and more, meaning to increase.

But what love is he talking about? Is he talking about brotherly love? Is he talking about loving Paul more? Or is he talking about loving God more? Well, initially the context might suggest a brotherly love loving one another, and it certainly doesn't exclude loving God.

[25 : 47] But I don't think the love that he is talking about stops there. It's a love that he wants to grow more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

When he wrote to the Thessalonians, Paul said that he wants their love to increase so that it would overflow. But I don't think the love that he's talking about is kind of a blind love or a sentimental love or a love if we look at the culture around us and their definition of love.

I don't think that's what he is actually saying. And I think the word knowledge helps us in understanding what that love is. For those who have understood Greek, when it's talking about knowledge, it's talking about a deep or intensive spiritual knowledge, the knowledge of God and of Jesus.

It's used over 20 times in Scripture, and it's always used in connection with the things of God. When Paul wrote to the Colossians, he said to them that he wanted them to have the full riches of complete understanding so that they might know the mystery of God in Christ.

Or when he wrote to the Ephesians, he said, speaking about the body of Christ, he said, until all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature.

[27 : 15] What Paul is saying is, I want you Philippians to grow in your love as you grow in the knowledge of God and the things of God. He wants them almost to become Bible students, learning more about God and growing in maturity from that.

And you might think, well, you know, we could all grow in knowledge and it's great to have knowledge, but what about putting it into practice? But I think Paul is actually referring to that as well.

When he says, in knowledge and depth of insight, the whole idea of depth of insight comes from a word that refers to putting into practice.

It's used, a variant of it is used in Hebrews and the writer was talking about solid food. He was talking about growing as a believer. And he says that solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.

In other words, they were using the solid food of God's word to grow. So they were able to discern the difference between good and evil. So they could choose, they could make moral decisions.

[28 : 24] They were putting into practice what they were learning. So I think what Paul is saying is, yes, Philippians, I want you to grow in your knowledge, but it's to have a practical benefit.

And verse 10 he says, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless. Discern what is best. There's many good things. If we think about how we spend our time or our thinking, there's so many good things that we can do in our lives.

We can think of many things that we're involved in. But sometimes should we take a step back and ask, are they the best things? Do we have our priorities right?

Are we prioritizing God and the things of God? And yes, we might even still be doing things, but are they the best? And I think what Paul is saying is, choose what is best.

Look for the priorities. What and what are the priorities? And they will always have to do with the things of God. And he then says, so that you may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.

[29 : 28] Now, I'm rather hoping that he's not saying that everyone has to be pure and blameless as a believer in this life, because I know for myself that I am not pure and I am not blameless. What he's saying is that they would be continuously changing.

They would be leaving aside some of their old habits, their old ways, and becoming more pure and more blameless as we work toward the day of Christ returning. If you can think of the word pure, often we use that word in connection with a precious metal.

Do you know when they find metal, it's got all these bits of dirt and dross in it. So what you have to do is you heat it up slowly and gradually all that dirt and dross comes out.

But it happens over time. That's like us as believers. We become believers. We grow in our knowledge of God. But it takes us a while to mature, to grow. And we still get caught up in different

things we shouldn't.

We still think things we shouldn't. But over time, we begin to change, to become more like Christ. I think that's what Paul is saying. He's not saying, well, you've got to be perfect now because he himself wasn't perfect.

[30 : 35] The Philippians weren't. And we certainly aren't. And verse 11, he says, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.

And we think of the word fruit. Well, you can't have fruit unless there's a seed. And that seed was planted at salvation. And that seed grew and grew until it bears fruit.

And what Paul wants is for the believers to start to show fruit in their lives. Well, what fruit is he talking about? Well, we can think immediately of what he wrote to the Galatians when he spoke about the fruit of the Spirit.

He spoke about love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And as we grow in our faith, we should be showing these different things in our lives. Now, you might think to yourself, well, I'm not patient. I never have been and never will be. But I'm pretty good at loving people. And I'm pretty good at kindness. Or you might say, well, I'm not very peaceful and not very self-controlled because I lose my temper a bit.

[31 : 42] But I'm pretty good at the rest. But you notice that Paul says fruit of righteousness. He doesn't say fruits, plural. You see, the fruit all come together.

So it doesn't work like that. Well, we can be this or that, or we can choose how we grow. It's all together. As we grow, we are joyful.

We are peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. And that will grow in us all. And sometimes in our Christian lives, we don't see it.

Other people might see it. Perhaps you haven't seen somebody for a while. And all of a sudden you realize, wow, they're more peaceful than before. They're more patient. They mightn't see it themselves, but they are changing because they are showing fruit in their lives as they grow in the knowledge of God, as their love increases.

So as we look back and take a step back from our verses that we've read, what is actually Paul saying? Well, he started off by stating who the Philippians were. They are in Christ.

[32 : 51] They were believers. We have learned that they were partners of his in the gospel. And we've also learned that he had great confidence that it was God who started that work in their lives.

And then we see that he was praying for them and he wanted them to grow, to mature in their lives. But for us, what did that mean for us?

What can we take from it? After all, Paul was thankful for them and he loved them. But what was his major reaction to the Philippians? As we look back, it was actually that he was driven to prayer.

Do you notice that he prayed because he was thankful for them? He loved them and he prayed that he wanted them to mature in their faith. So what about us?

Is there anything we can take from that? Well, when we think about us as a family here, we're a community of believers. We come and we spend time together in church on a Sunday morning.

[33 : 57] We do things together as a family, as believers wanting to share the gospel around. When we think of other people, other believers, what's our initial reaction?

I'm not looking for any answers, but how do you react when you think of this person or that person or that group of people or that family? Are you driven to wanting to thank God for them?

Do you consider people in the church are a partner with you in the gospel as the gospel is going out from this church? Do you consider them partners in that? Do you consider, do others consider you a partner in the gospel?

What about our prayer life? What do we pray for one another? When we think about each other during the week, what do we think of?

Very often, if we think about our own prayers, and I include myself in this, we pray for a lot of physical needs for people. We pray for jobs, for accommodation, for health, and these are excellent things to be praying for, and we should pray for these things.

[35 : 11] We also pray for people's salvation, that they will come to know Jesus, that they will have that assurance of salvation from the Lord. But do we pray for people's maturity in the faith?

When we think of other people in the church, do we pray that their love would increase more and more? Do we pray that they would grow in the knowledge of the things of God?

Do we pray that there would be fruit in their lives? Do people pray for us? This whole idea of partnering in the gospel, there's many activities of the church.

We all can't be involved in everything. We all can't be involved in Sunday school, or we can't all be involved in the rock. But for those who are involved in these things, do they consider you or me part of that, even though we're not there on a Sunday morning up in the room, or we're not there on a Saturday at the rock, or on polo on a Thursday, do they still consider us part of the partnership in the gospel?

I mean, when we go out on Wednesday to give out the magazines, the For You magazines, some people are not able to come. But for those who are going out, do they still feel that they have partners in the gospel because there's other people behind them, praying for them, thinking about them, being thankful for them?

[36 : 34] I think there's much that we can take from the first 11 verses of this. And it is a terrific introduction to the rest of the book because we will see continued love for the Philippians.

We'll see that Paul continuously wants to see them grow. He doesn't want them to stand still in their faith. And for us as believers, we shouldn't want to see others stand still in their faith either.

So maybe when we go out from here, we would be encouraged to remember each other in prayer, to be thankful, to consider each other partners, but also desiring to see other people grow.

And we can do that. We have opportunities to do that. We have a tea and coffee halfway through the service. And it is a time to encourage one another to see things changing in our lives.

A number of weeks ago, we were speaking about gifts of the Holy Spirit. We can encourage people to use their gifts for the church so that people are growing and they are fruit. And what we will see is over time that the fruit of the Spirit will be more evident in our lives.

[37 : 44] And what a joyful thing that is. Let's pray. Father, we do thank you for your word.

We thank you for this group of believers that is recorded for us. We thank you for the beginning of their faith. We thank you that at a point in history you decided that the gospel was going to go into Europe and those different ones were saved because they heard your message.

We thank you for Paul and his desire to see people grow, not to leave them stand still in their faith but to see their love grow more and more to become more mature.

We thank you for the truths in this passage. We thank you for the confidence that we can have as believers in you that it was you started the work.

It is you who continue it and it is you who will bring it to completion at the end. We thank you for our family of believers here in Carragoline. we pray that indeed we would be an example of a loving people, a people who remember each other fondly and desire to pray for one another.

[39 : 07] I pray for each one for myself that we would all grow in our knowledge of you, that we would become more mature, that our desire would be to know and understand more of the salvation that you have graciously given us.

We pray that there might be fruit evident in our lives but that this fruit it wouldn't be for our glory but as the passage says that it is to the glory and praise of God and may that be our desire to see you glorified, to see you praised and as we go out from here today may our desire be to continue to read in Philippians to be able to learn, to be able to read in advance so that we could be able to discern what you would have us learn.

May our hearts be continuously open to your word. In Jesus' name, Amen.