

Confident in Christ

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Date: 25 May 2025

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Please consider donating to this work in the San Francisco Bay Area online at ChristChurchEastBay.org. My name is Chelsea and I'm part of the Alameda Community Group. A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people 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.

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, being 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 all of you, since I have you in my heart, and whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

[1 : 15] God can testify how I long for all of you 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 for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Good morning. Let's go to the Lord in prayer as we open up his word. Lord, we pray that your breath would indeed go forth toward us in the preaching of your word, that we'd hear what you have to say, that we'd get a window into your heart.

Lord, would you shape us in the preaching of your word, in the receiving of your word, and in the application of your precious word? And would we be those kinds of disciples to do everything that Jesus commanded us to do?

So use your means of grace, we pray this morning in the name of Jesus. Amen. Amen. You know, for those of you who missed our biannual congregational meeting last week, I have to say that you really missed out, okay?

I think you really missed out because not only was it nice and concise and informative, but more than that, I think you got really a glimpse into the hearts of your leaders, the elders of Christ Church East Bay, whether it was Brian and Tonya sharing their delight over all the fruit that we've been seeing in Alpha, having these spiritual conversations with people exploring Christianity, whether it was Wes and Lori's humorous and heartfelt invitation to build community with us at the All Church retreat.

[2 : 57] By the way, registration's open, so get on that. Or Jesus' shepherdly update on our safety protocols, Karen's invitation to prayerfully consider, you know, who we might nominate as an elder or a deacon in this church.

Or, you know, Bill, Bill Barnes' kind of signature, slightly meandering, extemporaneous bit about just how much he loves this church and how thankful he is for all of you and your generosity.

It was a great meeting. But, you know, for me, I think what the highlight was for me was hearing lastly from Jonathan. I personally found that pretty moving.

And I felt like we got an unfiltered glimpse into the heart of our lead pastor. I think his opening words were something like, I love you. I love this church.

I love you, Christ Church. And then he proceeded to share with us how he's been processing, you know, being one of our founding pastors, having led this church for the past 19 years, and how he's committed to leading us into the next decade.

[3 : 56] And man, I felt that when he shared that with us. As someone who gets to work closely with him, it wasn't hard for me to believe what he said. He loves this church. And it's been easy for me as the associate pastor here to follow him.

And he's led, as he's led our church in these past five years toward, you know, a healthy united session of elders, a community of faith that's longing for revival in our time, in our city, and a church that's committed to and growing in prayer, getting on our knees before the Lord, a church that's also, you know, intentional about engaging those who are not yet disciples of Christ with the gospel. And I really hope that you've been able to see that with me, Jonathan's leadership in that way, and his heart for this church. You know, Jonathan's not perfect, only Jesus is, but he's been faithful. And there is no doubt in my mind that he really loves Christ Church. I mean, in many ways, this church is kind of like his baby. I mean, he kind of gave birth to this church with Catherine before they had Constance.

And as a founding pastor, I can see that just like his children will always have his heart and always occupy his mind, maybe even keep him up late at night, so also is Christ Church to him.

[5 : 11] And I share this not to make much of Jonathan, but because I think that this heart that I hope many of us see in our lead pastor, hopefully in me too, right? All right. But again, I share this because I think Jonathan's heart for this church is a helpful illustration of the Apostle Paul's heart for the church in Philippi, all right?

Today we're starting our sermon series in this letter to the Philippians from Paul. And like Christ Church to Jonathan, the church in Philippi was Paul's baby.

And this morning, we'll be looking at the first 11 verses of his letter to these people in Philippi. And man, unless you, you know, weren't really paying attention, Paul pretty much spends these first 11 verses in this letter just gushing over this church in Philippi.

And that's what I want us to pay attention to today, Paul's unmistakable, undeniable, unwavering affection for this church in Philippi. So what we're going to do is we're going to walk through this text verse by verse, and we're going to try hard to pay special attention to Paul's heart as he writes this letter, okay?

So let's go. Verse 1, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. And I'll stop us right there because, you know, often in Paul's letters, he'll assert his authority from the very beginning, especially for the more, you know, contentious and challenging churches, maybe like the Corinthians.

[6 : 30] Paul will often identify himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He'll foreground his weight and his authority as coming from the Lord, but not here, not here to the church in Philippi.

To the church in Philippi, he and his colleague Timothy are just servants of Christ Jesus. That's how he sees himself. That's how he identifies as their servant, as a fellow servant even, nothing more and nothing less, okay?

Then he says, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi. So the next thing that he does is he identifies who they are. Other translations rightly translate this holy people part as saints.

You could rightly translate it that way. Paul's not only identifying who he is, but he's saying, this is who you are. You are saints. You are holy people. If you have been united with Christ, you are God's holy people.

Set apart, purified, consecrated because of your union with the holy and pure Son of God. And by the way, as we go through Philippians, I really want us to be paying attention to Paul's language, okay?

[7 : 28] This in Christ, in the Lord, with Christ, with him, in him, in the Lord language, union with Christ is central to Paul's theology, okay? So just pay attention to that as we keep going, but let's keep going now.

He's specifically writing to who? To these people in Philippi, all right? And I just want to give you some background. I have a slide for this. I want to show you a map, and what this map is going to be is it is a picture of Paul's second missionary journey.

Can we get that slide up, please? Oh, there we go. Thank you. So on Paul's first missionary journey, if you know the book of Acts, what he does is he goes up into that area to the top right, Galatia, and he goes and he preaches the gospel up there.

He plants churches in that area, Galatia, also known as Asia Minor. But on his second missionary journey, he has this vision, and God calls him to go even further up northwest.

So he crosses over into that place all the way up in the top left, okay? We know today as southeastern Europe. And the first major stop that he has is at number 12.

[8 : 36] It's at Philippi, okay? And that's what Jonathan preached about last week from Acts chapter 16. And in case you missed it, basically, Paul went into Philippi sharing about Jesus, and a whole bunch of different kinds of people received and embraced his message.

A wealthy, pious merchant named Lydia, a slave girl who had a wicked spirit in her and who was being used by her slave owner to turn a prophet, and then also a dutiful employee of the Roman Empire, a jailer.

The very jailer who had put Paul's feet in stocks in prison when the city had turned against him for preaching and delivering people in the name of Jesus. So these three people, Lydia, the slave girl, and the jailer, and many more, all become Christians, and that's the beginning of the church in Philippi, the first church in Europe, actually, the first church in Europe.

So this is who Paul is writing to in this letter. Only now about a decade or so has gone by, and a couple things have happened, okay? A couple things have happened. One, Paul is writing now from prison, perhaps in Rome, maybe in Ephesus.

Two, the church in Philippi is thriving. It's even more established. Verse one tells us they now have deacons and overseers. We call them elders here. It's the same thing. They have deacons and elders. They're an established church.

[9 : 45] And three, another thing that's happened in the past 10 years or so since Paul's first trip to Philippi is that this church, more than any other church that Paul helped start this church in Philippi, was a church that generously partnered with and supported Paul's ministry even when he found himself in prison.

I have another slide for you. Look what Paul says toward the end of his letter to the Philippians in chapter 4. He writes, It was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you only.

For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent.

Okay, so this is the context for the letter to the Philippians. He's writing to this first church in Europe, this church he planted, this church he knew from infancy, and that he got to see grow and flourish and even become a partner in his work.

This church that faithfully stood by him even when he was in prison, sending Epaphroditus to bring him a timely gift. And by the way, this was crucial. This was crucial in ancient Roman prisons because they didn't provide like state-funded basic necessities.

[11 : 03] N.T. Wright says that when people were put in prison in Paul's world, they were not normally given food by their captors. They had to rely on friends helping them. Since Paul probably couldn't carry on his tent-making business in prison, he was completely dependent on support like this.

The fact that people from a different country would raise money and send one of their number on the dangerous journey to carry it to an imprisoned friend speaks volumes for the esteem and love in which they held him.

Okay, so I'm trying to put some skin on the bones here to help you understand the context of this letter. It's a very human letter from a real pastor to a real church. Okay, so all this is to say that Paul is massively thankful and massively proud of this church, and so it's no wonder that it occupies a very special place in his heart.

Okay? And so here in verse 2, he summarily states all that he desires for this church that's like a baby to him, and he says this in verse 2. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is his heart. This is what he wants for them, the ultimate gift from heaven poured out from the Father above and accomplished and applied through the Lord and King, not Caesar, the crucified and risen Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

[12 : 12] And notice he doesn't just say shalom, right? He says grace and peace. Grace and shalom. Paul wants even more than shalom for this beloved church.

He wants grace as well. And in fact, this is essential. This is essential to the Christian message, right? That because of the fall, that because of sin, that because of all the brokenness in this world and in our hearts, and because of the debt we've incurred before our holy God, who cannot and will not tolerate our wicked waywardness, and because of the brokenness, and because of the anti-shalom that we have brought into this world, there is no peace, there is no shalom without grace, without God's initiative, without God doing something for us that we could not do for ourselves.

There is no shalom without God generously and mercifully granting favor to his people, people who don't deserve it, and in fact, who deserve the opposite. One way that I've heard of defining grace that I think is helpful is G-R-A-C-E.

G-R-A-C-E, God's riches at Christ's expense. God's riches at Christ's expense. The gift of free shalom for us, but at ultimate cost to God, his son on a cross, and that's the gospel.

And this is Paul's heart for his church. Not just their shalom, but grace and shalom from the Father and through the Son. Verse 3. I thank my God every time I remember you.

[13:40] Okay? I thank my God every time I remember you. So this is one dominant feeling that he has for this church. It's gratitude. He's sitting there in prison. Maybe he's remembering the days when he was in that Philippian jail, and how his feet were so painfully put into those stocks, and how hardly anyone in the city cared about him or wanted to support him.

But now he's even in more trouble. Maybe he's awaiting execution in Rome. But here he is now having just received a hefty gift from Epaphroditus, from this church that's been supporting him really for about a decade, and he is filled with thanks.

And not only thanks, but he's filled with remembrance. This church is freshly on his heart. It's freshly on his mind. Have you ever known the honor of being remembered by someone, of being thought of?

That feeling of being seen, right? When you had no expectation that anyone would see or think you. That out-of-nowhere text, just ping-pong you that, hey, I'm thinking about you.

Hey, how's this going? I thought about that thing that you have of coming. That thoughtful, you know, handwritten letter that you get in the mail out of nowhere. It's a special and touching thing to be remembered, right?

[14:49] It's a real gift. In a world where there are so many things vying for our attention and for our mental bandwidth, to be remembered is really a treasure. You know, one of my best friends from college, one of my groomsmen, I actually got to see him just the other week in the Sacramento area.

We get together, I don't know, maybe once or twice for like real quality time a year. But still today, even 16 years later, we've been able to maintain a very deep and loving long-distance friendship. And I think that the key has been us making an effort to remember each other and each other's kids. You know, this friend of mine, his son has Down syndrome.

And so, like, this family's life, it's, well, it's different, right? It's different than mine. It's probably different than many of yours. And the way my friend describes it is that the joys can be higher, but the lows can also be a lot harder.

And especially in those moments where he's going through it and he knows that everyone else is just kind of living their typical lives, having no idea what he's going through, having no window into what their family is experiencing.

[15:59] And so, what I've made an effort to do as someone who wants to love him and wants to be a good friend to him is, you know, I make an effort to ping him. Whenever his family, whenever he comes to my mind, maybe with a prayer, a text of Scripture that made me think of him and his family, one thing he once shared with me was like, I don't really know what, like, friendship is going to look like for my son Tyler.

And then one morning I was reading about Jesus and the three friends, or was it four friends? Oh, I'm a pastor, I don't know. The friends who opened the roof and brought their paralytic friend to come into the presence of Jesus.

And I said, man, Travis, like, I just had this vision that, like, I think that's what God wants for Tyler. You know, I make a place in my heart, right?

I'm not just trying to communicate to them, I love you guys, I'm thinking about you guys, but I'm trying to communicate to them that I'm intentionally creating space in my mind and my heart for you and your family. And I think that's what Paul was doing here for the church in Philippi, remembering

them.

It's a beautiful thing, remembering them in love. And then also it says, with joy, verse four, in all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy. So it's not just gratitude and remembrance, but joy.

[17:15] It's not mere duty, it's delight. It's not like, oh, I'm obligated to this church, it's my first church plant in Europe. No, it brings Paul joy to think about them and to remember them in his many prayers for them.

Why? Verse five, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. See, he's watched his baby, he's watched these people, he's watched this church grow up to not just receive support and nourishment from his ministry, but also to partner in it.

You know, that's a rewarding thing, right? The parents out there, you know, this is something I'm experiencing with Cammie and Leah, you know, when they were able to feed themselves and go to the bathroom by themselves, buckle and unbuckle their car seats, now put away the dishes, help take out the trash.

It's not only brought a lot of efficiency to the Ong household, but it's been rewarding. Watching these girls grow and really join in the mission of our family.

Watching them grow not just for growth's sake, but as partners in what God is calling us to do together. Another example is this friend I have in Castor Valley. I went to high school with him, but I didn't really get to know him well until we went to college.

[18:23] And when he got to college, he wasn't very interested in Christianity or a relationship with Christ. But after time, we started to meet together regularly with some other guys, and he was won over to the gospel.

He was won over to Christ, and he was baptized. And man, just observing him now. He's a dentist now, crushing it. 20 years from then, he's got a godly wife, just raising his family, serving in the church, raising his children to love Jesus, to memorize Scripture.

It's so rewarding. It's so rewarding to me. And my point is just that there is joy in watching infants of the faith grow up to increasingly join in and participate in the mission of the church.

And that's what filled Paul's heart, I think, when he thought of these Philippians. And like every good parent, he looked forward to and anticipated and trusted God that this church would continue to grow and mature and fulfill its highest calling.

That's why in verse 6, he isn't just joyful that they grew to partner with him in ministry, but he was joyfully confident. He was joyfully confident that God, who started the work in this church, would carry it on to completion at the end of history, at the last day of Jesus Christ.

[19:36] So again, Paul is like a parent here. And what does every good parent want for their child? Well, they want their children to know how much they are loved, right? And they want their children to grow and develop.

And they want their children to reach their highest potential and fulfill their God-given callings. This is Paul's heart for the church in Philippi. And he reiterates this in verse 7, even maybe recognizing now how much he's been gushing over them, but then he doubles down on it and he says, It is right for me to feel this, like, gushing way about all of you.

Since I have you in my heart, and whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. He says it himself. They occupy a special place in Paul's heart.

And he feels like a kinship, a union with them. No matter his circumstances, they are ride-or-die partners. In chains, in defending the gospel, in confirming the gospel, they are with him. And not just as fanboys and Paul loyalists, but because of something deeper that's binding and knitting them together.

Paul says, All of you share in God's grace with me. All of you share in God's grace with me. Grace is what binds them together. You know, right after this, I have to go off to San Francisco to officiate a wedding of a couple I've been doing premarital counseling for.

[20:48] Many of you remember Ted Leong. He's getting married this afternoon. And you know what I hope, what I hoped to convey to him and his fiancée in our premarital counseling sessions is that it isn't simply their love and their good feelings toward each other that are going to make their relationship and their bond and their covenant work and last.

That's not what's going to sustain it. No, their relationship has to be founded and grounded in Christ. And what they really need to share together to make it work is they need to share in the

grace of God.

For everyone I do premarital counseling with, I tell them that they will fail and disappoint each other again and again and again. So their relationship cannot solely be dependent on one another's performance.

No, they have to see each other as united in Christ, as two sinners with one great Savior, a forgiving Savior who will never leave them nor forsake them. And that's the power.

That's the only power that will sustain their union, the grace of God. That's a beautiful thing. And we all share as Christians. This is what Paul sees in Philippi, not just his sentimental first church plants in Europe, but fellow recipients of the grace of God.

[22 : 01] I hope that's what you see here when you come into this place, when you come to this table. Take a moment, look around. You're not the only one hearing the words, Christ's blood shed for your sins. Let's move on to verse 8.

In verse 8, Paul writes, God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Okay, so I started this sermon with Jonathan's heart for Christ's church.

And we spent most of this sermon talking about Paul's heart for the church in Philippi. But here's where I give you the main point. It's not about Jonathan. It's not even about Apostle Paul.

Paul's heart for the church. All the affection that you have ever seen from a pastor for their church. It is only ever a derived affection. A glimmer of your chief shepherd, Jesus Christ's affection for his church, for his flock.

Paul's only longing for them with affection, with the affection of Christ. It's Christ's affection that's compelling him. So the point here isn't that, wow, Apostle Paul really loved this church in Philippi.

[23 : 05] I know his affections were simply channeling the affection of Christ for the whole church. This passage is ultimately about God's heart. For you, for me, for your fellow followers of Christ.

And maybe even for those who you haven't seen in a while. So yes, I hope to develop a love for the church, particularly for this church, Christ's church. A love and affection like Paul's for the church in Philippi.

But what I'd really love to see is for all of us to long with affection for the church, not just like Paul and Jonathan, but like Christ. This is God's heart.

God's heart for us is to love this church, to give our time, our talent, and treasure in service of the church. To give thanks for the church. To remember the church. And to remember particular people in this church.

And I pray that we'd be at church, at this church, just as joyfully delighting in one another. Not simply because of shared interest or shared consumer preferences or socioeconomic lifestyle patterns or hobbies or life stages, but joyfully delighting in our union and communion with Christ and each other and our partnership in the ministry of the gospel.

[24 : 15] See, if we aren't about the mission of the church, to make disciples of the nations and to teach them everything, to teach them to do everything that Jesus commanded, if we don't work out the implications of the gospel in our lives and go on mission and work it out in our workplaces and in our families and in our spheres of influence in this church, it's just going to become another insular gathering, a religious country club.

But if we see each other as partners in the gospel, as Paul saw this church in Philippi, and if that is our joy, that we have all these partners in the gospel, this thing that we love so much, then that's what's going to make a real spirit-led difference in the world.

That's what God wants to ignite and advance in, among, and around us. And remember, just like Paul was confident that God would complete the good work he began in the church of Philippi, this is a confident joy that we can have as well.

God will do the work in us. He'll bring it to completion. So why not devote our lives to it? Why not invest in what God is doing in and through His church?

Now, maybe you're here today, and it never occurred to you that the church, let alone this church, might be worthy of such affection and remembrance, and just like space in your heart and in your mind. What if you just started with praying for this church?

[25 : 37] In your homes, in your private life, here on Sunday mornings at 9.30 a.m. in the boiler room, on second Wednesdays here at 7 p.m., do you, will you pray for our church?

You know, when I look at Paul's heart for this church in Philippi, we can definitely see that his prayer for them here in verses 9 through 11, it emerges from a deep affection that he has for them.

And maybe you're thinking to yourself, well, that's why I don't pray that much for the church, and that's why I don't give much of my time, talent, and treasure to serve it. I just don't have as much affection as Paul did, and I don't want to be inauthentic.

I'll wait until I have more of a love for the church, and that's when I'll pray for it, I'll serve it. But you know what? I don't think Paul was just praying wherever his affections led him, okay?

I think it worked in the other direction too. I think he prayed for what he wanted his affections to be stirred up around. Because here's the thing about prayer. It doesn't just rise up to the ears of God in one direction.

[26 : 37] No, when we pray, it sinks down into our hearts. It moves out into our hands as well. When we start sincerely praying for something, it's really hard to not also pursue that same thing with the rest of our lives.

It's hard to pray, your will be done, and then to selfishly spend the rest of our day pursuing our own desires. I heard a story this week about a pastor whose church, it got caught in some heat, some bad press, because of a charity event that they had, and it caused a lot of traffic, so people started looking them up, and they found out what this church believed, and what this church believed was right, but not very popular in that community, and the pastor and the church, they got blasted.

Blasted on social media, tons of antagonistic comments against this pastor, against this church. But then do you know what this pastor's dad challenged him to do in response?

This pastor's dad challenged him to pray for every single antagonistic commenter on his social media. And he didn't tell them to do it just for God to soften the hearts of his critics, but for God to soften the pastor's heart toward his critics.

You see, that's what prayer does, not just for us and toward other people, but in us. In us. And you have to believe that Paul here wasn't just praying for these people out of his impulsive affections, but that he was praying for them in order to further fan the flame of his own affections for them.

[28 : 01] So that's one application. Let's pray for this church. Let's pray for the church. And then let's pray like Paul. Let's pray like Paul. You know, Paul very rarely prays for favorable and fortunate circumstances, like we often do.

Help me, God. Help my kids do well on that test. Help me land that job. Help me meet my soulmate. Prayer rarely prays. Paul rarely prays for things that God doesn't guarantee.

He doesn't pray for things that God doesn't want. No, most of Paul's prayers are focused on people's hearts and their relationships with God and their depth of insight into God's heart and will and kingdom.

Look here at Paul's prayer for the Philippians in verse 9. And this is my prayer, he writes, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. He doesn't pray that they're going to meet budget or get a building or find a children's director or even that they'll grow numerically.

These aren't bad things to pray for, but they're never his focus. He prays for their love to abound more and more. And notice he doesn't say love for God, neighbor, or church.

[29 : 08] He wants love to abound in every and any holy direction, in knowledge and depth of insight. He wants their love to be an informed, knowledgeable, and deeply insightful love that understands more and more the heart of God.

So that, verse 10, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may 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.

Again, Paul is like a faithful, loving parent. He's expressed his love to this church. He has hopes and dreams for this church to see them reach their fullest potential in Christ. And now, he has to do the hardest thing, the thing all of us parents struggle to do.

He has to trust that God will make it happen in his baby, right? And he's praying toward that end. He's praying in line with what he knows and trusts that God will do in and through this church, that God will grow them into a loving, knowledgeable, thoughtful, deeply insightful, discerning, pure, blameless church of saints filled with the fruit of righteousness.

And listen, this isn't some, like, spiritual performance review that he's trying to prepare them for. He's not saying that they need to get their acts together and be flawless and perfect by the time Jesus gets back or else.

[30 : 26] No, he already voiced in verse 6, right, that he who began a good work in them would be faithful to complete it. He knows and trusts this is going to happen, just like we know and trust that

God's kingdom will come and his will will be done, and yet we still pray for that every single week, right?

We do this, Paul prays like this, because we're praying the heart of God into our own hearts and minds and lives and into the world, into reality. We pray like this because we believe that even as we wait for the final day of Christ, when all things will be made new and all God's saints will shine like the sun and all the praise and glory and honor will fully and finally be directed at the Lord Jesus, even while we wait for that glorious day, we know that God also desires to make us fruitful now, to display his righteousness in us now, to bring himself praise, to bring his son praise and glory now, and not by our own efforts or striving, no, the fruit of righteousness that will bring, the fruit of righteousness that will bring God the most praise and the most glory is not a self-righteousness. It's not a self-derived righteousness, but what does it say here in verse 11? The fruit of the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, and that's the gospel.

That's the gospel that what God wants from us, he works in us in Christ. That the righteousness we need is the righteousness he's provided to us by faith in Christ, by trusting in and putting on Christ's righteousness as our own.

For it's only through our union with Christ, it's only when we're abiding in the vine, that we will ever bear the fruit that God wants us to bear unto the glory and praise of his name.

[32 : 11] So this is what he wants for us. This is what God wants. This is Paul's heart for the church. This is me and Jonathan and all our elders' hearts for this church. But most importantly, this is God's heart for his holy people.

So as we continue in this series in Philippians, my prayer is that the good news of God's affectionate heart for us in Christ will stir up our affections for the church and for Christ so that we might wholeheartedly make Paul's declaration in chapter three our own.

Where he says, but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord.

This is what he wants for us. That's his heart for us. And may it be our heart for him and his church as well. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, will you stir up our hearts?

Would you open our eyes to your affection for us and your affection for the church? And would you stir up in us an affection for you, an affection for your church? And would you make this place, this congregation in particular, full of the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ?

[33 : 29] And no other kind of righteousness, oh God, but only that which comes through our union with Jesus Christ. To his praise and glory we pray. Amen.

Amen.