

# Cynicism and Grace

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[ 0 : 00 ] Hey friends, my name is George Sinclair. I am rector of Church of the Messiah, and it's my great privilege to open the word with you this morning. And we'll be looking at Philippians chapter one.

But before we do that, hopefully you've been able to find this. I know there's a bit of a double link, but I'm sure hopefully you'll find this. If not right now, then eventually. Let's just pray.

Father, we ask that the Holy Spirit would bring us close to Jesus, that you would help us, Father, to grow in our remembering of Jesus, who he is, what he did for us, and what the work he continues to do in every person who put their faith and trust in him.

So Father, let the Holy Spirit fall. And this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. I always start my timer after my prayer. You know, it's a really interesting thing psychologically that most of us think that we know other people fairly well.

And I shouldn't sort of phrase it that way because it sounds like I'm sort of thinking that you don't know or I don't know what other people are like. But if you think about it for a second, it's a very, very common thing that we meet somebody at a party or at Costco or some other thing.

[ 1 : 14 ] Obviously now with six, I shouldn't say party. That's bringing back to those days when you could do those things. But we can go back in our time and our memory for when we actually could spend some time with people and meet them.

And we can talk to somebody for five or 10 minutes or maybe it's the barista or the server that we go to at a restaurant that we frequent. And we have a basic sense that we know what they're like.

And we think we're probably pretty good at knowing what they're like. But the interesting thing is, is that most of us don't think the other person is as good at knowing what we're like as we think we know what the other person's like.

I should say that again because I probably mixed it up a little bit. But isn't it true? You meet somebody and you think, you know, I have a pretty good idea about what they're like, I think, in terms of the way their mind works or a few other things.

But if you ask yourself the question, do you think the same thing is happening with them? Do you think they actually know what you're like pretty well? And most of us think, nah, no. I know what they're like, but they don't actually know what I'm like.

[ 2 : 18 ] But why is that? And if you think about it, a lot of our problems come from that type of a sense. We know what they're like. We know what they think. Do they know what we're like?

No, that's the problem. They don't know what I'm really like. That's the problem a lot of times in marriages, with bosses, with kids and parents and all of that. And it goes along with this other thing, which is a very, very curious thing about how we just tend to be.

And that other thing about how we just tend to be is that a lot of times when something goes wrong. I mean, this, believe it or not, I thought of this analogy before we had problems with this.

And maybe I shouldn't even use it, but I'm going to use it. It's just a generic thing. Often when something goes wrong or when something bad happens to us, that's actually even a more common thing, that when something bad happens to us, we actually think that it comes from malice.

In other words, a bad will, a bad attitude towards us, a desire to hurt us. And we rarely think that it comes about from incompetence. But if you think about it for a second, most of the things that happen to us that aren't very good, probably the majority of the things that happen to us that aren't very good are actually due to incompetence, not malice.

[ 3 : 31 ] But why is it that we don't automatically go to incompetence, and then after the incompetence thing doesn't seem to explain it, then we go to malice? Why is it that we usually go to malice?

So you think about these two things about human beings, that we have this sort of a very, very common matter of assuming that we can understand and read people, but they can't read us, and that when things that happen to us that aren't really very good, that they come from malice from the other person rather than competence.

Well, if you think about it, it's one of the reasons why so many of our relationships are all messed up and cause a lot of trouble. So we're going to be beginning a new sermon series today on the book of Philippians, and the passage that we're going to look at today, one of the things we do at Church of the Messiah is we read, we study, pray, read, think through entire books from beginning to end.

It's how they were written. It's the best way to understand them, and we're going to look through the book of Philippians and the first 11 verses, and believe it or not, the first 11 verses actually have some very insightful things to say.

about this problem and a way to sort of understand and deal with them. So if you find your Bibles, it's Philippians chapter 1, 1 to 11, or you can just listen as I read through it.

[ 4 : 48 ] I'm not going to read it from beginning to end. We're going to read a couple of verses, think about it, talk about it, a couple of others. Just before you, just before I start to read it, for some of you, many of you, maybe most of you, maybe all of you, you don't really know much about this.

You know, I love saying this. You know, I'm reading out of the Bible. It looks like a Bible, and it used to have like gold type stuff on the edge in the end. Now it's all getting, I use it so it gets wrecked up.

But this originally was just a letter. And it was a letter towards a church in Philippi, which is what we now call Greece. And it was written around the year 60.

And there's just a couple of things which are very interesting about this letter. I'll say other things about the letter as we go into it. But there's two things in particular that are of interest about this letter is that this was the very, very, very, very first European Christians were in this church.

The first. Like the way that Christianity entered Europe, we tend to think of Christianity as being mainly a European thing, but the very, very way that the beginning of Europeans hearing about the gospel, it happened in Philippi.

[ 5 : 58 ] So some of the people reading this letter back in the year 60 were in fact the very first European Christians. And the second thing is that Paul is writing this, the whole sermon series is called The Letter from Quarantine, and then like two little dots, Philippians.

And that's because Paul is writing this from jail, from home imprisonment in Rome. So he spends over two years in house arrest in a sense, a very real sense, in quarantine.

And it's while he's in quarantine in Rome that he writes this letter. And one other just final interesting thing about this is why is he in house arrest? He's in house arrest because he proclaims that there was a man named Jesus who died just outside the walls of Jerusalem, and on the third day the grave was empty, and the grave was empty because he had risen from the dead and appeared to people.

He's in jail for that proclamation, for that fact. Anyway, remember we're talking about the problem with why is it that we think we can read other people but they can't read us or not as well as we can read them, and we're also thinking about this whole thing about why do we tend to think that problems come, that what happened to us come more from malice than incompetence, and here's how it begins.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, and just pause, one of the things you have to understand in the New Testament is a saint, the word saint is just a way of describing an ordinary Christian.

[ 7 : 41 ] It's not at all the way we tend to think of it today, so whenever you see the word saint anywhere in the New Testament, anywhere in the New Testament, it's always just referring to an ordinary person who follows Jesus, trusting him as their savior and Lord.

Okay, so I'll just read that again. To all the ordinary people who follow Jesus and are in Christ Jesus, who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, this is how he begins the letter. It's very important. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. And just what I'm going to do today with my points and I might end up running out of time.

I have to watch the time. And so I might end up going through the last one fairly quickly. But what I want to do is just sort of summarize what we can learn from it in the form of four prayers.

Four very simple, short prayers. And I think they're going to show up in the notes. And if they don't show up in the notes, you can always go to the church webpage and we post the sermon on Monday or Tuesday.

[ 8 : 45 ] You can always listen to the audio version. You can watch the video again. But here's the first prayer. Lord, please grow in me a humble, trusting, remembering of your gift of grace and peace to me.

I'm going to phrase all of my points in the form of a very simple, short prayer. And the first one is, Lord, please grow in me a humble, trusting, remembering of your gift of grace and peace to me.

Now, here we get into our very, very first problem. And this is going to be where the Bible starts to show some great wisdom about this. The fact is that just as we think, I think that I'm pretty good at knowing you.

If I meet you, I think I'm pretty good at getting a basic handle on you. But I don't think you're very good at getting a handle on me. And if something that you're involved with goes wrong and it hurts me, I'll tend to think of malice rather than incompetence.

The same thing happens when it comes to the triune God. Let's be honest. We think to ourselves, oh yeah, okay, grace and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[ 9 : 59 ] Well, just as we tend to think about this as other people, we tend to think about this with a triune God. Now, it's very, very odd if you think about it. We tend to think that we know all about God.

We know all about what he's like. And in fact, for many of us, we're going through a very hard time right now. I mean, many of those of us who are listening to this were maybe struggling with the whole physical isolation.

We're struggling maybe with some relational types of things. We're struggling maybe with fears around the virus. There's a variety of different ways that we're struggling with this.

And we think we know God, the triune God, the God that's talked about in the Bible. And we tend to think that he's not really that good.

He doesn't really know what he's doing. And this idea that the fundamental thing that comes from him is both grace and peace, it's something that we're a little bit skeptical about, more than a little bit.

[ 10 : 58 ] It's a bit of a gag type thing for many people. And if for those of you who are watching this who wouldn't call yourselves Christians or you're trying to figure out what you are, the fact of the matter is is a lot of Christians have that gag reflex which they cover when they see words like this because we're well trained not to show it.

But the fact is there's something deep within our flesh that we just have a hard time thinking that the fundamental thing that comes to human beings that God desires to give you and me is grace and peace.

that that's the deepest, truest, realist thing about the triune God. And we even wonder how that could happen.

Now, so let's take a step back about our problem. Like, what does it say about you and me as a human being? It's actually not really very flattering if we think that every individual one of us thinks that we know other people better than they know us.

And some of you might say, well, George, it's not true for everybody else. But it happens to be true about me. I actually really do know people better than they know themselves.

[ 12 : 11 ] And then you might actually think that, you know, that's not what other people think about you. But all the other people around you probably know that that's actually what you really think. That you really think that you're better at knowing people than they are at knowing you.

And they, in fact, think you're full of pride and arrogance. But it is a problem, right? And it's also a problem to assume malice rather than incompetence.

It means that there's something bent in us. That there's a type of pride or self-centeredness that's bent in us. Because obviously, I mean, in a good relationship, you want to both reveal yourself so the other person can get to know you.

And you want them to reveal themselves so they can get into your life. And you want to reveal yourself so that that person can get into your life. We need, this is what social isolation really teaches us.

We need to have good social interactions and we want to have it. But there's something bent in us if all the time that we're trying to go through this process, there is this inherent thing that actually they don't really know me but I know them.

[ 13 : 23 ] I know what they're thinking. I know what they really want to do. And when they screw up and it hurts me, it's because they are bad. Not just because they were incompetent. There's something bent and broken in us.

And the interesting thing about the Bible is I think that if you would actually study the Christian faith and you study the Bible, you would discover that there is no religion, no spirituality, no system of thought that's more wise and insightful about the human condition.

I'm not saying that you don't get wisdom and insight from a range of sources. No Christian should ever say that. But I think if you actually look and compare, only the Bible actually really accounts for this fundamental aspect of a sort of a bentness within us.

And I say bentness because obviously we do get some true insights about the other person. But there's a type of fundamental bentness in us. And we can't leave ourselves to fix that bentness.

Like we carry it with us wherever we go. And you see, so this is the wonderful thing about the Gospel. The Gospel is this profound news that God was going to show grace to us.

[ 14 : 31 ] And grace is God's, that God in his kindness bestows unmerited favor and blessing upon ordinary people like you and me.

So when it says grace and peace to you, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, it's saying that the fundamental thing to understand about who Jesus, what God is like, what the Christian way is like, what Jesus is like, is that God looks on you and me and in grace, his grace means that in his kindness he bestows unmerited favor and blessing upon you.

And favor doesn't mean favoritism. It means he looks at you far better than you deserve. And blessing, when it's used in the New Testament, blessing is always a power from God to move ordinary people like you and me towards thriving in goodness.

That's what blessing always means. It means it's a power from God to move the individual towards thriving in goodness. So when it says here, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and we tend to be suspicious about God.

We tend to be suspicious about what his motives are, suspicious as to whether he's actually good, suspicious as to whether it'll actually make a difference to us. We're suspicious that if we get too close to God, he'll only hurt us.

[ 15 : 54 ] We're suspicious about God because we think we know God better than he knows us. The same things that we have that cause us problems as human beings are the same things that we put on God.

there's that bentness in us as human beings. And God's response to us, because if God is real, he actually knows you perfectly.

And you can't know him perfectly. But the fundamental message of the gospel is, the thing that Paul wants to tell everybody first before he says anything else is that the basic thing is that God gives you grace.

And grace means bestowing in his kindness unmerited favor and blessing upon you. And blessing means an actual power from God to help you to thrive in goodness.

You see, how this works is something like this. And it's worth my while to take some time on it, even if it means that some of these other points we have to go through very, very briefly.

[ 16 : 57 ] You see, God, the good news of the Bible is that God, the Son of God, sets aside his glory and divine honor and privileges and all of that, his appearance as God and remaining fully God, he takes into himself our human nature.

And that when Jesus is, and he lives a fully human life, and when he's living his life and when he's dying his death and when he's rising from the dead, he's doing all of that as our representative.

That's why it can stand for you. Some of you have heard this analogy before. I'll use it again because it's a really good analogy. Imagine after the pandemic is all over and people are able to gather that there's a group of terrorists who one day go into Wembley Stadium in England, which I think holds 110,000 people, something like that, over 100,000 people.

And terrorists are able to seal and lock all the doors and they reveal that they've placed a very, very large bomb, maybe a nuclear bomb, in the very, very center of the stadium and they're going to kill everybody in the stadium unless their demands are met.

And that, of course, would be front page and Twitter news all over the world instantly. The whole world would be riveted. And if, let's say, I called them up and said, listen, I'll offer you a deal.

[ 18 : 16 ] Somehow or another, I get the terrorist number. And I say, listen, I'll offer you a deal. Why don't you let all of the crowd go and all go and sit on the bomb instead? Well, they'd laugh at me like, come on, like, what, we're going to give up 110,000 people just for you?

That's dumb. What would happen if the Queen of England called them up? They'd take her. They'd let 110,000 people go to have the Queen of England sitting on the bomb.

Because not only do they have the 100,000, they have something better than 110,000 people. They have England and Scotland and Ireland and Wales in their grip.

They have Canada. They have the old, all of the old Commonwealth countries. They'd have United States. They'd have many, many countries in the world would be gripped because they're just understanding that the Queen represents more than the 110,000 people that she, in fact, can stand for, in fact, she's going to be standing for millions, for, in fact, maybe even billions, all gripped by him.

So the message of the Bible is that God sees how we're bent and how there's this, in a sense, inherent selfishness and self-centeredness and just wrongness about us that doesn't mean that we never get anything right, but there's just this constant something that's not quite right that we can't fix with ourselves.

[ 19 : 39 ] And what's God's response to us? It's kindness. It's unmerited kindness. And it's an unmerited kindness of showing favor to those very same people who shake our fist at God or laugh at God or mock at God or gag at God.

And it's a kindness. It's a type of power that changes. And it begins with the fact that Jesus' life, his life can be, represent me, and his death can represent me, and his resurrection can represent me.

And it's not just the way, like, in a sense, like our politicians, I'm not going to be dumping, like, both Trudeau and Scheer have been in the news this past week as to whether they really identify with us in our lockdown.

Why is it that there seems to be a separate rule for them? They're not really identifying what it's like to be unemployed. They're not identifying what it's like to not be able to get on a plane.

They're not identifying with those of us who can't go to a cottage. But here's the thing about Jesus. Jesus really did identify with us. If you read the Gospels, you'll see he comes and he's lower working class and he has to work for a living and he's persecuted and he's misunderstood and he has to walk places and he eats.

[ 20 : 51 ] He completely and utterly identifies with ordinary people like me. And so we have this profound idea in the Gospel, this profound news. It's not an idea, it's news. It's not just this, wouldn't it be nice if something like this were the case?

It's an actual proclamation that this actually happens, that God sends one who could truly be the representative of every human being and he doesn't come as a representative who has no idea what it's like to be a human being, but he comes to represent us and he identifies with us and he identifies with us even to the point of becoming a substitute for us.

that he lives the life that I could not live and dies the death that I could not die and deals with death in a way that I cannot deal by triumphant over death in his resurrection.

And he offers that to ordinary people like you and me. You see, that's God's unmerited kindness being offered to you and me and it's not just an idea of unmerited kindness.

It's the actual accomplishment of unmerited kindness made real in the world by one who represents you, identifies with you, is your substitute and offers you to take his...

[ 22 : 07 ] He says, George, I'll take your place, you take mine. And you say, well, why on earth, Jesus, would you do that? Do you know what I'm really like? Do you realize, Jesus, that I think I know you better than you know me? Do you realize that I think that any time something goes wrong, it's all due to malice?

Do you know what I'm really like? And Jesus says, yes, I know exactly what you're like. That's why my kindness to you is unmerited. And so when we put our hand in the hand of Jesus to trust him as our savior, to trust him as our representative, to trust his life for mine, his death for mine, his resurrection for mine, because God is kind and because he's showing you grace, well, Jesus enters into you and you enter into him.

And the very, very, very, very, very fundamental truth about you now is not that you are bent or that I am bent. The fundamental truth about you and me when we are in Jesus is grace and peace.

Peace means that we're now at peace with God. He has made peace, a peace for us that we can now begin to move towards being in balance and harmony with the true and living God.

And you see, that's why one of the things that Paul, Paul in this letter, he's going to be talking about selfish ambition, he's going to be talking about people trying to screw up his life, he's going to be talking about fights, he's going to be talking about, he's going to give a profound critique of religion and he's going to say that those who think that the world is divided between the religion, people who are religious or spiritual, being spiritual is just being religious in a hip way.

[ 23 : 51 ] Let's just be honest, right? Unhip people are religious but I'm hip so I'm spiritual. I've probably just offended a couple of you but that's what it really is, isn't it, right? And in fact, your irreligious friends would say, bang on George, that's exactly what it is, it's just religion taking your hip.

By the way, just for the record, I'm closer to hip replacement than hip as you can probably already tell. So anyway, to get back to this, Paul is going to be talking about the problems of religion, the problems of thinking that it's the choices between religion and irreligion and the choices never between religion and irreligion, the choices between grace and anything else.

That's the only option. Do you receive grace or do you turn your back on grace? And God's heart is that he wants you to receive grace. That's his heart. His heart about you right now, no matter how skeptical you are, how cynical you are, how down you are on the world, how down you are on yourself, no matter how alone you are, or how full you are because you're surrounded with your kids, you're having a great time, you're an introvert, you love being indoors, the paycheck's coming in, whoever you are, God only wants you to receive grace.

He only wants you to receive grace. That's his heart to you. And that's why it's going to be really important as we go all the way through this letter and it's really important for every one of us, if you haven't given yourself to Jesus, there's no better time than to do it right now to just stop listening to me or press pause and just say, Jesus, please, thank you that you were my representative.

Thank you that you identified with me and you know me perfectly. Thank you that even though you knew me, know me perfectly, you are only kind to me.

[ 25 : 32 ] And I can see that because Jesus really did live and die and rise from the dead and that's what he really did say about who he is. And so Jesus, be my Savior and my Lord and thank you that you will never let me go.

And for those of us who are Christians, Paul wants us to grow in a humble, trusting, remembering of your gift, that is God's gift, the Lord's gift of grace and peace to ordinary people like you and me.

Now we're going to go through the other three little things. I just picked three other things throughout the rest of this text. It's going to keep coming down to grace. It's going to keep being a bit of a challenge to the fact.

You see, it changes. Here, let's read verses three to five. Here's how it goes. 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.

I'm just going to read it again. 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.

[ 26 : 43 ] Now, some of you are gagging. Okay, one moment. Why are we gagging? Well, because we think we know things better than other people. Why? Because we think that malice accounts for more things.

And if it's not malice or it's incompetence, it's never good. I mean, those are the basic options. Malice or incompetence. Like, there's a deep cynicism in many of us and there's a deep cynicism when we see words like this.

But remember who's writing it. It's Paul writing from quarantine. It's Paul writing because he's not going to let up on the profound truth, the profound fact that this man, Jesus, did die and that he did rise from the dead and the grave really was empty and that the whole purpose of his life and death and resurrection was that God's unmerited kindness would be offered to you and made real in your life in a way that will transform you forever.

It begins to transform you today and it will go on and on and on into all eternity and that's the ground by which he's working on. And so what we see here in this prayer, I'll just give you the prayer, I'll try to unpack it in another minute or two.

Lord, by your grace, the second thing, Lord, by your grace, help me to die to cynicism and instead grow in thankfulness to you. Lord, by your grace, help me to die to cynicism and instead grow in thankfulness to you.

[ 28 : 03 ] Back when I was still able to go to coffee shops and talk to people, I was talking to a business person. We're talking about attitudes and we got talking about the fact that if you have a certain type of attitude, there's lots of foolish people who think that if you have a good attitude, then only good things will happen to you and bad things won't happen to you.

And we both agreed that that's just foolish. That's in fact not the case. You can have the best attitude in the world and all sorts of crappy things will happen to you. But what is true is that if you have a better attitude, you have far more resources to deal with what's in front of you.

To deal, to in a sense, my sleeves don't have to be rolled up. To roll up your sleeves and deal with the world as it is. As I said, the rest of the letter, Paul is going to be dealing with hypocrisy.

He's going to be dealing with religion, with irreligion, with selfish ambition, with people who think they're super spiritual, with people having fights. He's going to be dealing with a lot of different types of things.



So it isn't as if Paul is saying, Lord, give me rose-colored glasses so I only see the world in a certain way. No, the problem, every, one of the big problems that people have with reading the Bible is that it's so profoundly realistic, but it's never cynical.

[ 29 : 16 ] And that even when it talks about the evil in the world, it talks about the evil in the world and the evil in you in such a way that God wants to connect with you, not to drive you away. That's the problem we have when we read the Bible.

It's the opposite from it being rose-colored glasses as we flinch from its moral and psychological realism and power without cynicism.

And so here Paul is saying, remember, so why is he saying this? And here's where it's really, really helpful for us to think about it. And by the way, these little prayers, I should mention this.

I forgot to mention it because I'm trying to spend less time looking at my notes and more time actually trying to have a conversation with you. These prayers are all about his prayers for Christians.

There's going to be other places in the book where he talks about non-Christians, but here what you're listening into is how a Christian should pray for another Christian. And I want to tell you, I mean, if you're still trying to figure out where Christianity is and whether it's true or not, you already know this.

[ 30 : 22 ] We Christians can be just as cynical and full of backbiting and bad behavior as anybody else and especially towards other Christians. But here's where Paul begins in his thinking about other Christians.

You're getting a chance in a sense to hear how Paul thinks about other Christians. Christians. And the better way, the better place to deal with problems amongst Christians is when we're praying a prayer like this.

Like rather than dealing, beginning with, it's because of your malice that this is screwed up or it's because of your incompetence that this is screwed up or I know you but you don't know me and because I know you this is what you're really doing.

A better place to begin with is thankfulness for them because the fact of the matter is that when you, if you, as a result of this talk and God's grace in you, you give your life to Jesus, you have now become my brother or my sister.

You have a new identity. It might be that before you gave your life to Jesus, you thought of your identity as being primarily Canadian or primarily Chinese or primarily black or primarily white or primarily PhD or primarily working class or primarily gay or primarily transgender or primarily straight but when you give your life to Jesus, you get a new identity.

[ 31 : 46 ] Part of, in fact, the Christian life is learning to die to all those other identities, to receive an identity based on grace that goes on into all eternity and your new identity is brother or sister to me and I have become, when you give your life to Jesus, your brother.

And if, in fact, God's grace has been working in me, then isn't it a wise thing to begin when we want to start to deal with selfish ambition and other types of things because we do bad things to each other.

Excuse me. Excuse me. Allergies. It makes me a bit, sound a bit rough sometimes. But, Lord, by your grace, help me to die to cynicism and instead grow in thankfulness to you when I think of other Christians to begin with thankfulness.

Why? Because they're my brothers and sisters in Christ. And it's a far better place to begin with to walk through and to think through the different problems that I have to face.

It looks like somebody's going to be bringing me some water. We're live. That will help. Thank you very much, Daniel.

[ 33 : 05 ] So, that's just a beginning prayer for you and for me to try to combat it. And by the way, it's a really interesting thing. Notice here again in it, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.

Verse 3, 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. Just a bit of an aside.

If you seek joy, you'll never find it. Joy is a byproduct. If you want to increase the joy in your life, begin with thanking God for his grace and being thankful to God.

And that's something you can work on. Trying to push yourself to start being more joyful, that's just psychological manipulation. But in fact, if God has taken a person like you and me and bestowed upon us unmerited favor, that will go on into all eternity, thankfulness is always the right place to begin.

And it's the right place to begin when we want to solve problems with other Christians. A couple of other points. Let's look at verse 6. 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.

[ 34 : 27 ] It's referring to the fact that Jesus will return. It is right for me to feel, and actually the word is more than feel, it's talking about affection. It's talking about both a mindset and an attitude and a habit of thinking.

And it uses the word here, feel, because there's not really a good English single, simple, I'm a communicator, as you can tell, simple English word for it.

But it's a combination of a mindset, an attitude, a habit of thinking. It's a type of affection for the others. So, it is right for me to have this affection, to think 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.

Jesus, here's the third prayer. It really comes out of verse 6. Lord, by your grace, help me to put to death my confidence in my work and instead, grow in me great confidence that you work in me for my eternal good.

[ 35 : 44 ] I can't read my own writing. I'll say it again. Lord, by your grace, help me to put to death my confidence in my work and instead, grow in me great confidence that you work in me for my eternal good.

You see, if we begin by praying that for ourselves, then we can pray that for other people because that's the emphasis here. You see, look at verse 6. It says, 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.

In other words, the work of grace, when you receive God's grace, his unmerited kindness to you in a way which is a power in your life to have you thrive towards what is truly good.

He begins that in you. Jesus comes to enter into you and you enter into him. The Holy Spirit comes into you. The Father makes his home in you and that will continue. That work of changing you to live out of grace is something that you're never going to get perfect but it's going to continue to work in you because not because you're so good at doing it but because it's God doing it.

The same God who's showing you unmerited kindness with power for your true good and he's going to do it and do it and do it every day and some days you're going to really feel it and it'll be good and some days you won't feel it and you'll maybe feel like the dark night of the soul and some days you'll realize how much you transgressed against it and the point is to remember that it's his work in you not your work and if that's true of you then it can be true of the brothers and sisters that you need to pray for.

[ 37 : 20 ] Because the fact of the matter is my brother and my sister if you have opened yourself to God's grace the same thing that is true of me is true of you.

It's confidence in his work in you not your work which we really need to be gripped by to begin to be changed and transformed. One final thing the final sentence in the original Greek by the way a little nerdy point verses 3 to 8 are one sentence in Greek and verses 9 through 11 are a second sentence in Greek and this one just as we read it because I've run out of time the point will be the fourth point will be Lord by your grace please teach me and help me to pray for others.

Lord by your grace please teach me and help me to pray for others and this this is in a sense a bit of an outline of prayer a bit of a lesson in prayer about how you and I should be praying for each other listen to what he says this is one of those texts like you should memorize verse 6 by the way you should you know if you want to do something helpful memorize verse 2 and then after you've memorized verse 2 memorize verse 6 and then maybe as a way to to learn how to pray take verses 9 to 11 and use it as a bit of a guide as to how you can be praying for me or for people in your local church it's a brilliant guide to prayer that's why I said Lord by your grace please teach me and help me to pray for others and listen to what it says and it is my prayer verse 9 that your love may abound more and more isn't that a wonderful thing to pray for people and love here doesn't mean feelings love is a verb it's an an an an action an orientation an action towards seeking the true good of the other person so he says here's how you pray that your love may abound more and more and not only that but you're you're at the same time that you want their love to grow you want their knowledge and discernment to grow as well with knowledge and all discernment verse 10 why so that you may approve what is excellent and excellent here means what is necessary to thrive in the Christian life that's what it means it doesn't mean

Shakespeare and Bach it means what's necessary to thrive in the Christian life why and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ we want to pray that people are pure that we're not insincere we're not manipulative that we're pure and that that we're that what you see is what you get and and and if we try to show love it's not out of manipulation not out of get private gain that's why by the way you know if we can help you in some way let us know we'd love to help you we'll do our best to try to help you and then and then verse 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God Lord by your grace please teach me and help me to pray for others and verses 9 to 11 are a brilliant way to learn how to pray for others just want to wrap it up friends as I hope you've seen with this by the way I'm not saying that I've arrived I've made it or anything like that but what I know is is this

God's fundamental way fundamental way of wanting to deal with you is grace he offers you his grace and that's why the very first prayers may be the most important one for all of this is a takeaway Lord please grow in me a humble trusting remembering of your gift of grace and peace to me that can be a prayer for the rest of your life let's pray Father we ask that the Holy Spirit would fall with might and power and deep conviction upon all who are listening in and watching in we ask Lord that you would grow in each one of us grow in me a humble trusting remembering of your gift of grace and peace to me and all God's people said Amen