

God is committed to completing you

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[0 : 00] Well, can I start by asking, when will you be complete? When I was in primary school, I thought I'd be complete when I had a portable CD player.

Yes, CD player. When I was in high school, I thought I was going to be complete when I had a girlfriend. When I was in late high school, I thought I'd be complete when I had a Subaru WRX. But my parents wouldn't let me. I got a Subaru Liberty instead, and I crashed it. When I was in uni, I thought if I had a six-pack of abs and big arms, I'd be complete.

Yeah. When I stopped working out, someone at church said to me, oh, you've lost weight. Yeah, that killed that dream. It wasn't working.

For a long time, I thought when I was married, I'll be complete. Now, Emma's wonderful, but that's too much to ask of a spouse.

[1 : 13] For a while, I thought if I won the grace soccer, I'd be complete. Lasts for about 24 hours, that feeling.

A bit longer when you lose. I thought when I had a well-paying job, I'll be complete. More recently, I thought once I finish Bible college, I'll be complete.

Not quite. Not quite. At the moment, I think I'm thinking when I have children, I'll be complete.

I think for a long while, in terms of my personality, I've thought when I'm more socially confident, I'll be complete.

When I'm funnier, more witty. When I'm cleverer. I can barely say the word.

[2 : 17] I'll be complete then. So what about you? When will you be complete? When will your life be complete?

Will you be complete when you look the way you want to look? When you have no more debt? Will you be complete when you're married or when your spouse changes that behaviour?

It may be something quite serious. You might think, I'll be complete when I'm healthy again. Will you be complete, do you think, when you break that habit?

Do you think you'll be complete when you have no more stress from work or children? I think so often we think of completeness in terms of our circumstances.

When they change, we'll be whole. We desire our body to change, our personality to change, our career to change, our spouse to change, our children to change, our capabilities to change.

[3 : 26] Then we'll be complete. It's all about circumstances. How often do we think of our completeness in terms of our character? What if God has a different idea about what it looks like, what it means to be complete, to be whole, to be full of joy, to be the person God created you to be?

What if he's got a different idea? I think he does. What if he's got a different idea about what it means to be?

To God's commitment to his church? The first one is that God is committed to you by joining you to Christ. You are to know that you are joined to Christ if you have faith in him.

You are a saint. You are a servant in him. The second one is we should stop and appreciate the current fruit of God's grace in us.

When we see partnership in the gospel, people living for the sake of the gospel. The third thing we're going to see is the foundation, the confidence we can have is that we can trust in this, that God is the one who will complete you for the day of Jesus Christ.

[5 : 04] And the fourth thing is we should pray for it. This is what we should pray for. So let's get into it. The first one. Know that you are saints and servants in Christ.

God is committed to you by joining you to Christ. You are connected to him. Everything you receive from God is through him. There is no other way that you receive it.

It is through him. So verse 1. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons.

Paul is really careful to emphasize that the Philippians are first and foremost in Christ. They just buy their groceries at Philippi.

Now that's incredible because Philippi was a Roman colony and so they were kind of like a miniature Rome. From everything from their religion to their lifestyle to their politics, they were all shaped by Rome.

[6 : 12] There would have been a lot of pride in being a Philippian. But the believers weren't to understand themselves as Philippians first and foremost but belonging to Christ, in Christ.

That is where you are. That's who you belong to. To be in Christ, it's a favorite expression of Paul and it carries so much meaning and it's hard to put words to express it.

But let me just say, everything you receive from God is determined by your connection to Jesus. So Jesus uses a metaphor of the vine and the branches.

Everything you receive from God is through him. So can I just pause at this point and ask, do you have faith in Jesus?

Have you handed over your life to him? Because everything good that God has to offer you is through him, only through him.

[7 : 18] Now if you are in Christ, if you do have faith in him, know that you are a saint.

And the ESV translated it, holy one, which is helpful I think. So what is a saint? I think we often think it's like Andrew Johns for the Newcastle Knights being in the Hall of Fame because he's just so amazing.

He's one of the immortals. I think we think like that, the super Christians. But that's not what it means. It means holy one. It means someone who is chosen by God to be set apart, to belong to God, to serve God.

It's not based on what you've done. It's based on God choosing you. I was trying to think of an illustration, to be honest. I can't think of one good enough. So here's my best shot.

I think it's kind of like being chosen to work for like the CIA. I know that's American. But you were chosen to be set apart, to have a high calling to serve your country.

[8 : 31] Everything about your life from then on is in service to your country. It's kind of like that, but way better. If you're in Christ, you're a holy one.

You belong to Christ. You were set apart for him. That's everyone, all of us who are in Christ. And then we've got the phrase, together with the deacons and overseers, don't worry, Alex and Paul and elders.

It's not saying you're not a saint. It's saying you are with the saints. You're included in the saints. I wonder if Paul addresses the overseers and deacons because there was false teachers who were attacking the church at the time.

So maybe he's just trying to bolster the congregation going, stick to your leaders. Don't listen to the false teachers. I think that's possibly what's going on. And look at Paul and Timothy.

Now, Paul is an apostle. There's only a few apostles. Very high calling. And unlike the rest of his letters, he doesn't identify himself as an apostle.

[9 : 40] He doesn't need to, to the Philippians. I think their relationship is so close, he doesn't need to. What does he want to be known as? Who is he first and foremost? He is a servant of Christ.

I think he's anticipating chapter 2 where Christ himself becomes a servant.

Christ himself becomes a servant. God served you.

That's incredible, isn't it? He serves us. And Paul wants to be known as a servant of him.

His life belongs to him. I think he wants the Philippians to think the same way, for us to think the same way. We are servants. We have the highest calling.

[10 : 41] We have the highest job in the world. We are servants of the living God. God has committed to you by joining you to Christ.

Everything you receive is through him. You are a servant of Christ. The highest calling possible. So second, appreciate the current fruit of God's grace.

Your partnership in the gospel. The Philippian church, they were actively supporting Paul in his missionary work.

They were the only church in the beginning to be supporting Paul. We're told in chapter 4. They stood with him when churches were being founded and conversions were happening.

And they stood with him when he was in prison. Even when they themselves could be in danger of being put in prison or they could be losing respect for Paul, they stuck with him. They were supporting him.

[11 : 49] And they sent Epaphroditus, one of their dearly loved brothers, on a several month long journey, a dangerous journey. He almost died in service of Paul to help him in his ministry.

These guys loved Paul. They were worried about him. They wanted news. Is he okay? What's happening? What's the outcome of his imprisonment? Now, who is Paul full of thankfulness to? Look at verse 3. I thank my God. I thank my God.

He is full of thankfulness to God. Why to God? Why doesn't he thank the Philippians directly? I think it comes down to this word partnership.

We see it in verse 7, but it's translated a bit differently. You are all partakers, partners with me of grace. It is God's grace in us that empowers our hearts to want to see the gospel go out, to be heard, to be defended against all objections.

[13 : 02] They want the gospel to be argued for persuasively. They want Christ to be known and heard. It's God's grace in us that makes us even want that. We see at the end of the letter in chapter 4, verse 17, that Paul really appreciates the Philippians' financial support of him and their prayers.

But do you know what really excites Paul? He's learnt to be content whether he has a lot or nothing. What excites him is that this giving is evidence that they are working for the gospel, that they love Christ that much.

It is fruit of God's work in them. It's really exciting to him. So when a team goes out from here to Pilaga, thank you God.

When people give generously of their time and money to this church, to missionaries, thank you God. That is fruit of God's work in you.

When someone adjusts their work availability so that they can invest in church people and events, thank you God.

[14 : 16] That's incredible. That's evidence of God's work in you. When parents stumble through the door exhausted on Sunday morning, thank you God.

When people choose their sport and their hairdresser and their gym based on wanting to mix with unbelievers, who thinks like that?

Thank you God. These are just small examples, but there's so many other examples of God's grace in us. When we see it, we should stop and thank God for it. There is current fruit of God's work in us.

So this word partnership, I want to go a bit deeper into it. What is it exactly? I think it's a lot deeper than giving money.

It's way more than that. It's a shared desire to see Jesus known and loved for who he is, whatever means possible.

[15 : 24] We can disagree on the best way to do it. That doesn't really matter. They're one in passion and goal. It's a shared passion for Jesus to be known and loved.

It's a passion that is constant and enduring. So we see in verse 5, it's from the first day until now. This partnership and passion is an individual choice.

Notice how Paul is thankful for you all. Verse 5, every one of you. He repeats it. Verse 7, it is right for me to feel this way about you all. For you all are partakers with me of grace.

It's an individual thing. The thinkers, the doers, the grumpy, the kind, the extroverts, the introverts, the easygoing, the nitpicking.

Paul is filled with thankfulness for them all. Why? Because they're all easy to get on with? No, because they have a shared desire for Jesus to be known and loved.

[16 : 34] They have the same heart. This partnership, this fellowship, this deep affection endures hardship. They stuck with him in his imprisonments.

It's a beautiful thing. Have you ever noticed what happens when you serve alongside someone? Maybe it's a quench or pillager or playgroup or fresh or serving morning tea together, packing up shares together.

Have you noticed what happens when you do that? Doesn't your affection grow for those people? Why is that? You're just packing up shares.

Paul is thankful for the Philippians every time he prays for them. He says, it is right for me to feel this way about you all since I have you in my heart.

You are in my heart. He even calls God as witness that his heart towards them is filled with the affection of Christ Jesus. Why is that? Why do we feel affection for people we serve alongside? [17:44] Because we share the same grace. God's grace in us. We share the same passion. We have the same goal in mind.

We have true friendship. True fellowship. That is the fruit of God's work in us. There is fruit to be seen now.

And it's really beautiful. Paul is filled with joy for the fruit that God is producing in this church. Can I encourage you to think about the people in this church that you might find difficult to love?

Now, if you're worried about thinking about that question, just be rest assured that someone finds you difficult to love. Are they too opinionated?

Or too withdrawn? Too loud? Too shy? Too old? Too young? Do they dominate the conversation? Do they not contribute enough?

[18:56] You just don't share any common interests. Who do you find difficult to love? Think about that. Don't say it out loud. That would be awkward. Here's your challenge.

If they're not a Christian, move towards them like Christ moved towards you. If they are a Christian, I think our challenge is to stop and really look at that person and the way they're living.

Because I put it to you, you will find ways that they are living for Christ. They share the same goal as you. They want Jesus to be known and loved.

A lot of the ways they're doing it, you won't be able to see because you're not with them 24-7. But look, I reckon you'll find it. When you find it, thank God for them.

Paul is thankful for every one of them. Let's be thankful. So God's commitment to you was by choosing you and putting you in Christ, setting you apart to serve him.

[20:05] God's commitment to you is creating fruit in our fellowship in the gospel and a deep affection for each other that goes deeper than personality. And here's God's end goal.

Here's the grounds for our confidence moving forward. Verse 6. This seems to be the central verse. This is why Paul prays and works with confidence.

Even though the Philippians are under theological attack to add something to faith in Christ. Even though they're under social pressure to withdraw and hide their faith.

Even though there's some self-seeking attitudes going on in the church. There are solid grounds for confidence moving forward. Verse 6.

As you sinned yesterday, the same as you did before that.

[21:19] Where's your confidence in moving forward again? What's going to motivate you to move towards that brother or sister you're struggling with at the moment?

Before you commit to serving others more, are you waiting for the right amount of time? The right amount of money? The right frame of mind? The right amount of sleep?

What are you depending on? What are you waiting on? Here's what Paul is depending on. Here's what motivates him. Here's what drives him. He anticipates the day when Jesus Christ is revealed.

When he comes back in all his goodness is going to be seen by everyone. He pictures that day.

And he pictures every single Philippian standing before Christ. And he knows that on that day they are going to be radiant.

They're going to reflect the goodness of Christ. He looks forward to that day. How does Paul know this? Because it's not ultimately up to him and his ministry.

[22:27] It's not even ultimately up to the Philippians to change themselves. It's ultimately up to the one who began their faith in Christ. We see in Acts 16, Lydia is the first convert in Philippi.

Here's what we're told about her conversion. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what Paul was saying. He will put the finishing touches on the faith he has started in you.

He will do it all the way up to the day of Christ. He's getting you ready for that beautiful day. So the day of Christ.

Usually it's talked about as the day of the Lord, which has the idea of Jesus' judgment and his salvation of his people. But it's just here in Philippians he talks about the day of Christ.

I think this change of wording just puts a different emphasis on that day. In chapter 2, what do we see? We see that Jesus is going to come back and every knee will bow, every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord.

[23 : 42] Everyone's going to see his glory. So I think the emphasis here is that on that day, everyone's going to see the evidence of God's grace in your life, in our life.

And that evidence is going to reflect the beauty of Jesus himself. And all the thanks is going to go to Jesus. We start by God's grace.

We're going to be finished off by God's grace. And until then, more and more made complete to God's grace. So what does this motivate Paul to do?

Because it's up to God, does he sit back and relax? No. It's because it's up to God and his commitment to complete us that Paul has the confidence to work and pray towards that same goal. He knows he's in line with God in that same goal. So he prays for it. This is where we should start.

[25 : 00] We should pray for it. This prayer in verses 9 to 11 shows us what it means to be made complete. And it gives us a prayer to model that we should pray for one another.

Not just praying for changed circumstances, but praying things along these lines. So what do we see here? What does Paul pray for? What should we pray for? That your love may abound more and more.

There's already love there. But there should be no limit to it. May it abound. May there not just be a few puddles of love in your life, but may your life be flooded with love.

And who or what do we love? It's not specified here. So I think it's all-encompassing. It's love for God and love for one another. Abound in your love for God and one another.

And love doesn't increase by itself. You don't just choose to love. Love abounds in knowledge and depth of insight. The word knowledge is often used by Paul to mean something like grasping and experiencing spiritual reality.

[26 : 24] So I think it's to do with deepening our experience and understanding of God. Growing in our love for him. Growing in our knowledge of him. We need to know God so that we can reflect his kind of love.

And to increase in love, we also need depth of insight. I think this has to do with knowing what every situation requires of us.

Life is complex, isn't it? It's really confusing. We need insight. We need God's help in understanding what love looks like in this situation.

What does it look like to love God and love my neighbour in this situation? We need insight. As your colleagues at work slander your boss, how do you love?

How do you love God and those colleagues and your boss in that situation? That's hard. We need to hear what God says to us to choose how to love.

[27 : 33] As your parents are ageing and you need to care for them, but you have other commitments as well, what does it look like to love? That is hard. We need help in that.

We need to go deeper in our knowledge of God to understand how to love. As your children are stuck in self-centred habits, how do you love? If you're plagued by a lack of energy or illness, how do you love?

That's really tough. How do you love God and love those around you? We need help in that. Let's pray for it.

Let's hear from God from it. Let's look at examples around us. We need God to give us both knowledge of himself and insight into all situations if we are to abound in love.

So what's the reason for this? Why do we need to increase in love? We need to do it, verse 10, so that we can test and choose what is better, to discern what is best.

[28 : 43] So what is better? Having financial security or having a generous spirit? What's better?

What's better? Having less responsibility or having a servant heart? What's better? Avoiding all conflict at any cost or speaking the truth in love?

I ask these questions because our love for God is played out in the everyday details of our lives. We need to choose what's better.

We need to choose what is loving towards God and one another. And we need knowledge and insight to choose what is best, what is truly life-giving.

And here's the ultimate goal again. Have a look at the second half of verse 10. That you 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.

[29 : 53] God's goal is not just that you would reach the finish line. He wants you to reach it and be pleasing to him, to be radiant. The word pure has the idea of being without contamination, like

holding a glass of water up to the light to see that it's pure.

To be blameless is the idea of not stumbling in sin yourself or causing others to stumble. And not only do we pray that we would be pure and blameless, but we also pray that we would be filled with good fruit, everything that results from being in right relationship with God.

And notice that it's through Jesus Christ. We don't produce this good fruit, this good behaviour by ourselves. We do it through Christ.

Everything is through him. His death makes us pure and blameless. His resurrection empowers us to live for God. On that final day, the evidence of God's commitment to us will be revealed for all to see.

His grace at work in us will be revealed. It will be seen clearly. And God's going to get the thanks. He's going to get the praise. And that's how it should be.

[31 : 25] So as we finish up, I want to share with you Tim Keller's words because it's really helped me to picture that final day. So feel free to take notes still or to just sit and listen.

I'm hoping these words have the same effect for you as they did on me. Now he's speaking about the purpose of marriage.

So it's in that book, Meaning of Marriage. But he himself says, this applies more deeply to our Christian friendship. So this is what it looks like to love one another.

This is our goal. Love is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating and to say, I see who God is making you and it excites me.

I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to the throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, I always knew you could be like this.

[32 : 39] I've got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you. And we hope to hear God say to us, well done, good and faithful servants.

Over the years, you have lifted one another up to me. You have sacrificed for one another. You held one another up with prayer and with thanksgiving. You confronted each other.

You rebuked each other. You hugged and you loved each other and continually pushed each other toward me. And now look at you. You're radiant. That's where we're headed.

C.S. Lewis puts it this way, the same idea. If we let him, he will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant, immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright, stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly, though of course on a smaller scale, his own boundless power and delight and goodness.

The process will be long and in part very painful but that is where we are in for, nothing less. That's where we're headed. That's Paul's vision.

[34 : 06] He's confident that God is at work. Can I ask you to do something a bit uncomfortable now? Can I ask you to look around the room?

Look across the other side of the room. You may make eye contact and that's okay. Look around you. Look at the people sitting around you. Look at the guys up the back.

I'm sure they'll love some eyes out there. Look at each other. On that day, each of you, if you are in Christ, God is committed to making each and every one of us reflect the beauty of Christ.

That's where we're headed. Let's pray for it and work for it and thank God for each other. So why don't we pray now? Please pray with me.