"The Joy of God’s People" Philippians 1:1-11

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[0:00] Before we enter into God's word, let us take a moment to pray and ask for his blessing. Father, we thank you for this Easter season that we get to celebrate the life, the death, and the death and the resurrection of your blessed son.

Father, we pray that you would make that truth so very real in our hearts. Lord, remind us afresh of the joy it is to be called.
By your name, to be your son and daughter. Father, we pray that you would remind us also of the great privilege it is to be a part of your church, to serve and to partner in the gospel.
And as we come to this new book in Philippians, Lord, help us to grasp the understanding of the joyfulness of what it means to be a part of your church and to participate in this incredible ministry of reconciliation.
So Lord, guide us today. Help us to be students of your word, to rest under your word, and so be blessed by it. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Like I mentioned, we're entering into a new sermon series in the letter.
[1:10] Paul's letter to the Ephesian church will be in this just about into mid-July or so. So grab one of these, mark it up, and hopefully it'll be just a really rich time.

As a way of an introduction, I don't claim to know kind of the whole post-mortem on the reality of life post-COVID lockdowns. But one thing that I've noticed, and I'm certainly not the only one, noticed that what has emerged from these lockdowns seems to be this search for community and belonging by many different groups and demographics.
This is especially evident amongst young men, or maybe that I'm just seeing it because I have a special interest in seeing young men grow in the faith. But I would say it's evident across various demographics.
And I'm not sure if it was merely the reality of being socially isolated for months and months and months and months and months, a few more months as well, or if such isolation merely just exposed what was already there under the surface.
That there was a lack of deep community, of deep friendships, of deep belonging that come with that community. And with it, to have a purpose and a place and a role, not just to belong, but to actually have a role to participate in something that is much grander and bigger and larger than ourselves, without somehow negating our individuality so that we can be a part of something, but also not fall into complete anonymity.
[2:49] To know and be known, a place of purpose and participation, and with it, hope and joy. Communities of belonging that last oftentimes provide both this acceptance that you are a part of this community, but also provide opportunities to participate.

And more than just provide opportunities, but requirements to participate. Communities that promise acceptance without participation often wane, and those that demand participation but never offer acceptance become maybe a bit tyrannical or even maybe abusive.
So as we get into Philippians, we'll see that there's a biblical vision of what this community ought to be, what the ultimate community ought to be. And it is the church. I say that, and I realize that we have a congregation of people with varying experiences in the church.
Some that are new to the church, some that have returned after quite the long hiatus. Other people that are here because this church isn't like their other church. A whole kind of smattering of different experiences.
So to say that church is the ultimate community, some people nod, some people say not a chance. But Philippians will, and Paul the Apostle, he will make a case that this biblical vision for the church is the pinnacle and the ideal of what it means to be a human being living in community.

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[4:06] It offers belonging, and a belonging that is deep, that hits every part of our being, that no part of our being is exempt from this belonging, but also demands participation.

But does so not in a way that is tyrannical or manipulative or abusive, but rather, and this will be one of the key words that we will find over and over and over again in Philippians, it will be joyful. Theologians call Paul's letter to the Philippians the epistle of joy. So it really is a remarkable book that really sheds light on what the church ought to look like, and what we should aspire to as people that are called Christian.

And like I mentioned, the church often falls short of this ideal. In the evangelical world, it falls short by either emphasizing belonging, but lowering the bar of participation. So we see this in some churches that are just catering to every felt need, or every program that would make it easier to come to church.

And I think there is, and this is like I'm speaking in generalities, and there's criticisms. I think there's also some good things with some of this as well. But we lower the bar of participation. We can also err on the other side, where we confuse belonging with participation.

[5:24] That to be a Christian means to check off all of your duties as a Christian. You give a certain way. You speak to your neighbors a certain way. You have goals of evangelizing or reading through the Bible.

And if you don't hit those, maybe your place in church is potentially in peril. Whether that's communicated, seldom is it communicated explicitly, but it's implied? Maybe. Oftentimes what we see with this falling short, and again, I'm speaking of our own tradition in the evangelical church, there's either a lack of love and joy, or there's a fake love and joy.

So there's a lot of pitfalls, a lot of gutters, a lot of ways that we have fallen short. Our church is wonderful. I'll get to some of why I think our church is wonderful. Our church falls short as well. Okay, it just does.

So a letter like Philippians is important for our church, and it's important for our souls as we seek to grow individually, but as we seek to grow as a community collectively.

And this is just an important thing as we read through Philippians, but also a principle that is helpful for us to think about. In general, how we engage with the gospel together will affect how we live out the faith individually, and vice versa.

[6:38] Okay, as we engage in the gospel individually, will affect how we live it out collectively. So we're going to jump into the first part of Philippians chapter 1. It's a very short letter, just over a hundred words in the original language.

We could have easily split this first part of chapter 1 up into two or three sermons. I'm doing it in one sermon, so we're not going to necessarily hit on everything. But I broke this first part into three sections.

Verses 3 to 6, and we're going to touch on verses 1 and 2 all the way throughout. But verses 3 to 6, we're going to look at Paul's joyful thanksgiving. So these are key aspects of the church that Paul is thankful for, that he is joyful for, that he is expressing his affection towards.

So first, his joyful thanksgiving. The second, his heartfelt affection. And finally, his hope-filled prayer. So we'll look at verses 3 to 6. I'll read it again, even though Gord has read it.

It's a short section. But if you can follow along, that would help me a great deal. Verse 3. I'll just read verses 3 to 5. 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.

[7:49] What is very clear, right off the bat in this letter, is Paul's thanksgiving and his thankfulness to the Philippian church, specifically for their generosity and partnership throughout his ministry, even up to the present.

This is just a bit of a background. So we just finished Acts. So if you have been coming to church for a while, you'll be familiar with the narrative of Paul's ministry. If not, no problem. Paul is writing this in a Roman prison.

Technically, it's house arrest. He's in prison. He has chains on him all the time. He's not free to come and go. There are some liberties that he has, but by and large, he is in prison.

So it's written around 61, 62 AD. And Paul has been in prison for about three years. First in Caesarea, which is in the Galilee area.

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He was there for two years without trial. Crazy, crazy situation. That's near the end of Acts. He eventually appeals to Caesar. Acts ends in chapter 28, and he is in Rome.
[8:49] So he is writing this to the Philippian church in Rome. The Philippian church is in Macedonia, and it was the first church in Europe. Really interestingly, the first church in Europe.

And from the very beginning, they have been a generous congregation to Paul, partnering with him, primarily with finances, but also in encouragement.
And we'll see how these things are tied together. They have not only given to Paul, but also have answered the call from Paul to give relief to the church in Jerusalem that was incredibly poor, that needed, that they were in want.
So Paul is thankful. He is thankful for the generosity and partnership of the Philippian church throughout his ministry. And it's significant for at least two reasons. I'm sure there's more, but for at least two reasons.
The first, they've understood the call of generosity from the get-go. This hasn't been something that has been an ongoing lesson that they have been obstinate towards.
[9:50] They have understood that to be a Christian is to be a generous person. So right from the beginning, they understand that they have a duty, but also a joy to partner and to give and to encourage and to bless.

It's also significant because Paul has been in prison for about three years. In the ancient world, to be in prison is to be a shameful thing. I mean, listen, we take it for granted that inmates deserve some sort of rights wherever you guys fall on how to treat prisoners, whether it is rehabilitation or otherwise.
By and large, though, Canadians, we say, yeah, you're in jail, but you're still a human being. You still have rights. Some are suspended. You have a debate on what are suspended, what are not, but you have certain rights.
At the very least, that you need food and you need safety. But this wasn't always the case, and it certainly wasn't always the case in Canada. These kind of prison reforms come just after the war in the Archambald Report, if you're a fan of Canadian history.
So this hasn't really been a thing, even in Canada. And it certainly wasn't a thing back in the ancient world. To go to jail, to be in prison, to be awaiting execution, which Paul, I mean, he will be released here and he will continue on with some missionary journeys for about two years.
[11:06] He will be re-arrested and he will face the executioner's blade. He doesn't know that. At least he doesn't seem to allude to that here. But to face such an unknown future, it was a shameful thing.

It brought disgrace upon the accused and the people associated with the accused, whether their family or the people that he led. So is Paul an insurrectionist to the Romans?
We'll find out. But usually, Rome would take the leader, execute the leader, and the whole following would just disperse.
Therefore, there was great stigma around Paul's arrest and there was a great possibility that both the gospel would be compromised and by extension, the church associated with Paul would be scattered.
Again, we're putting ourselves in the shoes of somebody in the 60s, A.D. They didn't know what was going to happen with Paul. They didn't necessarily, they couldn't necessarily pick up a phone and ring his Roman prison to see how he was doing and yet, we see that they continue to be generous.
[12:14] Their generosity is not conditional upon Paul's condition. We'll see this next week but there was no chance the gospel would get thwarted.

We'll see this next week where Paul says, listen, in fact, this arrest of mine, it will result in more people hearing the gospel, not less. It's a really wonderful thing. Again, we'll touch on that next week.
And what this communicates to Paul, this generosity of the Philippians is that they're not just nice people. This isn't just a nice gesture for the apostle but it's actually something indicative of their faith, of their growth in the gospel.
Just take a step back now. When we become a Christian, we are united with Christ which is to say that we are no longer our own. We belong to a new family, a new kingdom, we have a new king.

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Our citizenship changes. However, whatever analogy you want to use, we get a new passport, whatever, but the point is we are transferred from this kingdom of earth into the kingdom of heaven.
[13:17] That's why Paul addresses the church the way he does in verses 1 and 2. Read with me just briefly. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. By the way, that's not to say that Timothy is the co-author of this letter but just that Timothy has a prominent place both in the ministry of the spread of the gospel and specifically the Philippian church.

But he goes on, Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
So what we are seeing here, verses 1 and 2, is that those that are saints, those that are called by God, both called out of this world and called to be holy, they are in Christ Jesus.
They are united to him. They are connected to him. This is an act of grace of God by God and it brings about peace between sinful man and perfect God.
And what ends up happening is that our destinies are connected to Christ in a way that is now completely inseparable. It's a remarkable thing that we are united to Christ and yet distinct from Christ.
[14:27] That's an important caveat to all this. But we are so united to Christ that the imagery throughout the New Testament is that Christ is the head and we are his body.

Okay? We don't talk about people as if it's their head and the rest of their body. It's not like I talk about my children and say, yeah, Joseph's head's looking kind of odd today.
I don't know, Joseph's looking kind of odd today. He doesn't look odd. A terrible example. But the point is we talk about people holistically, right? Holistically. That's a language used us to Christ. Again, distinction, very important. Actually, extremely important. Nevertheless, the language of unity with Christ, it bumps up to the line of like, is this even possible to, if I was to say that like, to go a step further, it'd be like blasphemy, that I'm somehow claiming to be God.
But that's how united we are to Christ. But as individuals, but as we are united to Christ, it means also that we are united to other people that are united to Christ.
[15:32] We are a part of a body. It means things are a bit different because, you know, if I have a mess up, God forbid, something happens, you can go to another church or maybe I say something to offend you or somebody else says something to bother you or vice versa.

You can go to another church. But by and large, if you are a Christian, you are stuck with the people here, both for good and bad. You're united to them. They're your brothers and your sisters. They're co-heirs with Jesus.
You can leave this church, but you are still connected to Christ and we are too. We are part of this family. We are united together with Christ. And therefore, we have a duty and a connection to partner with each other.
It's not an optional aspect of the Christian life but a core tenet of it. So going back to our section here where Paul is, he is so thankful for these Christians. He says, I thank my God in all remembrance to you always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy.
Verse 5, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, the New Testament is describing this partnership, this connection and it's using a word that might be familiar to some of you but it is a word that is not easily translated into English.
[16:44] It's this word called koinonia. It carries with it this idea of friendship, of partnership, of unity, of camaraderie, connection. Also, but not just in any way but connection as it pertains to loving Christ and living out his call in this world.

It's a deep, deep, deep friendship, community, camaraderie, same goal, shared vision. All of that is wrapped up into this one word, koinonia. and it is the word I think more than anything else because with it and we'll see in a bit that it has to be sprinkled and flavored with love.
It is almost the defining word of the church, of what describes the church. Diedrich Bonhoeffer, he was a Lutheran minister who opposed Hitler and was executed for it.
He didn't just oppose Hitler, he tried to assassinate Hitler but he was a wonderful theologian and he wrote a small book called Life Together and he captured this idea of Christian koinonia and he writes this in the first chapter, quote, Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize, it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.

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The more clearly we learn to recognize that the ground and strength and promise of all our fellowship is in Christ Jesus alone, the more serenely shall we think of our fellowship and pray and hope for it.
[18:12] Christian community is founded solely on Jesus Christ. It is in and through him that we have access to one another, joy in one another and fellowship with one another.

When God had mercy on us, when God revealed Jesus Christ to us as our brother, when God won our hearts by God's love, our instruction and our fellowship began.
So, as Christians, we belong not to one another by our own choice, but by the call of God in Christ. A wonderful book, a wonderful passage that describes what it means to be a part of this brotherhood, to be a part of the church.
So you see, if we go back to why Paul is thanking the Philippians for their generosity, it is not just the apostle being jazzed about them throwing him some canteen money while he's in jail.
Rather, Paul is overjoyed with seeing how their salvation is proving true by the maturity and obedience to Christ. They're participating in the work and the mission of God.
[19:15] This is why Paul says in 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. It's not just that the Philippians did not abandon Paul.

We'll find out later on that actually some whole other churches abandoned Paul, and he actually had a fellow worker in the gospel, a man named Demas, who abandons him. It's not just that he's thankful that they didn't abandon him, but Paul, he is just a very proud spiritual father.
He is seeing that his children in the faith are growing. They are understanding what it means to be called out of this world into the kingdom of heaven and then what it means to give of themselves. That their faith is not dead, but their faith is expressed in works. What does this help us to understand? It helps us to understand that we must partner with the work of God. So, church, partner with the work of God.
Give to missionaries. Give to them generously who have given up comforts here in the West to minister afar. Partner with other church planters, both in our denomination, the Anglican Diocese of Canada, but across the country with whatever denomination that they're a part of, as long as they're proclaiming the gospel of Christ, and give generously to them.
[20:28] Partner with Mercy Ministries here in the city that proclaim the gospel and help with physical need. Get to know your fellow congregants and serve them and meet their needs and bless them and then ask them for help.

And by the way, this is happening. This is not like a, hey, it's not happening, you better do it, because I hear stories trickle in, and I'm very thankful that they're not necessarily loud stories, but they're quiet, humble stories of people connecting with each other and serving one another and praying for one another and blessing one another.
Continue with that. It's wonderful. It's a beautiful picture of the gospel proving true and maturing faith obeying Christ. It's a wonderful, beautiful thing. Continue doing that. All of this is done as an expression of gospel thankfulness and Christian love.
It's evidence of work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, because we have been given this wonderful gift of peace with God by grace, by the grace of Jesus Christ.
And here's the thing with Christianity. Because Christ has given so liberally to us, the heart that truly has received this gift will begin to imitate to Jesus.
[21:42] Chapter 2 might be one of the high points in all of Scripture. We'll get there in three weeks, two weeks, and it will be this picture of Jesus who had everything, who emptied himself of all of his divine prerogatives to give his very life for us.

And the result isn't that we can sit back and enjoy, but it's though we enjoy by getting to work and imitating him. This is what Paul is seeing in the Philippian church.
This is what the Lord is commending to us to do this morning. So, growth in the Christian life. It's evidenced by our participation in the gospel. God is the one who began this good work.
He is the one who is bringing it to maturity, and one day he will bring it to perfection. And yet, in light of all of what God is doing and what he has done in the Philippian church, what is interesting is that this next section, Paul does not commend God, but he commends the Philippians.
So what's happening in this next section when he is showing his heartfelt affection towards them? This will transition then into our second point, verses 7 and 8. Let me read it. It is right for me to feel

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this way about you all because I hold you in my heart for you are all partakers of me of grace.
[22:53] Partakers, that's, the root word is again koinonia. 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.

How I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. It is not as though Paul is giving credit to the Philippians that is due God. Again, God is the one who is at work.
He is the one who has begun the good work, who is bringing it to completion on the day of Christ. Again, that's verse 6. But rather, what Paul is doing here is commending their outward evidence, the outward evidence, of what he is assuming is God's invisible and inward action in their lives.
It is a dangerous thing for ministers or anybody to presume that they have a window into the souls of men and women. It is a very dangerous thing. People are deceptive.
If you've been at church long enough, you would have been surprised and disappointed at people that have lived godly lives that have abandoned the faith. It is heartbreaking.
[23:58] It is a tragedy. You will also be equally surprised but pleasantly when somebody who seems like they are more worldly than they are heavenly, continue slowly to stick around and grow in the faith incrementally.

We don't know what is happening in the hearts of people. However, there is evidence of outward holiness that we have to just trust that the Lord is at work in people's lives.
We are not the judge of souls. We don't have a window into their lives. So what Paul here is doing is merely recognizing the holy work that is happening that he is assuming that is happening on the inside of the Philippians and he is commending their outward actions.
What Paul is doing is recognizing that the Philippians are growing in their obedience and faith which is to say they are growing in their sanctification. That is a big word that has a lot of implications to it but I will just pause here for a moment and see if we can't fill this word in a bit.
Try to define it and understand it a bit. We have already talked about salvation that Christ when we have confessed our faith in Jesus we are made right before God and that we are united to Christ and it's an act that only God can do.
[25:09] The Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 2 he says this in a beautiful way for by grace you have been saved through faith and this not of your own doing it is the gift of God not a result of work so that no one may boast one of the clearest couple lines about what it means to come to faith.

We still need to receive by faith what God is doing but it is a work that he alone is doing it is God who is initiating salvation through Christ and we merely receive however however our growth in holiness and good works it's our own work partnered with the Holy Spirit we need help we need God's divine help as we grow in the faith nevertheless as we grow in the faith we are empowered to obey and we have choices to obey we have agency to obey we have we are commended to obey to say no to sin and yes to righteousness so before God we are made right but we are still prone to sin and the call of the Christian life is to grow in holiness such works never justify or save the man or woman but they are evidence that faith is present and this is what Paul is getting at here in chapter 1 and it's very important that that we that we're careful not to blur the lines between justification that God is saving us this is a work that he alone is doing and us growing in the faith which is this partnership with us and God we can't blur those lines it's incredibly important they must remain distinct so that
A we don't somehow think that we have saved ourselves because we are feeling like we are growing in holiness which is kind of a sign you're not growing in holiness that pride is the main feature of your life but it's also very important that when we do sin we don't immediately assume that our salvation is lost the second we trip up the second we sin that we can go to Christ we can ask for forgiveness we can seek his mercy and trust that it is God who saves and he is at work in our lives and that we grow not completely linear but that's more like this but we're still growing right it's very very important that we do not blur those lines this is why Paul is so very affectionate towards this church he uses such effusive and loving language it's not stiff it's not business like he's not getting to the point it is an outpouring of his joy and his love and his affection he is again a proud father in the faith he is seeing spiritual growth happening
I'll just say this I mean I don't know if I say this enough or enough from up here but it is a joy to see and I don't see it all but from my vantage point what I see it is a joy to see this church grow in their love of God and their love for one another their desire to get into God's word to partner in the faith in God's mission you know we planted the church three and a half years ago a lot of those

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experiences are so awfully fresh in our minds and to know some people that were here from the very beginning even before we launched and continue on and partner that partnered with us that have ministered to our family incredible and then people who have come in the last year or two years ago or in the last six months and jumping in and seeing growth and progression it is you can't speak in like a business formal like hey this is I commend you on your growth in the Lord it doesn't work that way it's like this joy of seeing baby steps and you're not babies but this idea of you're a parent you see baby steps and then you see a toddle and then you see a run and you see this progression parents aren't stiff about this stuff they're not like hey my child is making great progress in the realm of walking it's like you're excited you're joyful you're giddy about it and I'll just say honestly it is like one of the in terms of like non-family aspects of my life it's like the greatest joy of my life it really is and I'm not just saying this it is a remarkable thing to see
I think this is what Paul is so jazzed up about so Paul ultimately how does he express his affection of course through words but more importantly it's through prayer and this will get to our final section our third point if we believe in a sovereign and loving God who creates and redeems not because he is a needy being but because he does so out of love we can be sure that the highest expression of care that we can offer one another is to commend each other to the Lord when we entrust people to the all-powerful all-knowing all-loving unchangeable victorious triune God that is a loving act it is recognizing first and foremost that the growth that people need and the issues that we face they are far bigger than who we are and it also is this act of worship towards the Lord that says only you can bring about the growth that you call us to it is one of the highest acts of love that we can do for one another so what follows in verses 9 to 11 is truly among the best prayers to pray if you are wondering how to pray for anybody for me pray verses 9 to 11 make it your prayer incorporate it this week this month all throughout the summer throughout the rest of your lives verses 9 to 11 [30:36] I mean it's dynamite we'll get into it in a second but just a couple words before that point 3 Paul's hope filled prayer Paul picks up where he left off in verse 4 by expressing his love for the congregation in prayer that they would continually grow in the gospel this point is so very wise this prayer is so very wise it's something again that we ought to be praying for in fact it is it really if you could fill this prayer out it would you'd have a wonderful life of prayer for the rest of your days and here's the prayer verses 9 to 11 and it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more Paul's already recognizing by the way that love is abounding but that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God as Paul deeply desiring the continued growth and flourishing of the Philippian church he prays three

I mean you can break it up even into you can get really granular with this but at least three very important things and they're all very interconnected deeply connected the first is that they would continue to grow in love and that love would be rooted in truth and wisdom very important love rooted in truth and wisdom it's not to be divorced from those things true knowledge seeks to cultivate and walk towards love and godly love is not self-serving but concerned with reality concerned with truth concerned with wisdom love it cannot be cowardly or mindless therefore we can't define love any which way we want we just can't we don't have the authority to do that I mean we can but then what we're doing is calling love something that it isn't so in the post modern post-Christian Canada we have very we have a plurality of visions of what love ought to be different versions of love and unfortunately any love that is self-serving any love that is self-consuming selfish short-sighted and ultimately ignorant of the triune God it will not be a love that is wise and truthful we often pursue anything that will make us feel that we have touched something transcendent what is love if it is not this pursuit of something that makes us feel like we are ten feet tall that we are immersed in joy and pleasure and in belonging that we have touched the transcendent it's remarkable that we all have this innate understanding that love must either be divine or connected to the divine but we chase after it in unwise and insane ways calling things love that are foolish dark and especially in our day perverted and that lead not to life not to wisdom not to truth not to flourishing but to degradation to death to splintering to not fellowship but disfellowship and if a love if that's a fruit of the love that you might be pursuing then you are calling something that isn't love love so a prayer like this is nothing short of an antidote to the insanity of the various versions of love that our world promises a love that abounds more and more with knowledge and discernment it is a sane thing it is a fruitful thing that recognizes that the origin of love and the end

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of love like the telos of love the end of love the ultimate goal of love is God himself
Father, Son and Holy Spirit the result to live wisely and righteously and lovingly it's not the hope of everybody now it might again you could even define what wise and righteous and loving life looks like not according to the Bible but still you're just redefining categories that are very biblical categories and things that we all desire but we're looking in other places the scripture rather calls us to love that is abounding that is wise that is truthful that helps us to understand right and wrong and pursue the good to pursue the beautiful pursue the true and the scripture calls this fruitful living I mean it talks about here in verse 11 filled with the fruit of righteousness almost certainly this would be what Paul expands on later in Galatians to be the fruit of the spirit through the spirit Galatians 5 22 and verse 23 love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control and then he says against such things there is no law which is to say that this is how we live righteously this is how we live in wisdom and in truth so follow any online influence or read any self-care book something about mindfulness and you will see some kind of recognition that the fruit of the spirit it is deeply desirable and it is a goal of a holistic well-lived life
I mean find me a wellness guru that wouldn't want to say that joy love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness self-control are good things these are good things wonderful things in fact these are things that that we need to pursue but how then do we pursue it how then do we define it but Paul here is saying that such fruit comes ultimately through the redemption of Jesus Christ and somehow this will result in us being pure and blameless and this is a wonderful thing except if you take a step back and you're honest with yourself who here is pure and blameless I'm not I'm certainly not pure and blameless what does Paul mean we will never be pure and blameless in this life so what is Paul referring to here and I think what will what helps us to understand this and this will be the second time in the short section that Paul will refer to the day of Christ or the day of Jesus Christ so he mentions it up in verse 6 and then again here in verse 10 this day of Christ it is the second coming the parousia the return of Jesus when our full sanctification will be complete where our growth in holiness will come to an end why?
because we will be made holy like he is holy we will be transformed so that I love this it's not just that we will return to Eden where there was perfection with the possibility of sin we will be perfected without the possibility of sinning any longer this is the promise that is made to us that when Christ returns we will be transformed and Paul is saying listen this is all a part of it that you are saved that you are made pure and blameless before the Lord that's how you can even approach the throne of grace but then you live out this life journeying towards that but when Christ comes he will complete it no more sin no more brokenness no more squabbles no more selfishness no more impatience no more pride no more welling up no more anger no more tears perfection but it is completely connected to Christ himself and his return therefore the final thing that Paul prays for is that our ultimate end would be to glorify God and praise him forever in the Westminster Catechism it says the chief end of man is to know God and glorify him forever praise him forever to enjoy him forever it's a wonderful succinct way of seeing what our eternity will be like that we will enjoy God being in his presence glorifying him and this is what Paul is praying for as he wraps up this short prayer in verse 11 consider how your day to day could be transformed and infused with the highest degree of meaning in your life in all of existence if you take these words to heart that you seek individually but also together as a community come to embrace this life trusting that God is infusing you with the strength of the Holy Spirit to live out the life he is calling you to live to partner in the mission of God to love one another with godly love being united to Christ but also united to one another how would that transform your life overnight?
[39:05] likely not after a year after five years after ten years committing yourself to this when you slip up when you sin what do you do? you ask for forgiveness you seek reconciliation but you continue on in growth I was talking to Richard just as we were setting up chairs about how often times more often than not the Lord's work in our lives is this kind of slow burn progression towards holiness it's not this overnight thing it's a slow gradual progression right?

how would that transform your day to day though? you know one of the most beautiful things about the Reformation was that it emphasized its emphasis on the priesthood of all believers true worship no longer limited to clergy but the baker could worship the Lord in spirit and in truth the smith the carpenter the teacher the small business owner the public servant the retiree the student and especially especially the homemaker what a privileged life but to honor the Lord and to worship him with with our day to day now to have that mindset shift how would that transform your life?

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wrap it up with this because of the cross because of Jesus' death and resurrection and ascension we'll be celebrating that very soon we are offered salvation that both infuses us with a belonging and purpose that enriches this life and spills over into eternity spills over into eternity but it also demands that we partner and participate with Christ and his church in this wonderful glorious mission of reconciliation and the promise isn't that your life will be will be so drab and difficult and heavy no it will the promise is that you could be even in chains like the apostle and be so joyful and your affections and your love could be pouring out and you see a chain and it becomes not a chain of shame but a chain of glory that you get to participate in the wonderful mission of God himself wild wild transformation wild flipping up the script

I mean it's really something for us to think about but in Paul's day having a chain on your leg connected to a Roman guard a very shameful thing and all of a sudden it is not shame that cultural shift is like unbelievable in the Roman day but that reality is still ours in the here and now belonging true participation true meaning friends there is no higher form of living that is offered in this life let's embrace it together as God's people let us pray father we thank you so much for this incredible joy filled letter from your servant Paul to the Philippian church but it is to us and lord we thank you that through the ages you have preserved this letter lord we thank you we thank you for all the scribes that faithfully wrote it down and preserved it and monks and whoever else was a part of just keeping this so that we could read it on this Sunday on May 4th 2025 incredible lord thank you we pray that though that we won't just be mere hearers of the word but that we'll be doers of the word and lord we will do it joyfully help us grow us knit us together remind us that by virtue of being united to your son we are united to each other and lord help us to to grow in this incredible community that you have gifted us with we pray all of this in Jesus name amen and lord and lord and lord

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