

Together For Jesus

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0 : 00] If there are any visitors with us, please take one of these as well, and you're very welcome with us this evening in the service too. There's nothing much to intimate on the intimations, just a change to the social distancing requirements which came in this week, and all the details are actually on the sheet, and you can just read through that at your leisure.

Once again, just to note that we regret the passing of Miss Katrina Mackay from Balmarino, and also our elder, Mr Norman MacLeod.

Everyone who comes to their demise in this world and belongs to a congregation, we miss them very much, especially those who have been very faithful over many years, as Katrina was and as Norman was, and we pray that the Lord will bless their families, relatives at this time, and bless ourselves too as a church, as God takes more of his saints home.

Our prayer is that he would, by his grace, replace them with others who will follow in their steps. So please refer to these intimations. I don't have any details yet as to the funeral for either of these saints.

That will be available this week after they've made the registrations and so on. So just keep your eye out for that in the notices locally. We're going to begin our service singing firstly in Psalm 98.

[1 : 27] Psalm number 98 in the Scottish Psalter version. That's on page 360 if you're using the Psalm books. The tune is Gainsborough. We're singing verses 1 to 4.

O sing a new song to the Lord for wonders he hath done. His right hand and his holy arm him victory hath won. So on through to verse 4, Psalm 98.

O sing a new song to the Lord. And we stand to sing. O sing a new song to the Lord.

The Lord God.

O sing a new song to the Lord.

[3 : 08] Of his grace and truth. To Israel's house hath been.

And the salvation of our God. All ends of the earth have seen.

Let all the earth unto the Lord. Send forth a joyful noise.

Lift up your voice aloud to him. Sing praise and rejoice.

And rejoice. Let's now unite our hearts together in prayer. Let's call upon the Lord in prayer.

[4 : 17] Our gracious and eternal God. God we are so conscious from these words. We are so conscious from these words. That we have been singing in your praise. That your call is to all the earth to praise you.

And that you have given your church. And that you have given your church the mandate to call out for others beyond its own pale. Beyond its borders to come and join together in the praises of God. And we thank you tonight that we are privileged to come to sing your praises. To hear your word. To listen to your voice. That we are privileged to know you. That we are privileged to know you. And to know one another through the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Lord our God we pray that you would humble us anew in your presence. And yet at the same time we pray that you would exalt us. For we are humbled in order to be exalted by you.

And when you come to humble us in your presence by showing us what we are really like in ourselves. You bring us to know Jesus Christ. And thereby in him we are exalted.

[5 : 20] Through faith in him you lift us up. You take us above the dunghill of our own sin. You place us upon him as a rock. You put a new song in our mouth.

You give us hope within our hearts. You enable us to see beyond this present world. Even by faith to see things which our naked eye cannot see. And which we cannot ourselves understand fully. Particularly until you open our eyes spiritually. And Lord we ask tonight that you would enable us to look beyond the present horizon of this life. And see from your word those glorious things.

That are spoken of that future and destiny of your people. And enable us at all times oh Lord to be conscious of the need to look upwards to you.

To be marked as those who show in their lives and in their way of life in the world. That we live for a better country. That we live for a better country. Even a heavenly one.

[6 : 21] Where the Lord God our Father dwells. And where we are promised through faith in Jesus. That we will live with him. We ask oh Lord tonight that you would manifest yourself to us.

We are so familiar with your word. Most of us have known your word for many years. Some of us from our infancy. We are so familiar with the concepts of the gospel. With the teachings that we find coming in the message of the gospel to us.

And yet Lord to know you is more than to know this. And we pray that we may know you personally. And to know you personally that we may enter more fully into that living relationship that your people have with you.

And that that may be evident to the world that sees us. And every day that we interact with in some way or other. That God may be real to them because he is real to us.

And we pray Lord that you would make yourself very real to us tonight in this building. And to those who are watching online. We thank you for the privilege of being together in this way.

[7 : 27] And using these different facilities. We thank you too Lord for the step forward that we have in relation to this COVID pandemic. When we are brought to the one meter distancing now.

This week and we pray onwards. We pray that it will be soon oh Lord. When we will be able to gather as we once used to. Without a fear of these restrictions or the fears attached to them. And without wearing of masks. We pray that we can sing out loudly and in a voluminous way. That we can truly praise the Lord with all our might.

Lord God we pray that the singing of your praises will increasingly be more precious to us. Having experienced the restrictions that have been placed during these past months and even year and more.

Oh Lord God we ask that you would restore to us. These great privileges that we enjoyed. And want to enjoy once again. We pray that the COVID virus itself and the pandemic associated with it.

[8 : 35] Will in your blessing and by your hand. Prove to be spiritually productive. Lord we know that there are people throughout our land and throughout the world asking serious questions.

Having come face to face with death. Either in themselves being near death. Or in the death of relatives or families, loved ones. And we pray that as you have used your providence in days gone by.

To impress upon human beings like ourselves. The shortness of time. The uncertainty of time. The greatness of eternity. The need of Christ.

Lord we pray that this will be one of the lasting aspects of this pandemic. So that we will see many turning to the Lord.

And yet we know Lord that even the greatest pandemic. And the greatest evidence of loss of life throughout the world. Is not itself sufficient to move our hearts.

[9 : 35] In a way that will receive Christ. That will confess ourselves to be needy sinners. In need of your salvation. Lord we pray that that will be the case in these weeks and months to come.

We thank you for your goodness to us as a congregation. And we pray that your blessing will continue to furnish us with all that we require oh Lord. In order to be living witnesses for you. In our own locality wherever we are placed. Bless us tonight we pray as once again we mourn as a congregation. And we give thanks oh Lord for the lives that have led us.

And spoken to us and been so luminous in our midst. As lights in this dark world. We ask that your blessing will follow their passing.

We give thanks Lord for Katrina Mackay's long years of testimony. For the beauty of her life as a Christian. For the way that even in conversation with her.

[10 : 38] It was so evident that she loved the Lord. And waited upon him. And loved his people and loved his cause. And Lord we ask that you would now bless her relatives.

Especially her niece. As they come to this point of approaching her funeral. We ask today also Lord for grateful hearts for the life of Norman MacLeod.

We bless you for the many years of faithful service. That he gave in this congregation and in our community. We bless you oh Lord for all that he showed of concern for others.

For the unsaved. For those who were deprived. For those that he at times helped even without public notice. We bless you Lord for the love that you laid upon his heart. For your people. For your cause. For this congregation. For us as ministers. We ask that you would bless to us. The witness that he has left behind.

[11 : 40] We pray especially that you would bless his beloved family at this time. Lord we pray for Christine. For Alistair. For Calumian. For their own loved ones. And for all the relatives.

For their own loved ones. And pray that the many who came into contact with his life. Throughout the course of it in this world. Will themselves reflect upon. The quality of the man they saw. And will realize oh Lord. That the Lord did great things for him. And can do great things for them too. And so Lord we ask your blessing.

For all of us here tonight. And all of us online. We pray for ourselves and our relationships. Give thanks for those who have been newly married. We commend them to you Lord.

Megan. And Cunhoch especially. We pray that you would bless those who are anticipating. Being married in weeks and months to come. And by your grace and by your will. We pray for them.

[12 : 36] That they may come Lord. To truly enjoy life together. And we pray that you protect our relationships. In a world that so easily casts them aside.

May it not be true of us oh Lord. That we take any of these great gifts of yours lightly. And we pray that you would bless tonight. Those others who mourn the passing of loved ones too.

Grant your blessing to our leaders in the nation. Hear us as we pray for them. As we commend them to you. We pray again for wisdom for them. And we commend them to you.

As those upon whom great honour is bestowed. And great responsibility. But Lord we pray that. As the weight of that is so evident to themselves. Help them to unburden it unto you.

And to place their confidence in you. And give them good counsel. Even counsel from your word. That they may follow it. And be of benefit to those they rule over.

[13 : 35] And so hear us we pray. Continue with us now. And pardon our sins. For Jesus sake. Amen. Now word to the children.

Some of them hopefully online as well. As any who are in the building just now. Just very briefly. I don't know if you like moths or not. Some people are more or less terrified of moths.

Others don't mind. I might particularly have liked moths really. From my youngest days. I used to just take a wee notebook. And try and draw some of them. When I was a boy.

Others don't like moths at all. I find them really kind of scary. Flutter about at night sometimes. And aren't really very attractive to them. But this last week.

Came across a little moth. On the glass panel. The division between our hallway in the mansion. And the porch. Has glass panels. And this little moth was sitting.

[14 : 31] On one of these panels. And as I looked at it. It wasn't very big. And I decided. I'll take a photo of it. And see if I can find out. What kind of moth it is. So sure enough.

I took the photo. With the phone camera. And then when I looked at it. It looked just very drab. Brown. Dark brown color. Just very dark. And nothing really at all.

Much to look at. And then I thought. Well maybe if I use a flash. Because I always. Somewhat dark in that. Part of it. And if I use a flash. On the phone. It might show up something.

So I put on the flash. On the phone. Camera. Then took the photo again. And what a transformation. When I looked at the photo. Then on my phone. Here was this beautiful moth.

With these beautiful. Light brown. Rusty. Orange colors. Which weren't at all seen. In the previous photo. And here they were. And beautiful markings. On the wings.

[15 : 27] Little strokes. Dark brown. Strokes down each wing. Absolutely amazing. The difference. Between that. And the first. Photo. That I'd taken. And.

I looked it up. And actually. It's called. An antler moth. Antler. As in deer antlers. The. The markings. On the wings. I discovered.

When checking it up. Online. The markings. Antler moth. Because they looked like. Antlers. Like deer antlers. On each of its wings. And it got me thinking about. Spiritual matters as well.

And about what the Bible tells. About ourselves. The Bible. Doesn't hold back. From telling us. About what we are. As sinners. And what we need. As sinners.

And we're not very. Attractive. In fact. We're quite ugly. Spiritually. And morally speaking. As sinners. Even if we might be beautiful. Physically. On the outside. To look at.

[16:23] The Bible tells us. That our sin is ugly. And our sin makes us ugly. We're very drab. Very dark. In color. In terms of our. Spiritual nature. As sinners.

As lost. Sinners. And we have to accept that. Because that's God. Being kind to us. Showing us what we're really like. So that we will come to himself. And be made into something.

Far better. Far better. And when the flash showed up. The beauty of. That moth. That's what the light of God's grace. Does to us. It changes us from being these dark.

Drab. Dirty. Ugly creatures. As sinners. Into. Something that resembles. The image of Christ. In fact. Resembles Christ. Because God.

Creates us anew. And we heard Kenny this morning. Talking about being born again. And when we come to be born again. And given new life. That's essentially what happens to us. We become beautiful in God's sight.

[17:24] We take on the beauty of Jesus. And as we take on the beauty of Jesus. So we find that more and more. God. Actually.

Beautifies us. This really children is what we were created for. We were created beautiful at the first. First. Before Adam fell.

Everything about the Garden of Eden. Was marked by beauty. Including himself and Eve. And their relationship. Sin destroyed all that. Made it ugly.

And it's in Jesus that it's restored. To beauty. And through faith in Jesus. And through God's grace working in our lives.

In Jesus. We come to be what we were created for. The beautiful human beings. That God designed in the beginning. And that's what we all want to be.

[18:22] And what you children. Should yourselves always. Think of us. You think of your relationship. With God. So if you see an antler moth.

Google it. Look for a large photo of it. And just admire its beauty. But more than that. Think of how it. Is a picture for us.

Of the change that God brings into our lives. When his grace works. In our hearts. So let's say the Lord's Prayer. And when we're saying the Lord's Prayer.

We know it so well. We know the words of it off by heart. But it's a prayer. And we're using it as a prayer. So let's pray the Lord's Prayer. Our Father which art in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts.

[19:19] As we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom. And the power. And the glory forever.

Amen. Our reading of God's Word tonight is from Philippians. The letter of Paul to the Philippians. We've looked at the first two verses of it.

Over the past couple of studies. But if we read tonight from the beginning. Through to verse 18. So that's the epistle to the Philippians.

Chapter 1 verses 1 to 18. Paul and Timothy servants of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi.

Were the overseers and deacons. Grace to you and peace from God our Father. And the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.

[20:17] 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. And I am sure of this.

That he who began the good work in you. Will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you. 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. And it is my prayer. 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 all the fruit of righteousness. That comes through Jesus Christ.

[21:14] To the glory and praise of God. I want you to know brothers. That what has happened to me. Has really served to advance the gospel. So that it has become known.

Throughout the whole imperial guard. And to all the rest. That my imprisonment is for Christ. Most of the brothers. Having become confident in the Lord.

By my imprisonment. Are much more bold. To speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ. From envy and rivalry. But others from goodwill.

The latter do it out of love. Knowing that I am put here. For the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ. Out of rivalry. Not sincerely.

But thinking to afflict me. In my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way. Whether in pretense. Or in truth. Christ is proclaimed.

[22 : 12] And in that. I rejoice. So God. We pray. We'll bless to us. These words. As we read them from. His precious word.

We're going to look tonight. At verses. Three to seven. Of. What we've just read. As we follow. Through with our study. In.

Philippians. Verse. I thank my God. And 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. And so on down to. Verse. Seven. Well like a magnificent. Firework. You know.

These. Big fireworks. That you get. At new year time. Especially. Times like these. When you look at them. Cluster together. You see them going up. Into the sky. And they just.

[23 : 08] Burst into the sky. With a wonderful. Light. And variety. Of different things. Usually shooting off. From them. Well. Philippians. This letter. Just bursts into life.

Doesn't it? From verse three onwards. Not that there's no light. Or life. In the previous verses. But when you come. To verse three. There. You really find. Paul's love.

For this church. And his regard. For this church. Just like that great fire. It's exploding. Into view. In verses three. To eleven. Actually. Where he talks here.

About. His thankfulness. And you see. The colors. Of that great. Explosive. Firework. Of teaching. If you like. You see the colors. In it.

And these words. That are used there. The likes of. Thanksgiving. Prayer. Partnership. Yearning. Requests. All the way down. Paul's love. And Paul's regard.

[24 : 03] For this. Church. In Philippi. Just explodes. Onto the page. For them to read. And for us to see now. As we read it now. As part of scripture.

When you look at the structure. Of these verses. Verses three to seven. Verse six. Really lies. At the heart of these few. Verses three to seven. And.

What he's saying. In verse six. 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.

And that breaks. Really. As a kind of bridge. Between. Verses three. To five. And verses seven. And verse seven. Onwards. To verse eight. But.

It works. Something like this. The. The request. That he's making. In verses. Three. To six. The. Three. To five.

[25 : 00] That. That. Request. That. Emphasis. On. The conviction. That he mentions. In verse six. The conviction. That.

God. Will. Complete. The work. That he has begun. In these. Christians. In. Philippi. And from that. Flows.

This wonderful. Prayer. But. The. The. The. The way. That is put here. You can see. That. That conviction.

In verse six. Is really. In a way. What gives rise. To. That prayer. These requests. This thankfulness. That he mentions. And. Verse six.

Itself. Then. As you look. At. The. The. The. The. Described. In. Verse seven.

[25 : 55] It is. Right. For me. To feel. This way. To think. This way. About you. Because I hold you. In my heart. For you.

Are all. Of the gospel. That is what provides. If you like. The basis. For the confidence. He has. In what he says. In verse six. And what he says. In verse six.

That conviction. Is that. From which. The prayer. Unless. This requesting. In the previous verses. Really flows. I am going to leave. Verse six. Tonight.

I will come back to it. God willing. Next time. Because. I want to look at. These surrounding verses. And. Having noticed. The way they are. Joined. Together.

In itself. Because. It has. In itself. Such a lot. Of teaching. With regard. To God. Beginning. And God.

[26 : 50] Going on. To finish. That work. And something. Of what both. These entail. But let's look. First of all. Tonight. At. The prayerful.

Remembrance. That he mentions. Here. In verses. Three to five. I thank. My God. In all. My remembrance. Of you. All.

Making my request. With joy. Because of your. Partnership. In the gospel. What is the key. To God's. State of mind. In his. Imprisonment.

As he writes. This wonderful. Letter. To his. Beloved. Christian. Friends. In Philippi. What is the key. To his. State of mind.

You could answer. That. In different ways. But surely. The key. At the very. Essence. Of that key. For joy. And for peace. In his.

[27 : 45] Imprisonment. Two. Very short words. My. God. I. Thank. My. God. He's not. Just saying.

I thank. God. I thank. My. God. He's talking. About. God. In such. Personal. About.

His. Prayer. And. What it contains. But he has. That familiarity. With God. Where he has. A personal. Close. Intimate.

Covenantal. Relationship. With this. God. And he goes on. In verse. Chapter 4. And verse 19. To speak of this. Again. In this.

My. God. Has. Such. A regard. For. Will. Fulfill. His. Promise. To the.

[28 : 40] Philippians. Where he says. In verse 19. My. God. Will. Supply. Every. Need. Of. You.

In. That. He. Is. Gloring. In. The. In. The. In. The.

God. Is. Something. Someone. He's. He. Was. In. The. The. The.

The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The. The.

The. The. The. In. The. The. tournament.

[29 : 37] Born. The. The. The.

This would not be an easy life. It wasn't like a small cell, such as he had been in Philippi when he was first there and the jailer was converted. When he threw them, first of all, himself and Silas into the jail, the innermost part of the prison.

Now, this is not that sort of confinement, but he's still chained to a guard every single hour of every day. He's very much hampered. He doesn't have his freedom. And yet, he talks about God in such a way that speaks of him so personally, he's there with him.

He knows him in that imprisonment. And as we go through the early part of Philippians, especially, you can see, not only does Paul know God in his imprisonment, he knows why God has put him there.

You see, you can't say, he wouldn't be able to say, God has placed me here for the defense of the gospel. He has placed me here deliberately so that I can be a witness to Caesar household, to the imperial guard.

[30 : 52] You don't find a man who knows God at a distance saying such things, but somebody who can say, my God. Well, that's very personal. That's very intimate. And he brings that intimacy into every circumstance of his life.

And that's what really lends such an outlook and a view and a mindset to him in every circumstance of life. What about yourself?

What about myself? Is God to me tonight, is God to you tonight, something of what he was for the apostle? As you sit here tonight in church or as you watch online, and we speak about God, we've been reading about God, we're preaching about God, we've been praying to God.

How near is you, is your life to that God? How near is God to you? Is your life one, like the apostle of being able to say on a daily basis, I have to face this day with my God.

I need my God to be with me through this day. I need my God to show me the way. I need my God to help me throughout the circumstances of this day. What a precious, precious thing it is that God brings us to be able to actually say, you are my God, and I love you, and I'm thankful to you, and I want you to stay with me, never to leave me, always to guide me through this valley of this world and on into eternity.

[32 : 33] You might ask the question, what is the most convincing evidence for that world out there tonight? I'm talking especially about that world that doesn't want to know God and denies God and lives without God and doesn't want to come to anything to do with the church and in some regards, in some instances, at least dislike the church or even hate the church for what it stands for.

What is it that's most convincing to that world that God exists? It's not some professor actually giving a stunning lecture on the existence of God, though that's a wonderful thing, and many can do that superbly, which I can't.

But the most convincing thing to the world, that evidence that God exists is in your life and my life, living consistently the life that shows this is my God.

This is my God. And that's what's going to really be telling when we live our lives in a way that clearly shows we have a living relationship with Christ, with God our Father, through the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you know, whatever people will say, that is something that they will notice. In fact, if you go on in the chapter itself, we'll come to it eventually, God willing. Only, he says in verse 27, let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or I'm absent, I may hear of you, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponent, this is a clear sign to them.

[34 : 19] You see what he's saying there? The fact that you're standing together for the faith of the gospel, that you're united in your stand for Christ and following Christ, that's something that the world out there cannot actually avoid noticing.

And they come to their own conclusion about it, but they can never say, I didn't even know anything about it. It's made clear the existence of God. It's an apologetic thing in the sense of presenting God to the world in a life, not only individually, but collectively together, as we actually seek to serve God in that way.

We've given a title to, some people don't like titles for sermons, I don't mind them, I think they're helpful if the title fits with what the passage of the Bible really is about. And the title we've given tonight is Together for Jesus.

Together for Jesus. That's what Paul is really saying to the Philippians, you know, I and you Philippians were together for Jesus. That's what our life is about. I'm here in prison, I'm writing to you Philippians, you are there in your congregation in Philippi, we're apart in terms of distance, but we're together spiritually and morally, collectively, we're together for Jesus.

That's what congregational life must be about when we're together serving the Lord. And as you can see here, I thank my God, he says, in this prayerful remembrance, in every remembrance of you, in every prayer of mine, making my prayer of my request, it is literally, with joy.

[36 : 06] And one of the striking things about that is the absence of self. The absence of self. This is a man who is not sorry for himself.

He's not saying to the Philippians, you know, I'm praying to my God, and I'm wanting you to pray to God that I get out of this place, and that I get out of this place as soon as possible, because it's not right for me to be here as an apostle and as a preacher of the gospel.

I want to be free. I want to be out there with the gospel. There's none of that with him. He doesn't actually say to the Philippians, you think you've got it difficult. What about me? Look at my life.

Look at the difficulties I'm facing. Here I am in this prison. I'm not out there with the gospel.

Complete absence of self-pity.

Complete absence of feeling sorry for himself. Because in prison, as anywhere else, Paul's focus is on Jesus, on his gospel, on his church, on the advancement of his cause.

[37 : 11] That's what's gripping his mind. And even as he's in prison writing to these Philippians, that's what his mind is churning over. That's what he's conveying to them. Here's this wonderful explosion of the absence of self-pity and a wonderful concentration upon Christ and upon his cause.

What a lesson that is to ourselves. Not at all feeling sorry for himself. And not only that, but if you look down through the passage here beyond verse 7 indeed, but go through it and just count.

We won't run through it again reading it, but just count the number of times you find the words all, always, you all, every one of you. Down through that passage, there's an abundance of these words.

All, always, you all. Now this is, this is not a church without its problems. It's not got the same kind of problems as the likes of Corinth had.

But still, Paul has to appeal in chapter 4 to the likes of Iodias and Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord or to agree in the Lord.

[38 : 17] There were disagreements, there were problems between people, there were problems in relationships, some were easier to manage than others. Nowhere does the apostle refer to these

here.

What he is simply saying is, and you can see, it's really just the equivalent of throwing a wonderful pastoral embrace around all of these people and really saying, I love you all.

I'm praying for you all. I'm not leaving any of you out. Yeah, all the diversity in the Philippian church. And yet, truthfully, Paul can actually say, I am making my request in every prayer of mine for you all.

For you all. For you all. All the way down there through these verses. And you can see from that how the likes of the diversity in Philippi was not in any way something that contradicted Paul's emphasis on unity and on love.

He loves them all. What a challenge to us tonight. What a challenge to me as a leader in the church and to Kenny as a leader in the church and to us as the elders of the church. What a challenge to yourselves too as the visible church of God in the world.

[39 : 44] Because we're all so prone, aren't we, just to be taken up with our own things. And so taken up with really what in effect are just little things that we make big.

That we make big issues of. And at the end of the day, what are they compared to the problems that other people have in the world? And here is Paul reminding us, you know, we have to have that same sense of love for all the Lord's people wherever they are, however different they are to ourselves, however much they may vary in terms of degrees of knowledge or experience or competence or whatever else.

And after all, you've got in this congregation a very well-to-do woman called Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened as she listened to Paul down by the riverside.

And then you've got this Philippian jailer, this jailer who has come from his rough background, most likely, almost certainly a pagan background.

And yet these are two of the founding members of the church in Philippi. And they're on the same level. And Paul is saying to them, the same love of Jesus has embraced you both.

[41 : 03] And I'm actually here saying, I love you both. I love you for what you are in Christ. What an example he sets us. What a teaching you have there in the Bible as God is saying to ourselves tonight, yes, by all means have the diversity of personalities and experiences and ages and backgrounds and all the rest of it.

Every congregation must have that. That's part of his richness. But, as he says elsewhere in the second chapter, be all of the same mind.

Consider others better than yourself. Love unconditionally others that differ from you. Look upon them in Jesus. Look at the best aspects of their life, not the things that you can see in every life including our own, that aren't very attractive.

Paul is saying you've got to look beyond that. You've got to look to Jesus in them and what they are for Jesus. So, pray for remembrance is the first point.

Second one is the partnership he mentions in the gospel and then later he mentions partakers of his grace. There's very similar things. I thank my God for you all because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

[42 : 29] Partnership really is the word fellowship. It's translated fellowship elsewhere in the New Testament and it has different shades of meaning depending on the context. It's fellowship in the sense of being bonded together in sharing something that we all have in common and that is mostly in the New Testament to do with salvation in Christ.

We have fellowship in Christ and with one another in Christ because we share together by being in him the salvation that he has purchased for us. We are sharers in Christ therefore we have fellowship with him and with one another.

But here Paul is being somewhat more narrow in his focus. If you go to Acts chapter 2 and Acts chapter 4 I'm not going to spend too much time on it just refer them to you and you can read through them later.

Chapter 2 verses 42 and 44 of the book of Acts where you find that the early church there in chapter 2 verse 42 they devoted themselves that's this group this group of believers they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching and fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And you move to verse 44 all who believed were together and had all things in common and it mentions their possessions. And then chapter 4 and verse 32 of Acts now the number of those who believed were of one heart and soul and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was

his own but they had everything in common.

[44 : 09] You see the things that we own together in Christ they're not our own individually we share with them we have fellowship together they belong to us all in common there's a commonality of possession in the gifts that Christ gives to his church even the variety of gifts even the most ordinary things you might say of possessions and goods and finances when we use them in the service of the Lord we don't ask a certain group of people to support the gospel financially while others are left out we do it as we have the ability to do so and the resources to do so but it's a commonality we have a fellowship in supporting and furthering the gospel is really what Paul means here because he's talking about your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now what a remarkable statement that is too because from the very first day

Paul is saying you came to share with me in the furtherance of the gospel you came to share together with me in advancing the gospel in Philippi and you know Paul is really saying you didn't actually come to attend upon the preaching of the gospel or my preaching of the gospel and then say well I'll think about it for six months maybe I'll give it a year or so and maybe then I'll throw in my lot with these Christians maybe then I'll feel right to support this gospel no he says from the first day that you became Christians this is what you did you partnered with me in the gospel and if you're a Christian tonight that's really what the Lord is laying on your heart by these words you're not an observer in the gospel you're not an observer in the church you're not a backseat church person you may be literally in the back of the gallery in the back of the building that's not what I mean but backseat in terms of spiritual commitment to

Christ when you become a Christian you become a partaker with other Christians of the furtherance of the gospel that's why we always appeal to people we hope with love and with all the tact and gentleness that we can muster that if you haven't yet come openly and fully to follow the Lord it's not just that the Lord is requiring that of you though he is but the church needs you the gospel needs you the furtherance of the gospel needs you don't hang back as if it was fine just to spend a long time or a short time whatever before you make that commitment Paul is saying no this is what you're like this is why I'm praying this is why I'm giving thanks to God for you on your behalf for your partnership in the gospel from the first day till now I know Kenny will agree with me he mentioned something of this morning that one of the things we truly value in this congregation is your partnership in the gospel the gifts that are evident throughout this congregation as they are harnessed and used for Jesus and for the furtherance of his cause let that be more and more for me and for you what really dominates our minds in the days to come and as we emerge from this COVID pandemic and the restrictions we will actually have this as as our resolve and as our not just our intention but our action because for Paul the Philippians as Christians were involved in that from the very first I thank God for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now there's no gap there's a gap in your own life tonight you see that that gap is closed up is closed off the cause needs you that world out there needs people following Christ where else are they going to see Christ and hear about Christ if it's not in the life of his people in the fellowship in partnership in the gospel and he goes on to speak about partakers of my grace

I could say that Lydia mentioned Lydia and the jailer previously and just it's interesting isn't it when you read in Acts chapter 16 about their conversion one thing you read that they had in common that they did in common was they opened their homes Lydia opened her home we believe that's where the church met for some time in her home but when the jailer was converted he invited Paul into his home to share a meal with him and his family open homes follow from open hearts and that's participation that's partaking that's partaker of the grace because when he mentions grace here it's not like you have it often in the Paul's epistles grace in terms of God's grace in salvation it's much narrower here because he goes on to speak about it in terms of supporting him and partakers of his grace in my imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the gospel both in evangelism and in edification of Christians already now in the congregation

[49 : 55] Paul is saying you were partakers of grace with me you took it upon yourselves by the grace of God to involve yourselves in this great movement of the gospel and tonight that's our great privilege as well mentioned the title of our study earlier together for Jesus wouldn't that be a great motto really for us as Christians for us as a congregation whatever it might be in those terms let's be Philippians for our day you know the people of Corinth were known throughout the world of that time for their debauchery for their sexual promiscuity for the ugliness of their lives and if you were known as a Corinthian it came to be a term of contempt really for anybody wherever they lived to be

called a

Corinthian meant you were associated with that debauched kind of life it described you as a very immoral person but here are these Philippians here are these Philippians that Paul is describing as partakers with him of the grace that comes to be focused upon the gospel and upon advancing the cause of Christ to friends tonight you are online this is our appeal to you let's be Philippians for our day for our generation because that's what God's grace is held out to us for let's pray Lord our God we thank you for that grace that brings us together we thank you for the grace that furnishes us with all the requisite gifts as you see it to serve you in this world we pray for ourselves as a congregation we pray that you would continue

Lord to provide us not only with the spiritual gifts that we need but with the unity in the use of them that is so essential as we reach out into the world and seek to make known the beauty of Christ and the power of Christ we pray again for ourselves and all our aspects of our work from those who work with the youngest in the congregation through to those who are adults and we pray that our concern may be to advance your cause be with our brother Kenny I oh Lord as he has preached here this morning in an official sense for the last time we give thanks for the prospect of hearing him many other times by your sparing grace we pray for him at this time that you'd continue to enrich his life and to give him time of rest and time when he will enjoy some weeks by which he is free oh Lord to carry out his life in a different way so that he will have the burden of having responsibility in the congregation removed from him we give thanks for all that he has contributed over the many years here to the life of the congregation and we look forward oh Lord with much anticipation to his contributions yet and so continue with us now and hear us and accept all that we offer to you in our worship and pardon of sin in Jesus name amen we're going to conclude our singing tonight our service tonight by singing in psalm 31 psalm number 31 that's in the sing psalms version singing verses 19 to 23 your goodness

Lord is very great prepared for those who fear your name you show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim that's on page 37 in the psalm books the tune is whereham your goodness Lord is very great your goodness Lord is very great prepared for those who fear your name you show your goodness openly to all who your protection claim your presence hides and shelters them from those who plot to take their life and in your tent you keep them safe from evil tongues that stir up strife the Lord be praised because he showed the wonder of his love to me when in a city

I was trapped surrounded by the enemy in my alarm I rashly said that I was hidden from your eyes but when I called to you for help in grace you listen to my cries oh love the Lord all you his saints the faithful will be kept by

[56 : 46] God but he will give the proud their Jew be strong take heart open the Lord now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always Amen again you