

Partners In The Gospel

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 October 2024

Preacher: Jonathan Chancey

[0 : 0 0] Now y'all didn't miss a beat. Was that a new song for some of y'all? It's a very old song. Y'all sounded like you knew it. It's a beautiful, beautiful, beautiful picture of the work of Christ for His people.

Let's remain standing if you've taken a seat. That was too early. Too early. Because we're going to stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. We're starting a new book this morning.

It's always exciting for me to open up a new book of God's Word and begin into a new section of the Word of God. We're in the book of Philippians this morning.

Our passage this morning is going to be Philippians 1, verses 1-11. We always encourage you to have a copy of God's Word open, whether that's the scripture journal that I hope you have a copy of to take notes in, or your own copy of God's Word.

Or if you don't have a copy of God's Word at all, you can find that in the Bibles in the seat back in front of you. It's going to be on page 921 in that Bible. If you don't own a Bible, take that copy home with you.

[1 : 0 5] It's our gift to you. We want you to have a copy of God's Word. It's going to be necessary as we go through this series in the book of Philippians. Philippians 1, verses 1-11.

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.

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.

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 is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart.

For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

[2 : 1 3] 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 the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Father, we praise you again for your word. We praise you for the good news of the gospel of Christ. And we pray now as we open up the book of Philippians, would you teach us, would you lead us in awe and in worship for all you are and what you've done in Christ.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Most of you know last week I traveled up to Wake Forest for the annual Pillar Network conference.

Our church is part of the Pillar Network. That's a group within the Southern Baptist Convention that plants and strengthens and establishes churches all over the globe.

And I came away as usual from that time, both very tired and very encouraged. And one of the things that I always come away encouraged by when I go is meaningful gospel partnership.

[3 : 34] Meaningful gospel partnership. Between like-minded churches, churches that share the same convictions and beliefs, churches that love the Lord and love each other, and churches that want to see the gospel advanced, not just in their own church and in their own community, but want to see the gospel advanced all over the world.

And I'm always encouraged because it is a beautiful thing to partner together for the advance of the gospel. Well, this past conference, I was surprised to see a pastor friend from Asheville there at the conference.

As you know, Asheville was one of the areas that was hit hardest by Hurricane Helene. And my friend got up on stage. They invited him up there and he shared two things.

For one, he shared the incredible level of need that's there in the area. His area has just been totally wrecked by Helene.

There are physical needs, of course, water, food supplies, cold weather supplies, these needs that we're collecting for, these physical needs. And there's spiritual needs as well.

[4 : 42] And by the grace of God, their church is well positioned to be a source of grace for both spiritual and physical needs. And these needs are going to continue for a long time.

All right, long after the news cycle has moved on to the next thing, these needs are going to continue. But then he shared, second, how thankful he was for the ways that other churches like ours, other churches within our network, churches from Greenville, churches from Charlotte, churches from Mount Pleasant, he rattled off six or seven other churches that came together to help in his time of need.

And he praised God for the evident grace that he saw through gospel partnership. And as he spoke, and as I reflected on what he said, I thought, you know what, that is exactly what we see happening here in the book of Philippians.

The book of Philippians is a beautiful picture of gospel partnership. Paul, the apostle Paul, has planted the church in Philippi. He has since moved on to another location to go continue the message of the gospel spreading throughout the areas.

He's continued planting and strengthening other churches. And now he's found himself in prison because of the ministry of the gospel. He has a tendency to do that. And in his time of need, who comes to help him?

[6 : 08] Who comes to encourage him? Who comes to strengthen him? But a member of the church at Philippi. Epaphroditus. And he comes not just with words of encouragement, but Epaphroditus comes with a financial gift from the church.

And he comes to say, Paul, we believe in what you're doing. We love you. We love the Lord. We love the gospel. We love the mission. And we want to be your partners in the gospel.

So in response to this gift, Paul writes the letter to the book, the letter of Philippians, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and the deacons.

This passage is, y'all get ready for this, okay? This passage is Paul's prayer of praise for gospel progress through partners. Y'all follow that? Y'all say it again, okay?

This is Paul's prayer of praise for progress, you could say, through his Philippian partners. And what it shows us here is the beautiful picture of what comes through gospel partnership.

[7 : 19] And so what I want to do this morning as we look to verses 1 through 11 is I want to ask the question, what does gospel partnership produce? What does gospel partnership produce?

And we'll see two answers to that question this morning. This will be our outline. What does gospel partnership produce? Gospel partnership produces, first, praise for God's grace.

See that in verses 3 through 8. And second, prayer for more. See that in verses 9 through 11.

First, gospel partnership produces praise for God's abundant grace. Gospel partnership is evidence of God's grace at work. It's reason to give Him glory and praise.

And I think it's helpful here for us as we begin the book of Philippians to remember how the church in Philippi even came to exist in the first place. Let's zoom out here from our passage and think about the origins of the church at Philippi.

[8 : 24] You read verse 1 here, and it seems clear to me that this is an organized gospel church. They have a group of saints there that Paul's writing to. Those who have come to know the Lord who have been baptized into membership of the local church there in Philippi.

They've installed officers. They have the two offices of the New Testament church, overseers, that's another word for elders or pastors, and deacons. This is a functioning, organized gospel church.

But zoom out for a minute from this book and ask, how in the world did we get here? How in the world did we get here? How did this happen? Well, Acts chapter 16 tells the story.

You can flip there if you like. You don't have to. But all of this is a work of God's grace. Paul, as far as we can tell, had no intention of coming to Philippi, but the Lord gave him a vision in the night.

A man from Macedonia was calling out to Paul, urging him, saying, come over to Macedonia and help us. Come here, help us. And I love how Luke puts it in Acts.

[9 : 33] He says, Paul concluded that maybe God was calling him to preach the gospel in Macedonia. And so he went. Immediately, it says, they sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel to them.

This is grace. God has sovereignly intervened and providentially guided the steps of Paul to come to the area of Macedonia.

And when they come there, they arrive at a city called Philippi in the rest of the chapter. It tells the story of how Paul goes and preaches the gospel and this hodgepodge group of unlikely converts come to faith in Christ.

First is Lydia, the seller of purple goods. She listens to Paul teach and preach and the passage says that the Lord opened up her ears and she might hear and perceive what Paul was speaking about.

This is grace. There's the girl who's possessed by a spirit and she's delivered. And then there's the Philippian jailer and his family who come to faith there in Philippi.

[10 : 37] Slowly but surely as seeds are planted here and there as the word of the gospel is spread, God builds the church in Philippi.

So now, now I imagine Paul as he's sitting there in a jail cell, he has a lot of time on his hands, right, while he's there in prison and he sees Epaphroditus coming to him with words of encouragement, a member of the church of Philippi coming to him with a financial gift of support.

I imagine him thinking back on all of this and just marveling at the grace of God. Look what God has done here. Look what God has done with these people.

I had no idea what God was about to do in this place. God has taken strangers, enemies of the gospel of God, enemies of Christ. He's brought them to faith in Jesus.

He's opened up their ears to hear the gospel. He has established a church. They're growing, they're maturing and now they're at the point where they are sending support out to more gospel mission, more gospel ministry.

[11 : 48] This is a work of God's grace. And so he says, verse 3, Philippians chapter 1, I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you, making my prayer with joy.

Why? Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Gospel partnership produces praise for God's grace.

So let me ask just a couple of questions here because I want to make sure that we're all on the same page. We're talking about gospel partnership. I need to ask a couple questions of you. First, what is the gospel?

And second, why do we need partners in the gospel? What is the gospel and why do we need partners? Well, what is the gospel? You may have come to church all your life and never really understood what the gospel is.

What is the gospel? I'm so glad you asked. The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. If you're a visitor with us this morning, you should know that our church, our aim is to make a really, really big deal about the gospel.

[13 : 02] This isn't an unusual sermon where we're preaching about the gospel right now. This is every single week that we gather here. We want to make a big deal about the gospel. In fact, our mission statement as a church family, do you all remember what it is?

We exist to magnify the glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's a message of the glory of God that's seen and experienced and demonstrated and manifested most clearly in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It's a message. So what's the message? What's the message? The message is that there is a God in heaven who is good and holy and just who has created all things including me, including you, but it's the bad news that you and I both and everybody else have rebelled against this holy God.

We have sinned against Him. We have earned separation from Him left to ourselves. His wrath is against us in our sin. This is bad news. Praise God.

The gospel is a message that God is a God of grace and a God of mercy and He has made a way to be made right with Him through the blood of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

[14 : 19] Christ Jesus has come, has lived perfectly in our place where we've all failed. Christ Jesus has died, on the cross bearing the wrath of God against our sin.

Christ Jesus has risen from the grave defeating sin and death, defeating all of our greatest enemies so that any sinner who turns to Him in faith may have eternal life.

That's the gospel. If you found your way into this place this morning and you've not put your faith in Christ, this is all you need to hear this morning.

Repent and believe the gospel. You too will be saved. This is the message and the ministry of the church.

If you ever have a friend to ask you, well what is Sea Wee Bay about? What do y'all do? What's your ministry at this church? You can respond very simply, we hold out the gospel to sinners.

[15 : 20] We preach Christ crucified. We lift up the name of Jesus. Why? Because that's how sinners are saved and that's how the church is built.

No gimmicks, no fluff. Our ministry is the message of the gospel. Jesus Himself defined the mission of the church.

Matthew 28, 18-20. What does He say? All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I've commanded you and surely I am with you until the end of the age.

So question number two, why in the world do we need partners to do it? Why do we need partners to go about this great commission task that Christ has given the church?

Well, the mission of the church is required of each individual church, but it is never dependent on each individual church alone to do it. The great commission is required of every individual Christian.

[16 : 35] We are all required, called to preach the gospel, but it is never dependent entirely on any one individual Christian to fulfill it. In other words, gospel progress requires gospel partners.

Christians ought to link arms with other Christians to evangelize their neighbors, their co-workers, their family members, and churches ought to link arms with other churches to see more gospel preaching churches established.

This is how the great commission will be fulfilled. world. We should know this better than anybody, Siwe Bay, shouldn't we? Siwe Bay Baptist Church probably, and I only say probably because God can do what He wants, right?

But Siwe Bay Baptist Church probably would not be here right now apart from partners in the gospel. First Baptist Church, Mount Pleasant, Oakhurst Baptist Church in Charlotte, Lakeside Baptist Church in North Myrtle Beach, Grace Baptist Church in Asheville, Life Church in Athens, Georgia, McDonough Road Baptist Church in Georgia, Life Park Church down the road along with dozens of other individuals, some of whom you have met, many of whom you have not met.

these people have seen a need for a gospel witness here in this community, and so they have partnered with us to make it happen. You know what that is?

[18 : 22] That is the abundant grace of God on display. It is evidenced, it is seen, it is manifested visibly, made visible through their partnership, and you know what I do when I think about these partners in the gospel?

I marvel at the grace of God. See, one reason why we are called to partner together and to link arms together is so that we might see God's power and His grace at work in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul sees it. He thanks God, but he doesn't stop there. Look with me there. Look what he does in verse six. He not only prays and thanks God for them, he also sends back some encouragement to them.

He lets them know that in their partnership he sees evidence of God's grace at work in them. Look what he says. I am sure of this, certain of it, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

One of the most beautiful verses of assurance and confidence in all the scriptures. It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I hold you in my heart. Why?

[19 : 44] For you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

You know, Paul knew a little bit about grace, didn't he? He was a Pharisee, a persecutor of the church. He hated the name of Jesus Christ.

But what happened? How did we get from there to here? Grace. Christ himself, the risen Lord Jesus, appears to Paul, revealed himself to him.

He saved him. He gave him a new identity, gave him a new purpose in life to give it away for the glory of God. to no longer tear down the church, but to serve and to build the church, to advance the gospel.

And Paul says, that same grace that took me out of my sin and opened up my eyes that I might see the worth of Christ, that same grace that has changed me, I see it at work in you.

[20 : 46] And what God started in you, church, he is going to complete it at the day of Jesus Christ. You know, we just sang this hymn. I hope you listened to the words, complete in thee.

Did you notice this? Yea, justified, O blessed thought, and sanctified salvation wrought, thy blood hath pardon bought for me, and glorified I too shall be.

All three pictures are here in this text. Do you see it? For the Philippians and for you, this is true. The moment the Philippians heard the gospel of Jesus Christ and believed, they are justified in the sight of God.

Declared righteous. God looks at them and he sees all the perfection of Christ. They are legally, objectively, truly righteous, perfect in the sight of God, justified.

And yet we all know this, we're not perfect. God sees us as perfect, covered by the blood of Christ, but truly, experientially, really, in our day-to-day lives, are you perfect?

[22 : 01] I'm not. We're not perfect. We are being sanctified. We are being made like Jesus. We are seeing the fruit of our justification played out through sanctification.

and Paul says, I see that in you through your partnership. I see that in you through your generosity. I see that in you through the ways the Lord is shaping your mind and your heart to be more like Christ.

Your sanctification is proof of your justification and it gives me confidence in your glorification to come. We are declared righteous. We are being made righteous and one day, Paul says, you will truly, finally, be righteous, glorified, complete in thee.

Here's the good news, church. God finishes what he starts. God has a no man left behind policy. He is not like us where he starts a project and it doesn't get done until months down the road.

He doesn't leave any projects unfinished. If God has begun a work in you, you can be absolutely certain that at the day of Christ, when the Lord Jesus returns, he will bring that work to his completion.

[23 : 24] Gospel partnership produces praise for God's grace. But not only this, second, second, when we see God's grace at work through gospel partners, look what happens.

We pray for more. We pray for more. Now, this is interesting, isn't it? Because, I mean, Paul has seen God do a lot. He's seen God save these Philippians in unthinkable, miraculous ways.

He's seen them grow up in Christ-likeness. He's seen them now share his heart for ministry. He's seen them give generously out of their own pocket to support him sacrificially for the cause of the gospel.

And what does he do? He doesn't say, thank you, God, that's enough. He asks God to do even more. He says, I want to see God continue to shape you by his grace.

If you will one day be complete at the return of Christ, and if that work of transforming grace has already begun in you, and I see it, and if I'm praising God for it right now, then I want to see it grow more and more and more.

[24 : 31] I want to see you shaped more and more and more by the grace of God so that I might magnify the glory of God because of you, because of God's grace in you.

I want to see you become who you are in Christ and who you will be when he returns. Look with me at what he prays for God to do in them.

We see his prayer in verse 9, and then the result, the outcome of his prayer in verses 10 and 11. So here's what he prays.

He prays verse 9, look there with me. He prays that God would work in them abounding, truth-rooted, discerning love.

You see all three of those there? Look there with me to verse 9. It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment.

[25 : 27] You see each part there. Each phrase is loaded with meaning for us to unpack this morning. Abounding, truth-rooted, discerning love.

And you know, this is really a helpful description for us as we think about how we can pray for our partners and even as we consider partnering with other works.

We want to be marked by abounding, truth-rooted, discerning love. What does this mean? He first prays that their love may abound more and more.

This is horizontal love. This is one another love. This is sacrificial, humble, selfless love for the sake of the gospel.

And church, love has to be at the heart of any meaningful partnership in order for it to last and in order for it to honor God. You all know this. It's one thing just to check off a box, to write a check, to feel like you've done your duty, your good deed, but that's not necessarily love.

[26 : 42] That could just be obligation or duty or just a sense of I feel like I've done a good thing. Paul knows that these Philippians went out of their way to support his ministry and they sent people over there to fund the mission, to encourage him, but he knows that they did this not because they just wanted to do a good deed, but because they loved Paul.

And they loved the gospel. They loved the mission. He says abound in this love, but not just any old love. Not just any old love. There's a shape to the love, isn't there?

It's grounded and it's rooted in the truth. This is abounding love with what? With knowledge. knowledge.

He doesn't just want them to do, he wants them to know why they do. That's knowledge. Listen, love and knowledge are friends. We shouldn't pit them against each other.

They go together. It's not good just to stroke a check and send it off to Paul or to Seawee Bay or to any gospel partner and not actually know why you're doing what you're doing.

[27 : 59] Other than you just think it's a good thing to do. I mean, it is a good thing to do, but why? Paul wants them to know why they're giving him this gift.

He wants their love and their loving actions to be rooted in knowledge. And again, ultimately, this is knowledge of the gospel. I mean, Seawee Bay, if I could say anything about you, you are a big-hearted, loving-to-a-fault, generous, kind-hearted people.

And I praise God for that, but listen, our love needs to be rooted in the truth of the gospel. Our actions of love need to be rooted in knowledge of the gospel.

Why do Christians love one another? Well, we love because what? Because he first loved us. That's the gospel. Why do husbands, why are we called to love your wives?

We're called to love our wives as Christ loved the church. How? He gave himself up for her. That's why and how you love your wife. Christ humbled himself to bring eternal life to the lost, and so we go and follow in his footsteps and bring the gospel to the lost and to the perishing.

[29 : 17] God has been generous to us. What do you have that you've not received? God has been generous and gracious to us, and so we are generous for the sake of the glory of God.

The deeper your knowledge of the truth, the greater your love should be for your brothers and sisters in Christ. They go together, Paul says. Grow in your knowledge of the truth so that you might grow and abound in your love.

And with that knowledge, he prays, will come discernment. Now, when we talk about partnering for the sake of the gospel, partnering with other good works, this is incredibly necessary because the needs are so many.

There are more needs than we can possibly begin to meet. And again, I know your heart, church, we're big heart people. We want to meet needs. We want to help people.

But here's a word of caution for big hearted people. Not everybody can meet every need. Not every church can meet every need.

[30 : 30] I had a seminary professor who cautioned us as a room full of ministry trainees getting ready to go into churches and college campuses and communities and go bring the gospel.

And he said, you need to know that the need is not necessarily the call. You may hear that a church needs help in the area of children's ministry.

And you may love that church, abounding love. You may know that children need the gospel, but you need to discern whether or not you are called to fill that need.

The need is not necessarily the call. We need love with knowledge and with discernment. And so here's where this applies to us, church.

Over the past two years, we've given generously out of our budget to some excellent organizations. We've given to the Pillar Network.

[31 : 35] We've given through the cooperative program to see churches established and the gospel advance throughout the nations. as we move into next year, you should know that we're prayerfully discerning how we might partner more directly with a gospel work to see other churches established.

I came back from the Pillar Conference this past week with invitations to go to Colombia and to go to the United Kingdom. you imagine two more different areas of the world.

But why? Why? Because churches are being established in these areas. Pastors need theological education. These churches need resourcing.

They need help. There are needs, but the need is not necessarily the call. We need discernment. And for us to partner well, we need to ask good, good, discerning questions like, well, is this a gospel work?

Is this something that would carry on if the gospel were removed from it tomorrow? Are we theologically and missiologically aligned with this partner?

[32 : 47] Do I understand the need that's here? Do I understand how we can contribute? Is this open-ended? Is it for a defined period of time? Do they exist to magnify the glory of God and the gospel just as we do?

Or is their mission something different? Church, we need discernment. And so, will you pray this for our church? Will you pray this for me, for Treg?

Will you pray that the Lord would grow us as a body in ever abounding, truth-rooted, discerning love? And let's trust that the result of this will be verses 10 and 11, that we might approve what is excellent and not what's false, that we will be blameless at the day of Christ, that we will be filled with the fruit of righteousness right now in the present, this righteousness that comes not through us and our generosity and our sacrifice, but through Christ alone and above all, above all, that God would receive all glory and praise for his work of grace.

That's what gospel partnership produces. Jesus. I'll tell you one more story as we close. One of the most encouraging moments of my life, a couple years ago I was at the Pillar Conference and we had just arrived at Seaweed Bay a few months earlier and I went out to the tent for lunch.

Everybody goes and we grab a sandwich and go sit outside under these big tents and around the table with me were four pastors. Dave from Oakhurst Baptist Church in Charlotte where I served a few years out of seminary.

[34 : 33] There was Mike from Lakeside Baptist Church in North Myrtle Beach where I came from before arriving here who sent us here. There was Matt from First Baptist Church of Mount Pleasant and there was Treg Hallman from Seaweed Bay.

About ten years of my ministry assembled there in one table it was almost surreal to look around the table and say why are we all sitting here right now? I'll tell you why.

Because these men, these churches have linked their arms together for the sake of the gospel here in all and all. Here at Seaweed Bay and I'll tell you I praise God for his grace to our church through partnership and I pray for more.

Let's do that now church. Father, would you grow us? Grow us in ever abounding truth rooted discerning love Father that we might know how you might use us for the advance of the gospel.

Lord we praise you for what you've done and what you're doing here. We praise you for our generous partners who have seen the need of the gospel here in this area. Lord we praise you for the fruit that we're seeing reaped as the word is proclaimed and the gospel is preached and we pray for more.

[36 : 02] We want to see your grace in action. Lord, sinners are saved and the church is built. We pray all this to the glory and praise of God in the name of Christ.

Amen. Amen.