

Partners In Grace
Sunday, December 28th, 2025
Philippians 1:3-11

Introduction

(SERMON SERIES SLIDE)

Hey everybody! It is awesome to be with you this morning, Beech Haven. If I have not had the opportunity to meet you yet, my name is Dylan Tedder, and I have the privilege of serving here as the Director of Students. It's been such a wonderful six months being here during an amazing time of growth and transition in the student ministry, and we have some really awesome students and parents. It's been a blessing to be here. You all have welcomed my wife, Abby, and me with so much love and warmth, so thank you guys!

Illustration

I hope you all had a great Christmas! Around the holidays, we often do this thing that can be really, really interesting in a variety of different ways called spending time with family!

(SLIDE 2)

I think one of the places I got to see the reality of family dynamics play out the most was serving as a host at a restaurant. I was a host at Sakura, the hibachi restaurant, throughout college. It was a lot of fun because I could witness all these different family dynamics.

Married couples would come in yelling at one another about how they didn't want to go there but the other one did. Kids would come in crying because they had just fallen in the parking lot outside. There would be that weird uncle who came to the birthday party and wanted to talk about the most random stuff, or the aggressive aunt who intimidated me and every server in the room—prompting the teenage daughter to say, "Mom, stop."

Everything was on display at that front podium at the Sakura Steakhouse on Atlanta Highway.

It was clear to me in that restaurant that family is an inevitable truth in this world. Regardless of personality differences, embarrassing moments, and all the other things that come with family relationships, you're stuck with family—and you can't really change it. So we strive to love our family.

The church carries a very similar dynamic. Whenever we, by grace through faith in Christ, come into a vertical relationship with God, we also get a horizontal relationship with brothers and sisters of the faith too. Regardless of the differences we may have, we are united and born again into this new family—the church. There are over 50 “one another” commands in the New Testament alone (love, forgive, etc.), so it is clear that when we come into a relationship with Christ, we also come into a loving relationship with the church.

And we see here a model for love that Paul has for the Philippian church.

(SLIDE 3)

Paul’s love in this text is marked by three things that we’re going to work through: gratitude for what God has done, confidence in what He is still doing, and prayer for one another’s growth in grace.

What would it look like for us at Beech Haven to love one another like Paul loved the Philippian church?

Body

Gratitude for What God Has Done (vv. 3–5)

In verses 3–5, we see a *who*, a *how*, and a *why*: who Paul is grateful to, how he expresses that gratitude, and why he is grateful.

(SLIDE 4)

Let’s look at it. “I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Who Is Paul Grateful To

First, it’s important to see that Paul expresses his gratitude for this church to God. The recipient of the gratitude is God Himself. Paul firmly recognizes that every good and perfect gift comes from above. The local church that believes and shares Christ crucified is a good gift that Paul brings thanksgiving to God for.

How Does Paul Express His Gratitude

Next, we see that Paul expresses his gratitude to God passionately. He doesn't just use light language. Look at verse 3:

"I thank my God for **every** remembrance of you, **always** praying with joy for **all** of you in **every** prayer."

He seriously loves the church and is deeply committed to it. He is constantly thinking about the church and praying for it. This is deep and passionate gratitude to God for the Philippian church.

Why Is Paul Grateful

Finally, why is Paul grateful to God for the church? Why is Paul filled with joy in his prayer for these believers? The answer is in verse 5:

"Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."

(There is about a ten-year gap from the church's birth to the time the letter is written.)

(SLIDE 5)

The relationship, fellowship, and unity of the church are rooted in partnership in the gospel. The church should recognize that its ultimate aim is to believe the gospel and spread the gospel.

It's important to note that the word for partnership here in the Greek is *koinonia*. This literally means shared participation or sharing in something together. This shows us that this isn't a passive faith but an active, shared mission. The Philippians are living on mission for the glory of Jesus Christ, preaching the message of forgiveness of sins through trust in Christ.

If a church is doing that, we should be grateful to God!

Significance

This is the heart we are called to model as the church: a deep gratitude for God's work among us to redeem us—to save us from sin—and a shared passion to carry the hope of Christ to others.

Confidence in What He Will Continue to Do (vv. 6–8)

Next, we see a bold confidence that God will continue to complete His good work of grace in the life of the Philippian believers. The crucial part of the text to understand is that God will complete His work in His people to make us more like Him because of who He is—not because of our magnificence. We are weak.

(SLIDE 6)

Paul says this (v. 6):

Illustration

I think one of the most obvious displays of our own weakness is New Year's resolutions! Last year, I told Abby, my wife, with confidence in myself, "You know what? I am not going to eat any sweets for the entire year. I am going to stick to eating only savory food."

"I'm gonna do it this time."

I think I made it maybe three weeks. But I know some of y'all have failed in the same way. The stats say that actually 88 percent of New Year's resolutions fail by February, so we'll have to see how we're all doing come February.

We say that we will do something at the very beginning of the year—we will bring it home and drive it to completion—yet within one month, about 90 percent of us have failed. If you're in that 10 percent, congratulations—you are one effective human being.

However, I ate ice cream cake for dinner last night.

But this goes to show a general trend. Mankind has been historically bad at following through with the very thing we say we're going to do.

But in verse 6, Paul says, "I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

Tie-In

We can rest upon the promise that God will finish the work that He has started in us as a congregation, making us more like Him as we grow in His grace (what Christian theology calls sanctification).

The mission He sets out to accomplish through the Philippian church will be accomplished in the same way that the mission He sets out to accomplish through Beech Haven will be accomplished. God has a 100 percent completion rate on what He sets out to do in the lives of believers, ultimately because of who He is. We are weak and fragile, yet He is strong and faithful.

Y'all, we are called to hold tightly to our Savior, Jesus Christ, in the Christian walk. We strive to be active in the Word, in prayer, in life groups, in worship, and in the life of the church. We want to faithfully pursue Christ and live out our faith with spiritual discipline.

But our ultimate assurance—our ultimate confidence that God will, by grace, continue to work in us to make us more like Him—does not rest on our grip on Him, but on the perfect grip He has on us as His children. God finishes what He starts!

We can look forward with confidence that He who began a good work of grace in us at Beech Haven will complete it—not because we are anything significant, but because our God is.

Verses 7–8

(SLIDE 7)

Paul goes on in verses 7–8 to say:

“Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

Paul is putting his heart on full display to this family of believers. He is letting them in on his deepest feelings of affection. Christianity is more than a feelings-based faith, but it is not less than that. God created us with emotions, and Paul lets them out here toward the Philippians.

He is saying it is right for me to look at my brothers and sisters with joy and gratitude to God. It is right to be grateful for your partnership in the gospel. It is right to look forward with confidence that God will, by His Spirit, make us more like Him.

One, because I love you—I have you in my heart, the deepest and most inner part of my being. This Philippian church had shown their commitment to Paul.

And two, because you are partners with me in the grace of God. Affection and love are stirred within the church through a shared mission to glorify Christ. They had shown dedication to Paul in his imprisonment, but even more so, dedication to Christ in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

He uses the strongest language possible to express his love:

“For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

He is saying, “I am accountable before God that I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.” The type of love we are to strive for with one another—and the type of love Paul models here—is the love and affection of Christ Jesus.

(SLIDE 8)

Do we have this burning love for our congregation? Is this the love we model toward one another?

Significance

The love of Christ meant sacrifice, humility, and service. Romans 8 tells us it is a love that not even death or life, angels or rulers, things present or things to come, powers, height or depth, or any other created thing can separate us from.

Again, we have to ask: Is this the love we display toward one another?

Prayer for One Another's Growth in Grace (vv. 9–11)

(SLIDE 9)

In verse 9, we see what Paul is actually praying. Verse 4 tells us that Paul prays for the Philippian church all the time, but verse 9 shows us the content of his prayer. We see the petition, the purpose of the prayer, and then the praise.

(SLIDE 10)

“That your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment.”

The Petition (1:9)

Paul's prayer is centered on the spiritual growth of the believers in Philippi. Earlier, we saw Paul's deepest emotions for the church, but here we see that while love is emotional, it is not only emotional. He prays for their love to grow in both knowledge and discernment.

In Philippians 4:8, we see a list of attributes the Philippians should grow in. This list ultimately reflects the character of Christ. Paul's prayer is that they would grow in their loving knowledge of Christ and carefully live out these qualities.

The Purpose (1:10)

(SLIDE 11)

“So that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.”

This verse is not calling the church to earn moral perfection. Rather, it calls believers—who have already been redeemed—to continue growing in Christ, bearing fruit from their connection to Him.

Illustration

I remember my wedding day, standing in the back room, waiting to see my bride. I was overwhelmed with anticipation. My groomsmen and my dad tried to calm me down, but my mind was fixed on one thing: I was about to be united with my bride.

When the doors opened, I lost it.

(SLIDE 12)

That moment didn't come out of nowhere. We lived the year leading up to our wedding in light of that day.

In the same way, this passage calls us to live in anticipation of the day when we will be fully reunited with our Savior.

The Praise (1:11b)

(SLIDE 13)

All of this is to the glory and praise of God.

Application

Is this the cry of our hearts, church family? Is the love that marked Paul's heart the same love that marks our relationships with one another? A love for one another that proves our partnership in grace. Where the outside world looks at the Church and wonders why we love one another in the way we do.

The honest answer is that we have all fallen short. Let us turn to Christ, asking forgiveness where we have failed to love the church as we should.

Who is someone you need to thank God for this week? Don't let that stay unspoken, have that conversation this week. Who do you need to encourage that you see God at work in them? Speak that Gospel affirmation over them. And who do you need to pray for? Let us be a church that is marked by our constant prayers for one another.

Conclusion

No matter why you are here today, I want to invite you to be part of the family of God.

The church is not a place for people who have it all together. It is a family of great sinners who have been forgiven by an even greater Savior. Now we are called children of God despite us not deserving it whatsoever, and we live on a shared mission to glorify our God together as a family.

Let us be grateful for what God has done, confident in what He is still doing, and committed to praying for one another's growth in grace.

Thank you for having me this morning. Let's pray.