

Philippians 1:1-11

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[0 : 00] Before this summer, there was about a four or five month period of time where I was just really broken down spiritually, beaten down spiritually.

! I was spiritually, physically, emotionally, mentally broken and shattered.! I haven't been in this position quite a long time.

Not to this extreme. And I've faced a lot of physical trials in my life and deep sorrows and bouts of depressions.

I've seen like the ugliness of sin in this world. The knowledge of what goes on in the world and how horrible it is. And I just felt, due to my own sinfulness and my lack of like zeal for God, I'm just no use to God anymore.

I'm not. I want to. I wish I could be that man that would like be used of God in a mighty way to change the ugliness of this world. But I just feel so insufficient and broken and there's no way I could ever contribute to this.

[1 : 05] Like a story that I might revisit later on in the year is the story of Elijah. And it's probably the number one go-to story that I read over and over and over this summer.

The Lord did bless me with some time to spend about two months in Ireland. And I really just used that time to draw near to Him and get away from what I usually throw my life into.

But while I was there, I'm going to read you just one verse out of the story of Elijah in 1 Kings 19. You don't have to turn there. But Elijah was just very heartbroken and devastated over the circumstances in Israel and how people were rebelling against God.

And he longed for revival. He wasn't seeing revival. And it said that he eventually just fled into the wilderness. And he sat down under a tree.

And I'll read you what it says. And he asked that he might die, saying, It is enough. Now, O Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my father's.

[2 : 12] And I really felt that way this summer. Like, Lord, I can't take any more. I want you to just end this for me. I'm not going to end it for myself. But if you would, I really would be grateful.

And I'm no better than any man that's gone before me. I have the same problems. I can't change anything. And I was just thinking, I can't go on.

I feel of no use. And this will never end. Will I even survive in this life? Like, I was just at that dead end. And as I waited upon the Lord and poured my heart out to Him daily, He met me in an awesome way and was, like, so faithful and really brought healing and refreshment to a lot of deep places in my soul.

And so if you've grown weary, kind of in the fight as a believer, and you're really tired of the trials and pains and struggling with the same sins, and you're, it's just all you can take, then I hope I have good news for you tonight.

And without this news, I think I would just be ready to end it. But, so, some of the things that I've learned this summer, some of the things I can hopefully share tonight, but to put it, there's a, I read the Puritans.

[3 : 35] I like all the old dead guys because none of the good guys, the new guys are hardly worth reading anymore. So, but one Puritan named John Flavill, a pastor, he wrote this, and this is kind of like a, it's just a little short phrase.

I can almost memorize it, but he says, As God did not at first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you were low. And that, bam, like that's exactly how I feel.

God will not, as God did not first choose you because you were high, he will not now forsake you because you were low. And that's, that's the only hope I had.

And this is what we're going to look at in our text tonight. So, if you're in Philippians, I'm going to just kind of walk through this a little bit. I'm not in Philippians. I'm where I was.

So, check out verse 3. This is going to be a little intro. This isn't going to be the main focus of the message. When you read a text like this, you can spend forever just on one phrase.

[4 : 42] So, I'm not going to try to do that. I'm going to try to focus mainly on verse 6. But, I kind of want to, I don't want to just breeze past the other stuff. But in the first phrase here, Paul calls God my God.

And that is very important. His personal, intimate relationship with the living God. Martin Luther is, supposedly has taught, I think he wrote it in his commentary in Galatians.

Christianity is a matter of personal pronouns. I thought that was really cool. Meaning that, your only connection to Christianity is, you have to have in a personal way.

It can't be anybody else's. It's your God. Christ died for your sin. He is your Savior. His Father is your Father idea.

And so, my God is like how he starts this out. And so, we're going to kind of move around the text a little bit. But, just first of all, there's, this isn't the main focus.

[5 : 44] Remember, there's three indications of what genuine Christian love could be described at in this text. And Paul kind of pours that out for the Philippians.

And the first one is, true, genuine Christian love means that you have other believers on your mind. The first one, he has them on his mind. And you see verse 3 there.

I thank my God in all remembrance of you. So, you should be thinking about your fellow believers, pondering them, what they're going through. Pondering their welfare and seeking to love them so they're on his mind.

Secondly, he has them in his heart. Look at verse 7. It is right for me to feel this way about you because I hold you in my heart.

Verse 8. For God is my witness how I yearn for you with all the affection of Christ Jesus. So, Christ gives his people a deep, ardent love for one another.

[6 : 48] People that say, I can't stand Christians, I like Jesus. They probably, if they really mean that wholeheartedly, they might not really know who the Savior is. Because hatred is evidence of blindness to the light.

And love is evidence that sight has been given to the blind. And that the miracle of being born again has taken place in someone's heart.

And the outpour of that is love. And so, we seek to love one another because Christ's love does.

We could go on and on about the whole commandment Christ gives to love one another.

So, he has them in his mind. He has them in his heart. And thirdly, he has them in his prayers. Look at verse 4. Verse 9.

And that love would come out of them in a godly way of living. And that all that would go back to the glory of God.

[8 : 13] It would bear fruit of righteousness. This evidence of only the transforming grace in someone's life if that actually happens. So, he's rejoicing. And that's three ways that we can love one another.

To have each other on our minds and our hearts and our prayers. And those are really important. So, jumping into the main focus tonight will be in verse 6 mainly.

And there's an awesome doctrine that we believe here, a Christ family, that has been believed throughout the centuries of the church. And it's defended by so many awesome biblical texts in the Old and New Testament.

But it's called perseverance of the saints. And it refers to that all those who have truly been born again. All those who have truly been saved of God will, by God's power, persevere to the very end of their lives.

Die and go to be with the Lord. And it's by God's power that they persevere, not by their own resolve or willpower. It's God's power that keeps them to the end.

[9 : 26] And that only those who make it to the end are those who are truly saved. And so, we're going to look at three things out of this text that you can see.

And we'll find them in the tenses of past, present, and future. We're going to trace God's work through the past, present, and future. So, number one is, God started a good work in them.

So, God started a good work in them. And this will be like in the idea of like the past tense, where he had begun or began like in the past.

So, look at verse 5 and 6. Kind of move there. Like, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day. So, the idea of like from the very beginning.

Then you jump to verse 6. And I'm sure, I'm sure of this, that he who began a good work in you. So, this idea that God started something in them.

[10:26] God did. God started something in them. So, you need to understand. We could go on about this all night as well. But, according to scripture, before Christ, there was nothing in us that desired God whatsoever.

We were slaves to sin. We were, we belonged to the devil. Not God. We sought to do his will. And we focused on the things of the world and the glory of man.

And it wasn't that we just heard the gospel and we're just on our own. Well, that makes a lot of sense. And we decided to reform our lives. It had nothing to do with that. We didn't just wise up and get this one day.

It was God who took the initiative and God did a work in us when he did not have to. And he has the power to change our lives. Flip to, keep your hand in Philippians always, but flip to Ephesians 2.

We'll start in verse 1 of Ephesians 2. Ephesians 2. This will sum up what I just said.

[11:33] Ephesians 2 verse 1. Paul talking to the believers. He's reflecting on their past life. He says, So, this is past tense.

Following the course of this world. There's the idea of the world. We were controlled by the world. We followed the flow of the world. Following the prince of the power of the air. So, that is another title for Satan, the adversary, Satan.

We were controlled by him. The spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. Among who? We all once lived in the passions of our flesh.

Carrying out the desires of the body and the mind. And by nature were children of wrath. Like the rest of mankind. So, that was our condition. And some of you still may be in that position tonight.

And I beg you not to leave without speaking to someone. And letting them minister God's word to you before you go. You need Christ. But for those of us who have encountered Christ.

[12:42] This was us at one time. You may think I've always been a pretty good person. But no. Before Christ, this was you. Just as much as anybody. And in verse 4, we start to see that initiative.

I'm talking about God. God took the initiative. But God, being rich in mercy because of his great love for which he loved us. Even when we were dead in our trespasses.

Made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. Now, the closest I've been in the crossing ever into the next life was.

I was on life support for two weeks. And you see a little hole right here. I tell little kids I got shot there. And they just kind of stare at me in amazement. It's about right the size of a small caliber. So, but I can tell you that even on life support, there wasn't a moment I could have just gotten right up and just done my thing. I could not have just moved on from that condition I was in at all.

[13:42] I couldn't just will myself to do it. And this is what the scripture says that you were spiritually before Christ. You were dead in your trespasses. And then it says you were raised with Christ.

So the power of God is what raised you from a spiritual death. And that is why you have to be born again. You see that? Like you were dead spiritually. That's why you had to have a new life in Christ. So there was nothing we could have done. This was God's initiative. God took the initiative in our past. 1 John 4.10 says, And this is love. Not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation or an atonement or appeasement for our sins.

Then verse 19, We love because He first loved us. It's not that we just decide to love Yah one day and God return the favor. There's an order to this. And so if you're not willing to believe the scripture, maybe you'll believe an old hymn that everybody sings.

Probably the most well-known hymn to mankind. But Amazing Grace, this is what the song is about. He says, It was grace that taught my heart to fear.

[14:53] And grace my fears relieved. How precious then that grace appeared the hour I first believed. It's the idea that God took the initiative. So, that's the first one is that God started to get work in us in past tense.

Number two, God is continuing a good work in them. So, this will be in the present tense.

Moving into this current moment. Go back to Philippians again. We're going to look at this in the text. And go to verse 5. It says, Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, present time.

Go to verse 7. It is right for me to feel this way about you 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. So, Paul is rejoicing because he sees present righteousness, present godliness in these people's lives.

[16:01] And it's reflected in their actions. Like what they have done are evidences, are outpours of what God has done in them. So, we see like right there, this verse 5.

And you also kind of see it in verse 7. But this word partnership, it's synonymous with almsgiving or financial support to someone. And they were the only church to support Paul for a long time.

And they actually just lacked the opportunity to give. They were eager to give to Paul. And they gave to his ministry. And he was just excited about that. And they also sent a guy named Epaphroditus that we'll read about in chapter 4.

They sent him to deliver the money and also to care for Paul's well-being. So, I mean, they greatly cared about Paul. And by Paul being under arrest and probably soon to be in prison maybe, to associate with him would have been shame in the ancient world.

And yet they stood firmly by him while he gave a defense for the gospel in the highest court in all the empire. So, this was in the present tense. Paul saw God's work in them in the present.

[17:14] And so back to us, we'll draw it to us now. God is presently at work in us if we know Christ. Many people believe that after you're saved, God just says, Alright, I've done my part.

Now go out and be a Christian. Like, do your best. That's, you know, I'm in your corner kind of idea. And it's not even really that. It's not even an idea of like a tag team where, you know, like I'm in a wrestling ring.

It's me and Satan. And every now and then I'm doing pretty good. And I take Satan down. And when Satan takes me down, I tag Jesus. And Jesus comes in and puts Satan in the helicopter spin and puts him down.

Like, it's not that idea either. It's like this idea of Christ is in me. And Christ's power is in me. And the only way that to succeed will be for Christ to work and not me.

Look down into chapter 2 real fast. Philippians 2. Philippians 2 verse 12. We'll get to this eventually and talk about it more in the future.

[18:21] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

And then listen to this. Isn't that interesting?

So, it's decided that God is at work presently in us if you belong to Christ. And we are responsible to work, to labor, to toil, to take action, to be obedient.

But as we do that, God fuels us with His power, with His energy, and with His grace to accomplish His good pleasure. So, these aren't opposing ideas.

We can talk more about this. If Paul writes to the church in Galatia and says to them, they had received the gospel well and many of them became believers.

[19:24] And he goes away and then all of a sudden he hears they're starting to add to the gospel. Like you have to have Jesus plus all the Old Testament or Jewish ritual laws that need to be circumcised.

You need, you need, you need. Jesus plus, Jesus plus. And Paul is like, basically, you idiots. What are you thinking? And he writes to them, Are you so foolish?

Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? So, this idea that God did His part and then just sent you on. Like that work the Spirit started is the work that the Spirit continues in your life.

So, God is presently at work in us. So, back to these things. The first one, God started a good work in them. Past tense. Number two, God is continuing a good work in them.

Present tense. And then thirdly, God will finish the work in them. Future. And, look at verse 6 in Philippians 1.

[20:30] And this, I am sure of. That He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.

So, I've met many people over the years. I mean, I'm not going to exempt myself. In the past, I used to struggle with this a lot. And I still do, but I know how to answer that now with truth and not lies. You listen to God and not to your own feelings. In the future tense, there's a lot of people who, even some of you in this room that I know have had this conversation with, I'm afraid that I'm going to fall away.

I'm afraid that I'm going to fall away from God's hands. I'm afraid that I can lose my salvation. Like, I don't know.

I'm not really convinced. You know, like, show me something in the Word that says otherwise. I hope that's not true, but I'm such a horrible Christian. I try so hard. I'm grieved that I can't obey God the way that I want to.

[21 : 36] You sound like Paul in Romans 7, which is where he says the things that I hate, I do. The things I want to do, I cannot do.

It's this idea. And you're like, please give me something. So I hope that this stuff will minister to your heart as it has in mind.

Because without this, I would despair. I wouldn't even be up here tonight. And many of you wouldn't be sitting here tonight. We'd have to become Christians every day and repent again every day and be saved every day if this wasn't true.

So let's look at that word right here where Paul says, where did we go? Where's the word? Okay. I am convinced of this.

I am persuaded of this. This is a cool, I mean, he's saying like, I am positive that God is going to carry on this work. I don't have any doubt in my mind. I'm confident that he is going to continue this.

[22 : 38] And so I'm going to give you a few things. God promises never to lose any who belong to Christ. Okay. He promises that all those who belong to Christ will not perish.

Not mainly, not really at all because we're awesome and we're worth it and we're just these most amazing people and God just can't be without us and he has to have us.

That's not it at all. There is nothing in us that God decided like, that's a pretty cool guy. I'm going to save him or that's a pretty cool lady. I'm going to save her.

Nothing at all. But can I ask you a question? Will you allow someone you love dearly to suffer tremendous pain and death if you knew their death was going to be in vain, if you could have prevented it?

I don't think you would. And I can definitely promise you God doesn't think that way. Turn to John 10 and go to verse 27. Just a few more places to turn tonight, but this is an important truth and I just want to show you this.

[23 : 48] It's not really about man's opinion, but about what God himself says. John 10 verse 27. Jesus is on this discourse and he says, verse 27, My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

I give them eternal life and they will never perish and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My father who has given them to me is greater than all and no one is able to snatch them out of my father's hand.

I and the father are one. Awesome passage. And so I'm going to give you a little illustration here.

If you had a choice today to go and spend a long amount of time at the vacation of your dreams, wherever place you go to in your mind, and you spent a great deal of money to get there, thousands and thousands of dollars to just get to this place where you wanted to chill and have a good time. And you get to the destination, you get off the plane and going through the airport and security stops you, immigration stops you.

[25 : 15] This has happened to me before. And they say, well, you can't come in our country yet. You owe \$10 to come into our country. You have to pay us \$10 or you're getting back on the plane.

And imagine if you had a friend with you that said, that is crazy and absurd. There's no way we are paying \$10. That is insane.

We're getting back on the plane and we're leaving. You probably would knock them out, punch them or spit in their face. And you would say, you stupid idiot. This is not, this is ridiculous.

We came all this way. It's been all this money. You're not willing to throw Andrew Jackson out there and like come in the country. Like that's, that's ridiculous. So as stupid as that logic is, I have a greater question for you.

Let's move this up on the divine scale. Do you really think that the heavenly father would watch his beloved son, immolated, crucified on the cross and not see the work that he started through?
[26 : 23] Not at all. He's not saying to the, to the, Christ isn't saying to his father, I've done the work. So I hope you make it worth it.

And the father is not saying to the son, like, I know you did that work, but I can't do anything about it. Let's just cross our fingers and hope something works out. Let's hope that you didn't die in vain. I mean, sir, many of you have seen passion in the Christ.

And it's like, can you imagine that being for nothing, for no reason, like the son of God being tortured, broken, and crucified. But the father is not saying, I know you died for them, but I can't, I can't save them.

Ridiculous. God will see that work through. And that's our greatest comfort. Charles Spurgeon, a great preacher in England, in the late 1800s, he said, if our faith be of our own getting or making, it will perish.

And the sooner it goes, the better. But if our faith is a matter of God's giving, we know that he shall never take back what he gives. And that, if he has commenced the work by his grace, he will never leave it unfinished.

[27 : 38] And that's true. That I will finish the good work that he began. And us till the day of Christ Jesus, and so that is God's promise, never to lose any that belong to Christ.

It's not just a hypothetical. The gospel will be hypothetical good news if it was like, Jesus died, but, you know, it's not. It's good news.

And so, God's own desire and ability to save his people is unmatched. Some of us start things and can't finish them.

That's because we get lazy, or we get hurt, or we lack the resources. But God, in his work, has the strongest desire and all the power to carry out what he started.

And, if anyone is committed to accomplishing the saving purposes in our salvation, it's God. And, God himself.

[28 : 38] God is not like men. Men conduct experiments and sometimes don't finish. God never leaves anything half done, ever.

Our salvation will be accomplished. Turn to 1 Peter, chapter 1. There's two more places to turn. One more after this one. 1 Peter 3, or excuse me, 1 Peter, chapter 1, verse 3. So, we got the disciple, the fisherman, Peter, writing here in verse 3 of chapter 1.

He said, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to his great mercy, he has caused us, so you see that he has caused us, God's initiation, to be born again to a living hope, not wishful thinking, a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept.

Look at those words. Imperishable, undefiled, unfading, kept, in heaven for you. And here's the awesome phrase. Who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

[30 : 12] Awesome. That Greek word, guarded, is only a military term in Greek, and it means to garrison or to watch over, to always have a guard over, a continued process of protection.

And no one could do that more than God Almighty. You know, so let's just say that I was a mob boss or whatever, just some gang leader, and I told you, hey, there's a guy in this building that I want you to take out if you're an assassin.

I'm telling you this. Go and take this guy out. But I need to warn you, the guy that's guarding this building, he is omnipotent. He has all power. He's omniscient, meaning that he knows all things, past, present, and future, and he's omnipresent.

He's even right here with us now. Good luck. He would not survive. And so, we are being guarded, our souls are being guarded by God's power, not our own ability, not our own skill or knowledge, not how much theology you can spit out.

I'm a big fan of theology. I'll talk about it all day, but theology in itself does nothing for you. I'll read you a verse out of 1 Thessalonians 5, verse 23.

[31 : 33] You can write it down. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Listen to this. He who calls you is faithful. He will surely do it. That's like what it says. Awesome. 1 Thessalonians 5, 23-24.

So, God's faithfulness doesn't depend on our faithfulness. God's faithfulness is what will preserve us the day of Christ Jesus or the end of all things, if you want to call it that, the return of Christ or the final day.

So, God's faithfulness just means that He always will be who He is. He doesn't change and He always will do what He said. And it's not dependent on any outside force, spiritual or physical. And to sum this up, I have a really awesome quote by a commentator, F.B. Meyer. He says, We go into the artist's studio and we find there unfinished pictures, covered large canvases, suggesting great designs, but which have been left, either because the genius was not competent to complete the work or because of paralysis laid low the hand and He just couldn't do it anymore.

[33 : 01] But as we go into God's great workshop, we find that He bears, does not bear the mark of haste or insufficiency of power to finish the work.

And we are sure that the work which His grace has begun, the arm of His strength will complete it. Really cool. God will always finish what He started.

So, true, genuine believers who have experienced God's saving power, we can rest in this. Some of you, like I said, may not be there. Other of you may be deceived thinking that you belong to God and you don't.

But your life will reflect that if that's true or not. Not perfectly. That's what we've been talking about tonight. But if He has saved you, indeed, He will not let you go.

And He will carry you through to the end. You will persevere and be saved. And the last place we're going to look tonight, Psalm 138.

[33 : 59] Turn there. Everybody like this? Just a few verses out of Psalm 138. Psalm 138.

Go to verse 6. Remember that quote that I started with by John Flavio where he said, As God did not first choose you because you were high, He will not now forsake you because you were low. Look at verse 6. For though the Lord is high, He regards the lowly. But the haughty, He knows from afar. And though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life.

You stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies. And your right hand delivers me. The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me. Your steadfast love, Lord, endures forever.

Do not forsake the work of your hands. Praise God for this. This is an awesome, glorious truth.

[35 : 15] And He gives all the glory for it. We don't get any glory and that's cool. That's what a believer wants. They don't want any glory anyway. They want it to all go back to God because all things are from Him, through Him, and to Him.

To Him be glory forever and ever. So we're going to respond with a time of singing on the West. I don't want to West go. In the back. And if you're struggling with some of this, please come and talk to us.

Chris is in the back. Nathan, myself, Wes, love to talk to you. So let me just pray. Lord, the burden of sin and the ugliness of sin and the pain that this world inflicts on Your people is real is real and it hurts.

And You never promised a life of ease. You said that in this world you will have trouble or tribulation or trial. But take heart because I have overcome the world.

And if we belong to You, we also will overcome. And so, Lord, I pray that You would encourage us with that. The day we remind us of Holy Spirit, quicken that truth to us that You started the work.

[36 : 35] You're continuing it now and You will complete it. and let us find great joy and great peace with that. And may we strive with all that we are to live for You and to die for You and to make the most of our time, Lord, for Your glory.

And as we do that, fill us with Your energy, fill us with Your strength to live that life so that You may receive the praise, Lord, in all things. To You be all the glory, Lord, in Christ's name.

Amen. Amen.