

All Things Through Christ

2nd in the Series

A Good Work to be Completed

Text: Philippians 1:3-6

3 “I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:3-6 NIV)

Introduction:

Our study of the book of Philippians focuses on our pursuit of joy.

I can't think of anything that is more important than to have joy in your life.

When you and I think about the opposite of the emotion JOY in our lives you have: You have strife. It's the absence of unhappiness. Who likes to be unhappy?

In our first sermon we found Paul addressing the believers at Philippi with the words, **“To all the**

saints in Christ Jesus ... Grace and Peace to you...”

So we understood from our first sermon that we're all saints and we have the privilege and honor of being heirs to the Kingdom of God.

If we understand that we are **“In Christ”** and we have the Grace and Peace of God then that equals JOY.

Let me be clear about being **“In Christ.”** This is the very essence of Christianity. But what does this mean?

Martin Vincent says that **“when Paul spoke of Christians being In Christ he meant that a growing Christian lives IN Christ as a bird lives In the Air or a fish lives In the Water or the roots of a tree In the Soil. To be In Christ is to live continually in the atmosphere and the Spirit of Christ; to live in a world where never for one moment do we feel separated from Him and where we feel His strength and power always around us. So that is One Thing that makes a maturing Christian different ... set apart from all other people.”**

Now – how do we distinguish a joyful person from a happy person, or a giddy person, or a foolish person? Let me tell you:

You can be happy if the Buckeyes won.

You can be giddy about a great opportunity.
You can act happy and yet be under the
influence of alcohol.

You can have JOY in spite of all the negative
circumstances that are going on around you.

Joy is something that is unaffected by
circumstances.

It's actually a state of mind that runs deep in our
emotions.

D. L. Moody a 19 century evangelist said,
**“Happiness is caused by things that happen
around me, and circumstances will mar it; but
JOY flows right on through trouble; joy flows on
through the dark; joy flows in the night as well
as in the day; joy flows all through persecution
and opposition. It is an unceasing fountain
bubbling up in the heart; a secret spring the
world can't see and doesn't know anything
about. The Lord gives His people perpetual JOY
when the choose to walk with obedience to
Him.”**

Webster says JOY is a very glad feeling of
happiness.

All of us have this basic need to be happy.

So I know of no greater emotional need today than
for you and me to have JOY!

Someone asked Mother Teresa what the job
description was for anyone who might wish to work
alongside her in the grimy streets and narrow alleys
of Calcutta. Without hesitation she mentioned only
two things: **the desire to work hard and a
JOYFUL attitude.**

But unfortunately both of these qualities – especially
the latter one – are rare in our world today.

Just look around and you'll easily find bad news,
long faces, and heavy hearts everywhere **even in
some churches.**

Now with that said here are needs that are common
to all people.

As we read this passage from Philippians, let's take
the next 4 verses 1:3-6 it goes like this: ***“I thank
my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my
prayers for all of you, I always pray with JOY 5
because of your partnership in the gospel from
the first day until now, 6 being confident of
this, that He who began a good work in you will
carry it on to completion until The Day of Christ
Jesus.”***

**1. The First source of Paul's Joy was the fact
that he had COMPANIONSHIP WITH OTHER
CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS.**

5

When you turn to the Bible, you going to find that God's word addresses this issue of companionship and fellowship throughout the Scriptures.

It shows us how God has provided everything we need in this area.

And that is Good News because everyone deals with this kind of stuff.

I do and so do you.

Have you ever felt all alone?

Have you ever felt you didn't have support?

Have you ever felt that there was no one there to help when you needed someone?

Have you ever felt that there was no one on whom you could call?

It's a pretty rotten feeling.
It's certainly not a secure feeling.

Paul Rejoiced in the Partnership of Faithful People.

We see in our text that Paul was excited, not about things, but he was excited about people.

He recognized that there were people who were standing behind him and supported him.

6

Folks, this means everything!

He said, ***"I thank my God every time I remember you."***

These were people who made a positive difference in Paul's life.

Look at verse 5 again, Paul says, ***"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."***

Because they had been faithful in standing by him through the hard times, Paul could rejoice.

You probably have people like that in your life.

We all need people like that.

And these are the kind of people we need to emulate in the church.

We need to be there for one another. Amen!!

Folks, how do you think a person feels if they feel alone? If they don't have anyone who seems to care? And especially if they feel this way towards church people.

This is one area – Christians – Church family we need to be more sensitive to. Don't allow people to

7

feel they aren't cared about.

And there is a good reason why.

We can't do it alone!

If you are trying to handle life alone, you are not going to feel very secure.

Have you learned this truth?

If you haven't, you will!

When all of life presses in from every direction, it can be overwhelming.

Moses learned that lesson after he had led the people of Israel out of Egypt.

The demands of leading that great multitude of thousands of people was overwhelming.

At times I get overwhelmed with 400 people in this church. I can't imagine the great multitude that Moses tried to care for all by himself.

Thankfully, he had a wise father-in-law, Jethro to give him some advice. In Exodus 18:17-18 (NIV) we read: Moses' father-in-law replied, "**What you are doing is not good.** I don't know about you but that might be a little sensitive to some people for their in law to tell them what they are doing is not good. But Jethro, Moses father-in-law said, ... ***these people who come to you will only wear you out.***

8

The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone."

And they came up with a plan so Moses could share the work with others. The plan worked!

Folks, as your pastor, I need you – the staff needs you - We need one another.

Sometimes we don't like to admit that, but it is true.

We might be able to exist without one other, but we are not able to truly live life in isolation.

And God never intended for us to do that.

Paul talks about how we need one another in the church in 1 Corinthians 12.

He compares our relationships with one another to the relationship parts of the human body have to one another.

We read in 1 Corinthians 12:21 (NIV), "***the eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!"***

Of course, the point Paul is trying to make is that we are not independent of one another.

We are interdependent. Can you imagine all of looking like an eyeball?

Each of us needs something from someone else.

And so, God pulls together diverse people from all over and puts them together in the church.

And this is a beautiful thing. Have you noticed how different all of us are from one another?

You see, we need people who are not like us to provide what we lack. Oh, people listen to me – there are people in this church who are so different than me – and yet – they are okay!

And the church can be a place where that happens.

You see, the church should be a place where the walls that divide us come tumbling down.

Next I want you to see - We are united in Christ.

And this unity in Christ overcomes every barrier to our relationships.

Listen to these words in Galatians 3:28 (NLT), ***There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all Christians— you are all Christians - you are one in Christ Jesus.***

That means that old people and young people can fellowship and serve together.

That means that educated people and uneducated people can work and fellowship together.

That means that rich people and poor people can be genuine friends.

The key is Christ. We are united in Christ. Amen

What we have in common is Christ.

It is the gospel of salvation that has brought us together.

You are not alone! You don't have to try to do it alone.

God never intended for you to have to do it alone.

He wants you to sense the security that comes from knowing there are faithful people in partnership with you.

You need to rejoice in these people.

Thank God for them. Draw upon their support and their prayers.

Paul says, ***"I thank my God every time I remember you." Verse 3***

Depend on them and be one yourself.

But there is another lesson we need to learn.

We have seen the truth that we are not alone.

We can rejoice in the partnership of faithful people who are there to help us and support us.

And there is a certain sense of security in that.

But we need more than that. The second lesson is to learn to...

2. Paul's joy was in the fact that he had decided to put his CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

I want to draw your attention to verse 6 and lift the word "**Confident**"

6 being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until The Day of Christ Jesus.

Another companion word for this word, Confident is our English word **security, trust, reliance and the feeling of certainty.**

Paul said, "***I am confident of this one thing.***"

Or he could have said it like this,

"I am secure in this one thing."

"I am certain of this one thing."

This is the thought of one's complete trust in God for His salvation.

It's important for us to understand that confidence and assurance are two of the striking traits of genuine believers.

Believers know God, they know Him personally.

God's Holy Spirit actually lives within the heart and body of the believer.

You see – the believer has absolute confidence in the work of salvation which God has begun in their life.

It's a sense of spiritual security. Talking about security – let me share this story with you.

I read something by Dr. Jerome Frank, professor of psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University that illustrates this need.

Whenever I am flying and I engage people in conversation a confession is almost always forthcoming when they find out I am a psychiatrist. A few years ago, before all of the modern security measures were installed at the nation's airports, a man I was sitting next to on a coast-to-coast flight told me, "You know, I used to be deathly afraid of flying.

It all started after that man brought a bomb on board a flight to Denver to kill his mother-in-law. I could never get it out of my mind that someone on board one of my flights might also be carrying a bomb."

I asked, "Well, what did you do about it?"

He replied, "Well, I went to one of those special schools for people who are afraid of flying and they

13

told me there was only one chance in ten thousand that someone would be on board my flight with a bomb.

That didn't make me feel much better.

The odds were still too close.

But then I reasoned that if there was only one chance in ten thousand that one bomb would be on the plane, there was only one chance in 100 million that two bombs would be on board.

And I could live with those odds."

So I asked, "But what good would that do you?"

He quickly replied, "Ever since then, I carry one bomb on board myself—just to improve the odds."

Does that make you feel more secure to fly?

We all need a sense of security.

The work begun in us by God is **a good work**; that is, it is a work that radically changed your life and my life when we came to the Savior and asked Him to forgive us of our sins and He did.

No matter what kind of life a person was living, once God converts that person, the new believer begins to live a good life: a life of ...

Righteousness, purity, and holiness

Love, joy and peace

Faith, humility and control.

14

Just this week I prayed to God in our church grounds, "God, I just want to live a life of righteousness. I just want to live a life of holiness and purity."

But the work I'm preaching about this morning is incomplete as long as we believers live on this earth.

You see every one of us is constantly under construction in this pilgrimage with God.

We are imperfect people as long as we are alive.

There is always a work for God to do in us.

Friends, listen to me, it's not one trip to the altar or two trips to the altar and we're there. NO!

God is always working within the life of the believer to help them to grow to be more like His Son.

God is always working on each of us to make us more and more pure and more and more holy and more and more faithful.

You see – now understand this – some of you here this morning struggle with purity.

Some of you struggle with living the life of holiness

Some of you struggle with being faithful.

It's Okay to struggle – as long as you're struggling you're still pursuing the things of God.

But friend, you can get the Victory – God has the victory for your life.

The Good work that God has started in us is to be completed when Jesus Christ returns to this earth and takes us home to be with Him.

When Jesus returns to this earth – it is then that we believers will be changed/transformed into a perfect man and given a perfect body.

And folks, get excited about this, we will experience a new heaven and a new earth with Christ for all of eternity.

That's the confidence Paul was talking about when he said, ***5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until The Day of Christ Jesus.***

Paul had a deep faith that God was at work – that God was in full control – and that God was in the midst of whatever happened, was happening, and would happen. Hallelujah

If a hardship came into his life, he had faith in God that God has a special purpose for that.

If pain dogged Paul's steps, he believed it was only because God allowed it.

If he was under arrest, he believed that this too was part of God's plan.

Let me say it again, we are under construction in our spiritual walk with God!

In other words, we all are a work in progress.

Christian friend, no one has arrived yet. There are no Super Christians in our midst this morning.

I remember someone saying, "Please be patient with me, God isn't finished with me yet." And it's true.

God is always working in our lives.

Now understand this – it is God's goal for our lives to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ.

We are being made to reflect Christ's character through our lives. This is the work God is trying to accomplish in our spiritual walk with Him.

Folks, we are in a spiritual process of transformation.

17

Now as I understand this – I am going to be in this transformation for the rest of my life here on this earth.

Yes, I'm saved – I'm sanctified – but I haven't arrived yet and neither have you!

It doesn't take place overnight. It's a process of change.

God uses everything in our lives to change us.

And God works in and through all things for our good and His glory.

Illustration:

This week the staff and I met to discuss this service and I informed them where God was leading me in this sermon and Amy Catron was talking about how God had worked a certain situation to their benefit when Ben was a baby.

Amy would you come up here this morning and share a little bit about this and how God worked to help you to afford special milk for Benjamin when you and Derek couldn't afford it.

And keep in mind folks, while she is telling us this story – remember God works in and through all things for our good and His glory.

(Amy's testimony)

18

Isn't that great to hear that? Doesn't that speak to almost all of us?

What do you think this miracle of the special milk for Benjamin did for Derek and Amy?

She won't forget it as long as she lives. It increased her faith in God. It helped her walk – and as she continues to tell others about it – it will help their faith.

Everyone of us could give a testimony of how God worked something out for us and it had to be Him because it couldn't have happened without Him.

Application:

If you are trying to handle life alone, you are not feeling very secure or confident right now.

You see, in our selves we don't have all the wisdom we need to make the right decisions in every circumstance.

We don't have all the knowledge we need.

We don't have all the abilities we need.

We don't have all the resources we need.

We don't have it all and we can't do it without God.

3. Paul's Joy was in the fact that he Relied On The Power Of A Faithful God

Thank God for the people in our lives.

But thank God that we serve a God who is able to do what He says He will do.

Listen to what Paul says in verse 6: ***...being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.***

Paul had no doubt that God would complete the work he had started.

What do we see here? What we see is that God is at work.

Our salvation is His work.

It is not something that we can earn ourselves. Salvation is of God.

Listen to one of the greatest passages describing salvation. It is found in **Romans 8:28-30**:

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he

predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

God has a plan for us.

We have been called according to his purpose.

And what is that purpose?

It is to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ.

But this is God's work. It is not ours.

Only God can change a human heart.

Let me say it again - this transformation doesn't take place overnight.

It is a process of change.

God uses everything in our lives to change us.

God works in and through all things for our good and his glory.

We read in 2 Corinthians 3:18 (NIV): ***“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”***

Our lives are being transformed, as the King James Version has it, from "**glory to glory.**"

Summary:

When we come to Jesus and repent of our sins are saved – we have experienced the first work of Grace called initial sanctification/salvation.

Later when we yield completely to the Lord every part of us we experience sanctification.

Initial Sanctification is the experience and process by which we are progressively set apart for God.

It is an instantaneous work, but also an ongoing work.

It is a work that begins at regeneration in what we call initial sanctification and continues until glorification.

Glorification is when we die or we are raptured out of this world.

Spiritual believer - God is in the process of developing us to be more and more like His Son.

In other words, God will finish what he began.

God never starts something that he cannot finish.

We start things we can't finish, but God never does.

I begin a project around the house, and often, about halfway through,

I temporarily quit with the intention to finish later.

The problem is, later may or may not ever come.

In fact, sometimes I start another project, and then another, until I have projects coming out of my ears.

How about you? Do you always finish what you start?

Thank God that he didn't quit what he started!

Aren't you glad that Jesus didn't quit half way to the Cross?

Thank God he didn't conclude that living a good life and doing a few miracles was enough.

We didn't need a good man or a miracle worker.

We needed a Savior — a perfect sacrifice for sin.

When Jesus, on the Cross, said, "**it is finished**", he revealed that he had finishing power.

God will finish what he began. You can count on it.

Paul said he was confident of this. Listen to what he said in 2 Timothy 1:12 (NAS): ... **for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that he is able**

to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

Paul was convinced.

He had been persuaded by his experience of God that God could be trusted.

And isn't this what faith is? Isn't faith trusting God? We can trust that God will do what he says.

You see, we not only have people who are with us and for us, we have a God who is with us and for us!

Again, we are not alone. God is on our side! Listen to what Paul says in Romans 8:31-32:

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (NIV)

If God is on our side, then little else really matters, does it?

We can feel secure in the fact that the God who is for us is going to finish his work in us.

He is going to present us before his throne faultless.

He who sees the end from the beginning already sees us as glorified through Christ.

Nothing and no one can take that away from us. He goes on to say in Romans 8:38-39:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NIV)

Our eternal destiny is secure through the finished work of Christ.

So we can feel secure.

God has not left us alone.

He has given us faithful people to stand with us, to pray for us, to support us, for whom we can rejoice and give thanks.

And he is ever with us.

He will never leave us nor forsake us.

By his power he has saved us and by that same power he will take us to Heaven.

You can count on it.

25

You can rely on the power of a faithful God.

We are not alone.