

Philippians Ch 1 Vs7-11

The defense and confirmation of the Gospel

Last week we began to get into the 1st 6 vs of this ch and in them you recall that we learned that Paul is the instrumental author of this letter. I say instrumental because the writing of scripture is unique in that it always 2-fold in its authorship, there's always the instrumental author and then there's the actual author. The actual author as you know is the Holy Spirit, we read in 2nd Tim 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*" 2 Peter 1:21 tells us that "*prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.*"

So in reality the Holy Spirit is the author of the written word of God, however there were various human instruments used in the penning of these letters in this case the human instrument was Paul the apostle. and with him at this point is his companion and right hand man, the one who is currently co-laboring with him – Timothy. and He's writing to all the saints, all those who have been set apart for the work of service unto the Lord, which is in reality every single believer in Jesus Christ because what makes you a saint is nothing more than being found "in Christ". There is nothing more that makes you a saint and there's definitely nothing less, you recall we mentioned 2 types of people in this world the "saints" and the "aints" and the only thing that determines which category you fit into is whether or not you're in Christ. Now those 2 little words "in Christ" we kind of skipped over last week or didn't really spend any time on but I want to take just a second to remind you of a little of what that entails because this is one of the greatest and most critical terms probably in the entire bible for the believer when you begin to realize all that it means and implies, "in Christ."

We went over it when we began the book of Eph but I want to remind you of it now because it means way more than if you're in Christ, you're a Christian, sure it includes that, but that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of that term much less exhaust it. In Christ is both where we live and how we live, stop to think for a minute about what it means to live *in* a certain environment and then benefiting from the provisions of that environment. For example we gather at least once a week and several of us many times a week *in* these four walls, and we benefit from the provisions that are ours in this environment. We have a place to sit, this environment provides that for you, there's shelter from the sun, shelter from the rain, shelter from the snow or freezing cold. From the whipping wind that likes to mess up our hair and cause us to lose our place in the bible. The Lord has provided air-conditioning for us *in* this environment and heat when we need it; the Lord has provided lights where by we can read our bibles, restrooms for our convenience, there are telephones and classes for your children, P. A. so that I don't have to yell for you to hear me. There's so much to benefit from just by being *in* this building.

A baby lives *in* an atmosphere for around 9 months where by it draws from the resources that are provided *in* the mother's womb, everything it needs in order to live and flourish and grow in health and strength is provided for that child and it draws from those resources while it's *in* that environment. You could think of the lakes and the fish that live in them, it's absolutely critical that a fish be in that environment and drawing from the resources and provisions of that environment in order to survive and grow. You see these are things we can relate to, well allow me now to direct you to the fact that as believers you are to live and flourish and grow and draw from the provisions and resources that are yours in Christ. He is where you live, it's in Him (the bible says) that "*we live and move and have our being.*" Where do you live? In Joplin, no; where do you really live? Oh yeah, in Christ, and we are to benefit from the provisions that are there *in* that environment.

As you study through the 1st 3 ch of Eph Paul deals with those provisions and resources that have been given to you "in Christ". But here Paul is writing to all who are in Christ along with the bishops or overseers and deacons, so in reality this is to the entire church body. and Right off the bat he begins to emphasize the joy that he experiences over them for their *fellowship* in the gospel. Notice vs 3-5

This word "fellowship" being the key, *koinonia* or partnership in the propulsion of the gospel and we spent a little bit of time on that last week, so we won't today. But if you're interested in our perspective here when it comes to tithing or giving to the work of the ministry for the propulsion of the gospel, get the tape from the 2nd service last week. But concerning the word "fellowship" Paul gives us in these 1st 11 vs, 3 thoughts concerning what true Christian fellowship entails, we won't examine them in detail but so that you might see them and research them on your own time if you like we see in vs 3-6 that Paul has them in his mind.

He speaks there of his remembrance of them, in vs 7-8 he takes it a little deeper, not only does he have them on his mind, but he has them in his heart, and then finally in vs 9-11 he takes it to yet another level of intimacy when we read that he has them in his prayers, these 3 things being the ingredients of true Christian fellowship or *koinonia*. We finished up last week considering vs 6 emphasizing or placing the focus on the faithfulness of God. He says (Read) and You recall I gave you several scriptures that declare the faithfulness of God, He will do what He says He will do, the bible says that God is not a man that He should lie. In other words God is saying that He's not like us, saying one thing and doing another, our walk so often failing our talk. Starting projects never to finish, my wife and I had the blessing of being able to build a small home last year. We were living in a 2-bedroom fixer upper, that in 5 yrs I never fixed up, (maybe a little here and there) but I thought, "man, we'll build this home, I'll remodel this baby in a couple of months, we'll sell it and the good times will role."

Well, it's been almost a year and guess what, we're still in the fixing up stages, isn't that horrible? But God is not a man that He should lie, again the bible says let God be true and every man a liar, God will do whatever it is that He says He'll do, if He commits to a work it's as good as done. That's what Paul is saying here, he says I'm absolutely confident, or I'm emphatically assured of the fact that, "*He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" Until the day you're raptured out of here and see Him face to face, there is only one thing that can keep God from completing the work that He's begun in you.

It's not your enemy, all the forces of hell can't prevent God from doing the work that He's committed to doing in you. Jesus said in regards to the church that He would build (which includes you if you know Jesus Christ) that the very gates of hell couldn't prevail over it. The only thing that's going to keep God from doing the work in you that He desires to do is you. Will God do it? Absolutely, but you need to understand the balance of the scriptures, He's not going to violate your free-will, if you don't want Him working in your life that's your choice, He won't force Himself upon you, but He is faithful to that which He has begun. Heb 12:2 says that He is, "*the author and finisher of our faith.*" Don't forget that, not only did He begin it, but He will finish it as well, you just be responsible to remain yielded to His hand upon your life. and I believe that this vs applies both individually and corporately, we've applied this to individual lives, the work that God is doing in you personally, but remember Paul is writing to a corporate body of believers, God's begun a work in this body of believers, and He's faithful to complete or perfect it or fulfill His intentions through it as well.

Vs7

Paul says it's absolutely just, or right for me to think this concerning you, that God is going to finish what He started. It's right to trust in the Lord. I know that God is going to complete this work in you of the fellowship in the gospel, I know that we will be partnering in the propulsion of the gospel till the end. Because you're in my heart and the Greek could just as easily be rendered as, "you have me in you're heart" it could go either way, though this is more likely the proper rendering. Or maybe he wrote it in such a way so as to leave it so that they would understand that there was a mutual love and care for one another. So that he's saying, I know that this work that God is doing in you is going to be fulfilled because there's such love that we share for one another that nothing is going to get in the way of us co-laboring in the gospel. There is an unbreakable bond of love, or this connection between us that God is using and is going to continue to use to propel the gospel. It's that fellowship or koinonia, a unity and like vision that God has cultivated and has continued to nurture between us that He has chosen to use to take the gospel to the world.

But Paul says here, “I have you in my heart”, this that 2nd aspect of fellowship that we observed a minute ago, vs 3 pointing to the fact that he had them in his mind, but now moving a little bit deeper. Why, because it’s possible to have people or a certain person in your mind without really having them in your heart. If we were to be honest many people would have to confess today *not* that, “I have you in my heart”, but, “I have you on my *nerves*”. But Paul’s love for them was one of sincerity, it was genuine and he carried them in his heart, both on the mission field, and in prison. He says here that they are in his heart both in his chains, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. Now, there’s something sort of tucked away there that I want you to notice. Part of Christianity is defending and confirming the gospel, see that, understand that, take notice of that. Peter tells us, “*sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.*” When Peter speaks there of giving a defense, it’s the same exact word that Paul uses here in speaking of his defense of the gospel, it’s the Greek word “apologia” from where we get our word that we use when we speak of “apologetics” speaking of those who take a stand to defend the gospel.

When we defend the gospel we do so by bringing forth the truths of the word of God, by rightly dividing the word of truth and making a case for the good news of Jesus Christ and when we make a logical defense of the gospel, a defense that is rightly divided and sound it *confirms* or establishes the word, it settles the deal. and if we can’t defend the gospel, (which we can) but if we can’t make a defense of the gospel to the non-believing world then there’s no point in even being a Christian. “What are you saying Jeff? Are you saying that if I don’t know everything then I might as well give up?” No, that’s not what I’m saying, what I am saying is that if this isn’t true, if what we know as the word of God is a pack of lies or just some book filled with neat mythological tales by a bunch of guys that had good intentions but in the end it’s not real. Then we may as well close our bibles right now and go home and be thoroughly humiliated and disgraced that we were so deceived as to ever believe any of it. As Paul said, hey, if the resurrection isn’t real, then we’re of all men the most pitiable because we invest our whole lives into the validity of it. But it is real, the word of God is true, the problem isn’t the lack of evidence, or the fact that we don’t have anything to work with in order to state our case or make our defense because that’s not the fact. The problem lies in the overwhelming abundance of evidence that is so vast and immeasurable that it’s hard if not humanly impossible to learn it *all* there’s so much.

So if there’s a problem it’s in our ability to learn it because there’s so much and we should be praying, “God teach us to know and understand your word that we might be able to make an accurate defense and confirmation of the gospel.” That’s why Paul told Timothy when he left him in order to oversee a church to *study* to show yourself approved unto God, why? So that you can be a workman that need not to be ashamed because you rightly divide the word of truth.

Paul told Titus that an elder should be those who are “*holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.*” Why? “*For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.*” In other words there are a lot of heretical teachers out there who need to be exposed lest they lead the sheep astray, but how can you recognize the lie unless you know the truth, how can you know what the counterfeit looks like with out having an acute awareness of the legit.

We need to study the word of God, I was so blessed this last week when someone approached me concerning the men in this fellowship and he said you know I’ve never been in a church where so many men know the word of God. Now as an under-shepherd to the Chief Shepherd, that blessed my heart and if you’ve been here more than about 2 weeks you know that we emphasize a study of the word not only corporately but you are to be cultivating a personal relationship with God. How? Through prayer and the study of His word, and we need to be equipped in God’s word, that’s why I’m never too worried about running over in time in our studies (you guys are saying, “believe me we know”). But the question shouldn’t be do we have the time to be in God’s word for an hour it should be time to do anything else? If you have time to watch the news or read the paper or anything else, then you have time to study God’s word, because believe me when I tell you it’s priority and importance out weighs anything else that this world has to offer. Why, so that we can establish and confirm the gospel, where would we be today if Paul couldn’t have defended the gospel, don’t get me wrong I’m not exalting him but the bottom line is that God chose him for the work.

But you can begin to see the importance of possessing by the grace of God and the study of the word the ability to defend and confirm the gospel. and Many times in the NT God would confirm the word, through signs and wonders, miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit confirming the reality and validity of the word. Acts 2:42-43 “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.*” Acts 4:29-30 “*Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.*” and The list could go on, but notice that they requested signs and wonders of God in order that boldness might be given to them for the preaching of the word. In other words the miracles would confirm the word thereby increasing their boldness to proclaim it all the more.

I find nothing wrong with seeking God and praying that He might begin to do miraculous things, not that we're seeking a sign, but that the word might be established. Paul told the Corinthian believers, "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.*" Now he went on to say that he would speak wisdom to the mature but the point was that he didn't want to woo anyone with smoothly articulated vocabulary, but He wanted people to be convinced in the power and reality of the living God.

The gifts haven't ceased, they've been neglected, or quenched, again as you read through Acts you find people getting healed, the gospel being preached and people getting saved. You never see the apostles holding a healing or miracle service whereby they're hitting people and they're all falling over, but God wants to do a work and confirm the gospel in and through people's lives. There's no need to fear the gifts of the Spirit but rather we should be open to the Spirits move in our midst in a decent and orderly fashion as the scriptures teach, now if I'm sharing and someone starts spouting off in tongues that wouldn't be decent or orderly. That would be chaotic, confusing and disruptive and you won't find scriptural support for such actions, but all this to say that we need to be equipped to defend and confirm the gospel.

Why, read on, "*you all are partakers with me of grace.*" We're all in this thing together, Christianity as I've said so many times is not a spectator sport, and though when it comes to various acts of service we can disqualify ourselves through sin and rebellion, but as far as Christianity in general is concerned there are no bench warmers and everyone is a starter and no one ever gets pulled out of the game until the day we go to be with the Lord. You are all partakers of grace, we have all partaken of the gospel of grace (have you partaken this morning of the gospel of grace) oh you may know Jesus Christ but His mercies are new every morning come to the table fresh this morning and partake (and if you've never been God's giving you an invitation this morning to partake of His grace and live forever).

Do you understand what it means to be saved? Could you explain that to somebody today, if someone were to walk up to you and ask you what it meant to be justified before God what would you tell them? What is eternal life? What is atonement? My sins have been atoned for, what does that mean? Can you defend the gospel; these are the basic fundamental elements of the gospel that every single Christian should be able to articulate to the non-believer. What does it mean that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sin? Specifically it points back to the Mercy Seat (which was the lid to the Ark of the Covenant) where God would meet the people and the forgiveness of sin would be imputed to them through the shedding of the blood of the sin offering being sprinkled there upon the Mercy Seat and through the shedding of the blood God would forgive their sin and reconcile them to Himself and it all happened at the Mercy Seat.

Jesus Christ is our Mercy Seat, He is where we meet God and receive reconciliation to God through the shedding of His blood for the remission of our sin and it's through His blood that we receive atonement for our sin. He is our propitiation. How many Christians can explain what it is that Jesus Christ has done for the world and justification before God in Him? "Well, that's the pastor's job I don't have time", oh; really? Do you read the newspaper? Sure I do, but you don't have time to read the good news, interesting. Interesting the things we have time to do at the exclusion of God's word or by neglecting corporate study of His word at church, we're partakers of grace, so lets partake.

Vs8

Paul could speak so emphatically that he calls God as his witness, there is no higher witness and what was it that he called God to witness concerning himself. His longing for them from the very deepest seat of the emotion of his being, a longing that's so emphatic that it's not even of himself; it's the affection of Jesus Christ It's with the heartbeat of Jesus, how could that be? Because Christ was his life, he said for me to live is....(what) Christ. Oh how we need to allow the Lord via His Holy Spirit to cultivate a depth such as this in our lives

Vs9

Here it is, Paul has them in his prayers, fellowship. In his mind, in his heart and in his prayers, and what is his prayer for them? That their love may abound more and more, now in order for it to abound even more, the implication there is that it had to be abounding in the 1st place. Paul is commending them for their love Jesus said that people will know that you belong to Him, not by your bumper stickers, not by your T-shirts or patches or Christian type jewelry, but by your love for one another. Paul is saying you guys got it going on, but there's room for more, there is always room to grow in love to abound even more in love. But what is that he desires that love to grow in? Notice, knowledge and all discernment, someone has said love is blind, but that person didn't read their bible, love isn't to be blind, Paul wasn't about tolerance, but rather he desired that they use wisdom in love, and what does the bible say? James 3:17 *"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."* You remember that Paul rebuked the Corinthian church who seemed to glory in their "love" and "openness" which lacked any sense of knowledge and discernment (1 Corinthians 5:1-7). and As a result there was major sin being tolerated in the church, a man sleeping with his step mom and yet the church was just turning a blind eye to it in the name of "love". and Yet a tolerance of sin will corrupt the whole body, our love is to abound in knowledge and all discernment, speaking of exercising wisdom and applying insight in a situation.

Vs10

Another reference to the rapture, but we're to discern those things that are excellent or test those things out that they may be proven to be of godly value to our lives. and Again the approval of things excellent carries with it the implication of the recognizing those things that aren't of godly value so as to disapprove of them. Rom 12:9 says, "*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*" and Again in 1 Thess 5:21-22 we read, "*Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil.*" Why, notice the last ½ of the vs (read) Maybe we'll touch on this just a little more in depth next week but the emphasis is so that you might be pure and blameless. Sincere speaking of purity, that being inner righteousness and with out offense means that they would be blameless, speaking of outer righteousness. A 2-fold work that God does in our lives and He does it in that order, He works in the inner man and through that transforms the outward man.

Vs11

Fruit in your life glorifies and brings praise to God, but the fruits of righteousness come only by Jesus Christ fruit is only bore as the result of abiding in Christ. A few key vs out of John ch 15 that correlate to this would be John 15:1-2, Jesus speaking said, "*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.*" Vs 4-5 "*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" and John 15:8 "*By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*" James 3:18 tells us, "*now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.*" and Paul's prayer is that they might be sincere and with out offense, the result being that they would be filled with the fruits of righteousness as a by product of abiding in Christ to the glory and praise of God. His desire was that of Christ's for His disciples that people would see their light so shining that as they did their good works their Father in heaven would be glorified.