

Philippians: Rejoicing in the Advancement of the Gospel
“Rejoicing in Gospel Partnership”
Philippians 1:1–11
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We will be looking at the book of Philippians in our study. We have been tremendously blessed during this transition season. The Lord has provided for us so many different pastors from all over the states to basically preach their best sermon on Sunday morning and we have just been absolutely blessed by that. I come each week thinking “How did they know this is exactly what we needed to hear this week?” It’s been a blessing to see the Lord provide in so many different ways and how other pastors want to love us and serve us.

One of our values here at Briarwood is to preach through books of the Bible. We love preaching the whole counsel of God's Word. Now, it's really hard in our transition season to do that with guest pastors. So, we want to do that on Sunday nights and we want to use our pastoral staff to walk through these books together so that we can minister to one another. It has already been such a blessing to me. I get the privilege to kicking off our new series in the book of Philippians. The book of Philippians is probably one of my favorite books of the Bible. It is full of what I like to call these ‘Christian coffee cup verses.’ There are these powerful motivational verses that run throughout this book that are absolutely tremendous as they minister to the soul.

Philippians is also a book about joy in many ways but it's not just a temporal joy or just a circumstantial joy, but it's a transcendent joy. It’s a joy from above. As we go through Philippians there is this joy that radiates from Paul that he is rejoicing constantly through this book. He calls us to rejoice, but not rejoice in the fallen world where there are hard and difficult circumstances or situations, but we are to rejoice in Christ, the Gospel and the grace that He has given us and it is in the advancement of the Gospel. We will see how Paul is fixed on the Gospel advancing in our world as we go through Philippians.

The title of this series is Rejoicing in the Advancement of the Gospel and as we go through Philippians, we will unpack what that means and how that applies to our life. This is theme even starts in the first few verses of this book at Paul thanks God habitually for their partnership in the Gospel. He praises the Lord that they have been working with him from the first day and until now. Paul says in Philippians 1:12, *[12] I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel.* His imprisonment is causing the Gospel to move forward, and in that he rejoices.

Then in the next paragraph he talks about these other preachers that are trying to preach the Gospel out of envy, to really stick it to him while he's in prison. He's like, “You really don't know me, do you? I love the fact that I don't care if you're doing it out of poor motivation. I love the fact the Gospel is being preached because the power is in the Gospel. So praise the Lord and I will rejoice.” Then he ends in chapter one of Philippians, saying, ‘To live is Christ, to die is gain and whatever it is that the Lord sees fit, for me, it is all joy.’ So this is a book about rejoicing in the advancement of the Gospel, and it is such an honor to walk through this book with you.

My plan is to start with Philippians 1:1-2, then give a little bit of introduction about this book, and then move on to Philippians 1:3-11, because that's really going to be the heart of this study. Philippians 1:1-2 says *[1] Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in*

Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul, as he opens his letters, traditionally says who the author is which is him and sometimes others. Then he says who he's writing to, and then he gives this kind of normal greeting of grace and peace. Basically, he's reminding us of the Gospel, that we have peace with God and peace with one another because of grace and what God is doing in His world. The authors of this book is Paul and coauthored by Timothy but if you really look at the letter, it's really Paul. Timothy is there and he may be his scribe or secretary. Paul may be dictating to him as Timothy is writing down the things that Paul has to say but this is really Paul's letter and you can tell that by the way that he talks. Paul is talking about his situation and the things that he is thinking through, the things that he's praying for, the things he's encouraging in this church.

Now, Timothy is important to the church at Philippi, which is probably why Paul included him. Timothy was there when this church was planted about ten years before this letter was written and Paul intends to send Timothy at a future date to go back and minister to this church. This church has a special relationship with Timothy, so it's right to include him so Timothy is there with Paul. Paul is in prison, most probably in Rome, awaiting trial for his possible execution. He's not in a great place. Timothy is there ministering to Paul, loving him, encouraging him, helping him in the ministry while he's in prison. So Timothy and Paul are writing this book to us, and he's writing to the church at Philippi.

Philippians was probably written around 60, 61, 62 A.D. approximately, and a decade before which you can read about in Acts 16, Paul arrives with others to try to reach this area for the Gospel. It is the northern part of Greece into Macedonia. He goes and does what he typically does and that is when he goes to a new place, he seeks out either a synagogue or other Jews that are worshipping so that he can show how Christ is the revealed Messiah. But when he gets to Philippi, there's not enough Jews to have a synagogue. So he goes down to this river and meets this lady named Lydia. Lydia is a seller of purple goods. She's a wealthy business woman. Paul preaches the Gospel to her, comes to Christ and then begins this operation of ministry out of her house. It is a home base and Paul along with others spend about three months there ministering the Gospel.

At one point, this young slave girl who is demon possessed and has this fortune telling ability follows Paul around and Paul not wanting to be associated with that, rebukes and casts out the demon from this slave girl forever changing this little girl's life, but in doing so angers her owners and winds up in jail with Silas. While in jail, a great earthquake takes place, destroys the prison. The prisoners are able to get free. The jailer fearing about what may happen because of this – the shame, the punishment – takes a sword and is about to take his own life. Paul stops him and says, 'Wait a minute, we're still here. Do not do this.' Paul preaches the Gospel to this jailer and he comes to Christ and his whole household are baptized. Shortly after that, Paul is kicked out of the city. So his first visit isn't very long initially. Now he does visit on his third missionary journey at least twice. He has some history, some time with them, but he has this deep love, this deep affection for this church that is very evident in this letter because of their love and their care.

This church at Philippi is a very poor church, but yet it's a very giving church. They regularly give to the cause of Christ, to the advancement of the Gospel and Paul is tremendously honored and thankful because of them. Part of the what's going on here in this letter is that the church at Philippi knows that Paul is in prison and needs support. The prisons in those days weren't like the prisons that we have today, where you have meals and other amenities to take

care of you. You are very dependent upon others, upon your friends, upon your family when you were in prison for support, otherwise, you may starve and die and oftentimes that would take place. Being the giving church that they are, they send Epaphroditus on the long journey to Rome to bring support, to bring aid, to care for their beloved apostle. Along the way, Epaphroditus gets sick, almost dies. He's delayed in coming, but he finally gets there, gives news about what's going on in the church and ministers to Paul in a time of need.

Paul writes back with several aims. One is to say thank you for their support, two, thank you for their love, and three, thank you for their comfort. He also thanks them for sending Epaphroditus to care for him because he needed it. Then he updates them. This is what's been going on while I'm in jail. Here's who's coming to Christ. Here's what the Lord is doing. Then he wants them to take Epaphroditus back and warmly receive him. There may have been some doubts about his delay. What happened to him? Did he run off with the money? Is he hurt? Is he injured? What's going on? Please receive him well. Lastly, he deals with a few things that are going on with this church – some conflict, some pressures from material possessions, worry and financial struggles. So that's the background and the context for this book. Now I'd like to pick up where we left off in the passage at verse 3.

As we look at the rest of this Scripture for this study we will see in Paul's prayer and thanksgiving that he is going to be rejoicing in gospel partnership, especially in this church at Philippi who has walked alongside him, loved him and supported him. This phrase 'partnership in the gospel, partakers with me and grace' have a Greek word that we're very familiar with called Koinonia, which means fellowship, but it's deeper than what we typically think about fellowship. It's not just a church fellowship that usually includes food and a good time but Paul is talking about this partnership, this united togetherness, this deep love and affection, the shared life that we have together, the shared purpose of advancing the Gospel under the banner of our Lord Jesus Christ, who saved us by grace. We all are united in grace. That's what I want you to see in Paul's prayer of thanksgiving and how it's centered around this Gospel partnership.

Philippians 1:3-11 says *[3] I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, [4] always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, [5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. [6] 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. [7] 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. [8] For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. [9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

There are three things I want you to see in this text. Number one, Paul's gratitude. Number two, Paul's encouragement and number three, Paul's prayer. Let's start with Paul's gratitude. Right from Philippians 1:3-5 Paul has a habit of giving thanks throughout this book and his other epistles. In I Thessalonians 5:16-18 Paul says, *[16] Rejoice always, [17] pray without ceasing, [18] give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.* This is not something that He just preaches and not practices. This is something that he puts into practice in his life. This is a discipline for him that he eventually goes to Lord in giving thanks where he has a discipline of gratitude, which leads to a joy, which is absolutely amazing when you think about where Paul is writing this letter from – jail.

Paul is not where he wants to be. Nobody wants to be in jail. He wants to be planting churches. He wants to be taking the Gospel where it is not. He wants to be reaching and changing lives. He's been called by Christ Himself to take the Gospel to the Gentiles and he so desperately wants to do that. He's not with the people that he loves. Again, it's a very lonely place in prison. He has Timothy, maybe some others have visited him but there are probably long stretches of isolation, long stretches of being by yourself with your fears, with your worries, maybe your frustrations. Then think about the fact that maybe he had a few doubts and wonders about what's taking place in the churches that he's planted, what's taking place in the people that he's loved and shepherded along the way. He knows of the threats and the people who are coming to distort the Gospel and preach a false gospel. Perhaps he's worried that his life's work will be completely burned up?

Yet we see Paul in prison giving thanks with joy. If I'm being honest right now, and I was in jail I would not be giving thanks with joy, especially if I'm not doing what I'm being called to do or want to do, and with the people that I want to be with. I'm going to be probably very frustrated, very upset, maybe even bitter, maybe even angry, maybe even depressed, maybe asking question, "God, why in Your sovereignty did you allow this to happen? I just don't get it. Why did you place me here? You've made this call on my life, and yet I'm not being able to fulfill it. What is your plan?" But that's not how we find Paul and I think it's because he has this habit of giving thanks. Regular thanksgiving is a key ingredient for joy that overcomes your circumstances, that overcomes the problems in your life, that helps you to focus on the things that you have rather than the things that you do not have.

There's a lady named Susan Lutz who has an article called "Thankfulness Even When It Hurts" and she has a book with the same title, but in it she talks about this reality that we can easily get on this descending staircase of negativity in our life. She says this from the article; 'Many people have a descending staircase of negativity that has operated in their heads for years. Once they have thought the first negative thought, they know exactly where they're going to end up all the way to the bottom. They know ahead of time what each and every thought is going to be. And again, because their thoughts are so familiar, they seem so powerful and irrefutable. If that's true of you, remember being thankful is a way to step back from those thoughts and turn to the Lord, to trust what He has to say about your life. Over time this will become what feels real and natural to you.' She is saying that it's easy to get on this descending staircase of negativity that leads to your depression, anger, bitterness, and doubt and the way back from that staircase is gratitude – thanksgiving.

Researchers know this to be true. They have done many studies on people that are struggling with depression, difficulty and negativity. They have shown that feeling thankful can improve your sleep, your mood, and your immunity. Gratitude can decrease depression, anxiety, difficulties with chronic pain and risk of disease. One article said if there was a pill that could do all that, everybody would be taking it. Here's the reality. Every single one of us have access to that resource. We are to practice the discipline of gratitude. Lutz continues to say, "as soon as you are thankful, you begin to link your life to God's promises. You learn how to see your circumstances through the lens of God's Word instead of interpreting God's Word through the lens of your experiences which always dilutes, devalues, and diminishes God. It's like looking through the wrong end of a telescope instead of magnifying what is wonderful, what is grand, what is beautiful. We turn the telescope around and see it's smaller than what it really is." Paul's practice, his habit, his discipline of gratitude helps him to hold true to God's promises, hold true to God's sovereignty, and to be able to make statements like 'to live is Christ, to die, as gain.'

What's the application for us? I believe we ought to create a routine for giving thanks. This ought to be something that we develop in our life. It starts based in the most basic form which is as we read our Bibles every day, as we commune with God in prayer and personal worship, we ought to spend some time giving thanks to God, even when we don't want to, even when it's hard. We ought to give thanks for at least three things every single day to God. Thank you for the Gospel. Thank you that I'm saved by grace that's not based on my performance, but based on what You've done for me. Thank you that I have a roof over my head. Thank you for my family. We need to get specific, articulate things, and cultivate this attitude of gratitude in our hearts and this attitude of joy when we do that.

Then get creative and figure out routines in your family. Figure out something that would work for you personally. One of the things we do in our family, and I give credit to my wife because pretty much every good thing that we do in our family comes from her where I just kind of go along. One of the things that she has built into our family is our bedtime routine with our kids. When we put our kids to bed, we always do three things with them. Number one, we go through the family rules – obey mommy and daddy, don't hurt others, don't hurt yourself, don't break things, and always tell the truth. Two, then we ask them this question; 'What made you happy today?' And thirdly, we pray with them.

Going back to the question 'what made you happy' is that our kids are young and they don't quite understand all about giving thanks yet. They don't understand thankfulness but they do understand the emotion of happy – what it means to be happy. The reason we do this with them is that we want the last thought they have before their head hits the pillow, is something good, something positive, and it is such a beautiful thing – even when they don't want to do it or they're frustrated about something that happened at school or they're mad at mommy and daddy for something or they didn't get to play with a toy long enough before bedtime – to hear them say what made them happy today is so good for them and so good for me. It's also so good for me to say what made me happy that day. We ought to be cultivating these routines of gratitude, these routines of giving thanks.

Secondly, let's look at Paul's encouragement. Philippians 1:6 says *[6] 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.* What an amazing statement that is. What an unbelievable truth. Paul gives them this Gospel promise right here in the heart of his prayer, in the heart of his thanksgiving. Basically, he says, here's the assurance that you need, that God completes what He starts, that you're saved by grace and you're kept by grace. You're not saved by your grace and kept by your performance. No, once you're in Christ, you're secure in Christ, and He gives you the resources that you need to continue on and persevere, because it's incredibly hard to be a Christian where you're at so we need that encouragement. They needed that encouragement that God is with them, and His ministering to them even though Paul's in prison – the one they look to for hope when they look for direction. He tells them the Holy Spirit is working in them. God completes what He starts. He's going to give you the resources that is needed for you to persevere in this world. He is confident of their salvation. That's a bold statement.

How do you make a statement saying something like that, that you're confident of somebody's salvation? He knows what Jesus knows. He says you will know the tree by its fruits so he can make such a bold statement like that. I can give you assurance of salvation because I can see the fruit of the grace in your life. One reason he says this is he says because I hold you in my heart. Some commentators debate who holds who in their heart? Is it the Philippians or is it Paul? The simple answer is it's both. They both have this love and this affection for one another.

Paul is just kind of oozing with it in this paragraph that makes me a little uncomfortable but he's a manly man so he gets away with it. He has this love, this heart, this desire, this mutual love for one another. Then there is this mercy that's shown forth in their life, in their care for Paul while he's in prison, and their care for supporting others in the Gospel work.

Then Paul says that you are partakers in grace, not only in the imprisonment, but also in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel. You're on mission. You're continuing to spread the hope of Jesus in your world from the first day until now. You're persevering, and the reason why you're persevering is because God is preserving you. Paul uses what is showing forth as fruit in their lives to give them assurance and confidence. He's saying your love, your mercy and your ministry show evidence of God's grace in your life and you need this encouragement to continue on, to persevere.

One of the things that I love about the church is that it connects us with people that we would otherwise not be friends with or know or have the pleasure of doing life with, outside of Jesus Christ. I think about the many friendships I have here and the many friendships I have with people in churches all over the States and even all over the world. And I think what a blessing it is to me! Even more specifically, when we talk about the love, the affection, the mercy and being partnered in the Gospel in ministry, I think about two years ago when a tornado hit our house. Some of the things that I witnessed, this partnership, this koinonia, this love and affection, this mercy, this ministry showed up at my front door.

When a tornado hits your house, you're disoriented. Your life is literally turned upside down. You're wondering, 'what in the world am I supposed to do? Is insurance going to cover the things that I needed it to cover? What will we do with our dog Cooper since the fence is absolutely obliterated? What do we do to stay? Where do we get food?' There's a lot of questions. There's a lot of worries and God met us in all of that through Briarwood. You didn't come with t shirts, you didn't come all that organized but you just came. You put a tarp over our roof, you washed our clothes. You help me organize the things that were in my used-to-be-shed. You helped saw down limbs and take chainsaws to trees. And if that wasn't enough, you said, "you have a lot of help here. Let me go to your neighbors. Let me care for them. Let me minister to them." You all spent days and days with my neighbors, loving them, helping them, caring for them, showing them mercy, showing them grace. The thing that I heard for months and months on end after that was "wow, you have an amazing church."

My neighbors saw what Paul is talking about at the church in Philippi, this partnership in the Gospel, the mercy, the love, the joining together where you all were able to share the Gospel on my street in ways that I hadn't before because you all showed up. Paul is encouraging this church. He's saying to them, "Know the Gospel assurance, persevere, keep going, know that God is working in you and it's evident because you're going to need that as we continue to minister in a hostile world." We need to hear the same thing as we continue to love, as we continue to care, as we continue to give mercy to one another, this shows up every single day and I get the opportunity to witness it when somebody is in the hospital, when somebody has a death in their family, or when somebody has a baby and they bring meals to care for that young family. I see it every single day that you're partnering in the Gospel that you're partakers in grace together. We need to continue to hear it is God's grace that has saved us, that keeps us, that perseveres us.

We also need to encourage other like others, like Paul encourages us, particularly if you're someone who doubts your salvation. I've had many conversations with people that struggle saying, "am I really saved?" Typically, there are three kinds of people in this world; one, people that are saved and they know that they're saved, two, people that are not saved but

they think they are, which is a very dangerous place to be and thirdly, there are people who are saved, but they just don't know it. I encounter people like that all the time and in that I would point them to Philippians 1:6 that says *[6] 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.* Then I'd say 'what does it really mean to be a believer?'

What does it really mean to be in Christ? Let's talk about your testimony, not talking about your past testimony about when you think you came to Christ maybe when you were 8 or 25. I'm talking about your present testimony. Do you today believe that Jesus Christ is your only way to heaven, that He's your only hope, the One who forgives all your sins, that there is nothing that you add to your salvation, there is nothing that you do that can get you into heaven because the requirement to get in is perfection and none of us are perfect? But we don't have to be perfect because God sent One who was perfect for us. So today, do you trust in the Savior who is perfect for you and then took your sin record and paid it on the cross and canceled your debt? Then when God says, Why should I let you into my heaven? You say "You shouldn't because of what I've done, because I have not done anything to earn it. My only hope is in Jesus who did it all for me."

Do you have that confidence today? Do you believe? Do you trust in that? If that's not enough, where you say "I still need a little bit more" the second question you can ask is, 'does fruit show up in your life? Is there evidence of grace in your life?' Paul points to the evidence of grace in the church at Philippi. Do you show forth love for God's people? Jesus said in John 13:35, *[35] By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.* Do you have this love for one another? Are you merciful? Because Christ showed mercy to you, the sinner who deserved hell but received His heaven. Are you on a mission? Are you living for Christ, sharing this hope of the Gospel? None of us will do this perfectly, and some will have seasons where we do it better than others, and there'll be others where we are just kind of stumbling forward, which is where I'm at, but we cling on to the hope of the Gospel for the grace that saves is the grace that keeps us.

Thirdly and lastly is Paul's encouragement. Philippians 1:9-11 says *[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, [10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, [11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

Here Paul prays for three things. One, he prays that they would have love and discernment, two, that they would be pure and blameless, holy and Christ like, and three, that they would have fruit of righteousness, which is more of an external fruit from being in the service of the Lord than internal fruit. To sum up this whole section, Paul is basically saying, you have been tremendous. In this letter to the church at Philippi, he spends probably the least amount of time rebuking this church than he does with any other churches. He's saying you're doing an incredible job. Keep going, but don't be satisfied. Don't stop. Persevere in the faith. He's praying that they would grow, that they would press on, which he will talk about later in this book; that he presses on to obtain the prize.

He is praying that we persevere in the things that God has called us to do, that we would have this abounding love, this overflowing type of love filled with discernment, that we would we would kill sin in our life because sin kills us and that we would be fruitful in the works of ministry. I think about our church, Briarwood Presbyterian Church. We have such a wonderful legacy, a Gospel legacy here. May there never be a day that we stop praying, that we grow, that

we persevere, that we continue on in the faith. We continue to do the things God has called us to do.

I could say a lot about all three things, but I do want to say talk a little bit about this love with discernment. Why does he want us to have love with discernment? What is he talking about there? In a sense, it's we have to know how to love. We don't just love indiscriminately. We love in a very defined way, a very Biblical understanding of what love is modeled after Christ and this love is agape love – self-sacrificial love. We need to understand rightly how to love so we need discernment and wisdom to do this. We need to prove what is good and say 'no' to what is evil.

One of the occupational hazards of being the singles pastor and the young couples pastor, is my wife and I get to do a lot of premarital counseling and we love to do it. In one of these sessions we walk through I Peter 3 and I Peter 3:7 says [7] *Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.* Then I tell the husband, "You don't have to understand all women. That's impossible. But you have to understand one woman, your wife." This also applies to the wife – you have to understand your Neanderthal husband. It's hard work. You have to study each other. You have to learn each other. You have to figure out in wisdom how to best love them, how to best care for them, how to best set them up in a good position for them to thrive. It takes discernment.

My wife, Kate and I like to say we learned the hard way on this in our marriage. Kate and I are opposite in personalities, opposite in love languages and I probably made her cry every single day of our first year of marriage. I used to think I was a nice person. Part of that, was that we needed to learn each other, how to love each other. See, I'm an access service guy, so our whole first year marriage, I'm running around doing dishes, mopping. I'm thinking, "I'm being a really tremendous husband. I'm doing all these things to make her life easy." She is so grateful for that and very thankful but she says to me, "I know you're loving me and I see all these things that you're doing, but it really just not hitting me in a way that I really receive love. One of the things that you haven't really been doing is encouraging me or writing me letters or giving me nice notes."

My wife is a words of affirmation person, which is a whole lot easier than cleaning the dishes, by the way but for some reason, it's almost impossible for me to do. She said "All you have to do is send me a text that says, 'Thinking of you' and that takes about a millisecond, right? But my brain doesn't work that way. I have to slow down and think about how do I love her, how do I care for her? If I love her, I need to love her the way she receives love, not because she demands it, because she doesn't. It is because I want to honor her. I love her with wisdom. I want her to flourish. I think about every week how to send her a nice text. Can I write her a note? It doesn't have to be long so she can feel treasured and loved. She is having to learn the same thing about me. She did the dishes week and I about fell over because it was my job so that was amazing to me. She said 'you had a busy week this week with all the things you had to do and I just wanted to love you.' See, that's love with discernment, that's love with wisdom. We study each other.

We are to study the body of Christ. That is one of the reasons why we do spiritual gifts assessments here at Briarwood. We're in community groups with one another. We share life, small groups, and supper clubs together. With that we need to be taking the time and the hard work to understand one another so that we can best apply love and care for one another. We don't need to do that for us. We need to do that for those that are outside the walls of Briarwood, those that we engage with in our cubicles at work or in the parks, our sports teams and our gym.

Everywhere we go, do we take the time to slow down and understand people so we can at best apply love? Why? So that they could hear the hope of the Gospel – so their ears would be open and their hearts would be ready to receive the Greatest News.

The Greatest News is that we're not saved by what we do. We don't get to heaven because on the cosmic scale of goodness and badness we tipped in the right direction. We get to heaven because of Jesus, His grace, His mercy and forgiveness of our sins. Nobody else says anything like it. The Gospel has the power for you to have life and have life abundantly. His Gospel also has the power to unite people in ways that transcends culture, transcends personality, transcends interest. We want people to know that love.

If you're reading this today and you don't know this love, this transcendent joy that Paul's talking about, or this grace that Christ offers, it's not about what you do but it's about what's done for you. I pray that today you would come to know Jesus, that you will be a partaker of grace with us, that you join us in Gospel partnership so that you can have life here now and life eternal. You can have the same perspective of Paul that when the world takes everything away, they can never take away your eternal joy. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, we praise and thank You for Your Word. We thank You for this wonderful Book. Thank You for Your grace. I thank You that you saved me as that 20 year old college student. We thank You for the ways You have loved us through each other. We thank You that You have allowed us to be a witness in this lost world. We pray that we continue to persevere. We thank You for Your preserving grace that we're kept in grace not by our performance, but by Your love. May we grow. May we keep on in the work that You have called us and may there be people that are not yet born, praise God, because of our Gospel light. If there's anybody reading this struggling with assurance of salvation, we pray, Father, that in this study there was something that was said that would encourage their souls and we ask this in Jesus' Name, Amen.