

# Dear Palmetto



**Text: *Philippians 1:1-11***

What is the Largest Organism in the world?

- How about the **Blue Whale** weighing in at 109 tons and over 100 feet in length?
- Or maybe the **giant sequoia** at over 275 feet high with a trunk 100 feet around?
- Or how about the **Utah State Tree – The Quaking Aspen**? Each mature tree is usually only 65-80 feet tall, with a trunk around 1-2 feet in diameter.

According to the **NY Times**, the world's largest organism has been identified in the Wasatch Mountains of Utah. **Pando**, also known as "the trembling giant," is a huge stand of 47,000 Quaking Aspen trees and stems, growing from the root system of an individual male tree. The name Pando comes from the Latin meaning "I spread out." It covers 106 acres, weighs 6,600 tons. It is genetically uniform and acts as a single organism.

The Quaking Aspen grows by sending new shoots off the old roots. In this way, an individual plant may cover hundreds of acres all growing from a single interconnected root system. The interconnectedness of the Aspen not only gives life but also provides strength against harsh storms.

\* What a tremendous lesson for us. We in the church are meant to be like the mighty aspen, not like the single tree fighting for survival on our own but growing from a common root of fellowship in Christ Jesus around the true gospel.

## I. Paul's Introductory Greeting (1-2)

***Philippians 1:1-2*** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseer and deacons:<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### A. The Background (1)

#### 1. Salutation

- a. the name of the writer - *Paul (and Timothy)*
- b. the name of the recipient  
- *all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, the overseer, the deacons*
- c. a word of greeting - *Grace to you and peace...*

***2 Corinthians 11:23-28*** Are they servants of Christ? I am a better one—I am talking like a madman—with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless beatings, and often near death.<sup>24</sup> Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one.<sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea;<sup>26</sup> on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers;<sup>27</sup> in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.<sup>28</sup> And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches.

## 2. Setting – Philippi

- A city founded in the 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. and named after Philip II of Macedonia. He was the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi was a Roman colony, in many ways, like a miniature Rome, ruled by Roman law and Roman life reflected in its politics and even in its architecture.
- When Paul wrote this letter, the church had been in existence for about 10 years. How old is Palmetto? 10 years.
- Acts 16 describes Timothy's conversion and then Paul's change of plans following his Macedonian vision. In Philippi Paul and Timothy encounter (1) Lydia, (2) A slave girl, (3) Philippian Jailer.

## B. Blessing (2)

v. 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 1. **Grace** – the typical Greek greeting.

Grace is God's undeserved favor displayed through Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

*Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

- 2. **Peace** – the typical Hebrew greeting.

Peace is the bridge that now exists between us and God because of His grace. We are now reconciled to God. We now are at peace.

Grace and peace come how? v.2 ...from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

## II. Paul's Expression of Gratitude (3-8)

*vv.3-5 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*

### A. Paul's Attitude (3-5)

v.3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

v.4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

v.5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

We read that word joy or rejoice 19 different times. The name of Jesus Christ is mentioned more than 40 times.

Some writers say this speaks primarily of their financial support for Paul, but there are at least four ways recorded in this letter which show their **partnership in the Gospel** (cf **Phil 1:7**)

1. **Giving** - Php 4:14-16
2. **Praying** - Php 1:19
3. **Suffering** - Php 1:29, 30
4. **Witnessing** - Php 4:2,3

**Partnership** – koinonia – fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation.

We in the church are meant to be like the **mighty aspen**, not like the single tree fighting for survival on our own but growing from a common root of fellowship in Christ Jesus around the true gospel.

\* When it came to Paul's mission, the Philippians were SENDERs, Paul and his companions were GOERs. **One was the arrow, the other was the bow.** Neither was more important than the other, because like the Quaking Aspen, they were INTERDEPENDENT.

William Carey, known as "The Father of Modern Missions," saw missions as a miner into a deep mine — one which had never been explored, with no one to guide. He said to Andrew Fuller and John Ryland and his other pastor friends: "I will go down, if you will hold the rope." And John Ryland reports: "He took an oath from each of us, at the mouth of the pit, to this effect—that 'while we lived, we should never let go of the rope.'"

What is it that brought Paul and the Philippians into fellowship? The fellowship of the gospel. It was the fellowship around a common goal.

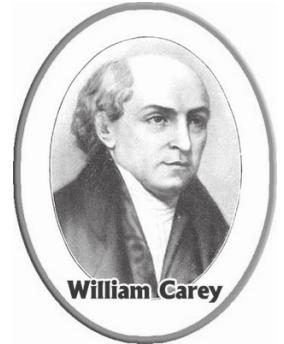


Illustration of Tolkein's "the Lord of the Rings," The first book is called "The Fellowship of the Ring." You have nine diverse characters, from completely different backgrounds and with completely different lifestyles, but they were a fellowship in that they were completely united in their goal which involved their mission of the ring.

## B. Assurance (6)

**v.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.*

### 1. God Commences the Work – *he who began a good work in you*

Can I lose my salvation? It depends on who saved you.

**Consider Lydia in Acts 16:14** *One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*

**What does Paul tell us in Romans 3:11?** *no one understands; no one seeks for God.*

**If God didn't begin His work in you, you would never come.** *Ephesians 2:8-9 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

When salvation begins that is called **Justification** – We are declared righteous.

### 2. God Continues the Work - *will bring it – KJV says will perform it*

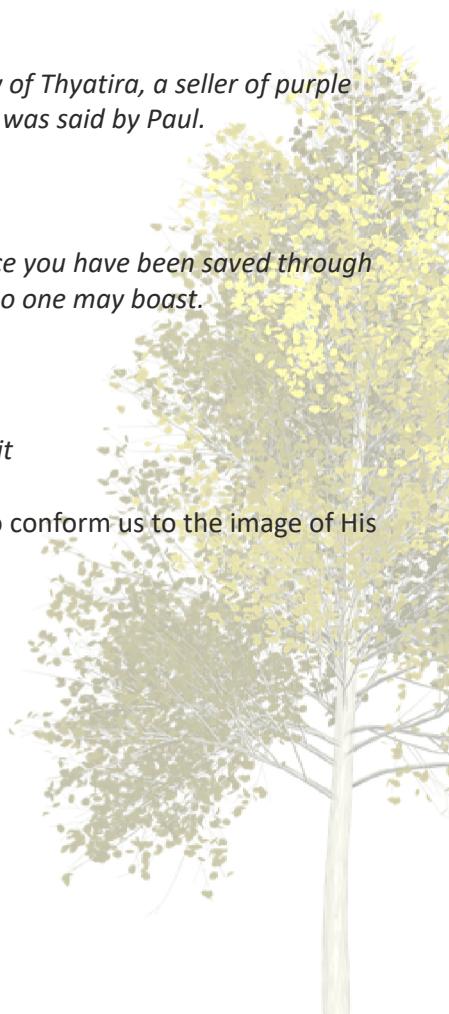
The theological term for this is **sanctification**. God is progressively working in our lives to conform us to the image of His Son.

Did you grab a nametag on the way in this morning?

Each one of us could have put this label on this morning:

**Hello, My Name is: PBPWMGINFWMY**

"Please be patient with me; God is not finished with me yet."



### **3. God Completes the Work** – will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

\* Salvation **commences** with God - **Continues** with God – and is **Completed** by God

The theological term for this is **glorification** – **Romans 8:30** *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.*

**Romans 8:30** *And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.*

**If you have gotten on the train of justification, then you are destined for the station of glorification.**

### **C. Admiration (7-8)**

**vv.7-8** *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.<sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

Paul has been greatly used by God, but these Philippian believers would also be rewarded for the part they played, by their continual care through their prayers and even through their financial gifts.

Remember, this church was founded 10 years earlier. Paul remembers this church with joy. They have partnered with him through the years. He is talking about Lydia, and the slave girl, the Philippian jailer and his family. He now is yearning for them with the same affections of Jesus Christ. These were more than just donors, they were truly partners.

## **III. Paul's Prayer for Growth (9-11)**

### **A. The Measure of Genuine Discipleship (9)**

**v.9** *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,*

#### **1. Love that Abounds** - Agape

**John 13:35** *By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."*

**abound** - pictures a river that is overflowing its banks or a glass of water that is filled to overflowing.

#### **2. Knowledge that Grows**

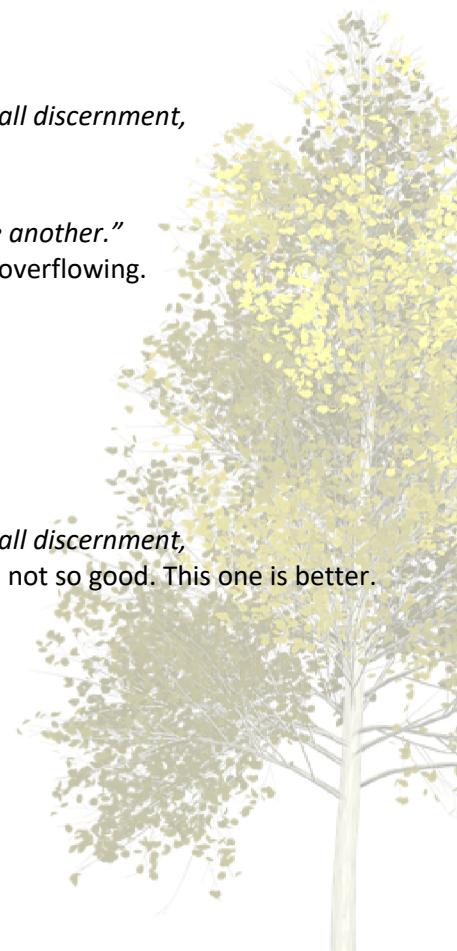
**v.9** *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge ...*

This isn't talking about intelligence, but knowledge of the Word of God.

#### **3. Discernment that Develops**

**v.9** *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,*

Discernment is the ability to look at various options and to say, "This one is good. That's not so good. This one is better. That one is best."



## B. The Motivation of Genuine Discipleship (10-11)

**vv.10-11** so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,<sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

### 1. A Discerning Life - "so that you may approve what is excellent"

**approve** - word used for testing metals—like gold ore or coins—to find out what they are worth.

Are you living your life trying to get as close as you can to the edge?

**R.J. Morgan** has some helpful advice when it comes to making wise choices:

When making a decision, ask:

- Does the Bible speak against it? (Ps 119:9, 10, 11)
- Will it glorify God? (1Cor 10:31)
- Will it harm me physically or spiritually? (1Cor 6:12)
- Could it cause another to stumble? (Ro 14:21)
- Would I make that choice if Jesus were standing right here?

### 2. A Blameless Life

**Philippians 1:10b** and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ

**Pure** - carries with it the idea of being tested by the sunlight / the same word is translated as sincere.

**blameless** - without offense, without stumbling, not stumbling or not tripping. Not causing others to stumble or fail.

### 3. A Fruitful Life

**Philippians 1:11a** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ

Note that this fruit comes "by Jesus Christ

### 4. A God Centered Life

**Philippians 1:11b** to the glory and praise of God.

God's glory is the goal.

#### What does it mean to glorify God?

The Puritan, Thomas Watson answers this for us: Glorifying God consists in four things: 1. Appreciation, 2. Adoration, 3. Affection, 4. Subjection. This is the yearly rent we pay to the crown of heaven. (You might take a moment to read Watson's detailed amplification of each of these four points - "**Man's Chief End is to Glorify God**"

Another Puritan writer, Henry Scougal, called it "**The Life of God in the Soul of Man.**"

1. It starts with abounding love
2. That manifests itself in knowledge and discernment
3. Resulting in the ability to make wise choices under pressure
4. And the visible fruit of a righteous life
5. That comes from a living relationship with Jesus Christ
6. So that God alone gets the glory.

What is the largest organism in the world? Is it the blue whale? The Giant Sequoia? The Quaking Aspen?

Dear Palmetto: The largest organism is us! The body of Christ rooted in the truth of Scripture, redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb, passionately committed to giving God all of the glory!

