

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Morning

Date 15th May 2022 Hymns Psalm 121 T Auld Lang Syne, 134, 411 Read: Philippians 1:1-8
Text Philippians 1:7-8

Series: Philippians (17) Title: Paul's Love for the Philippians

When the saints at Philippi received news that Paul was in prison, they sent Epaphroditus to help and encourage Paul.

Paul was overwhelmed by the love and the affection of the Philippians. He began to write this letter to send it back to them by Epaphroditus.

In the opening words, Paul states his bond with the Philippians. Then these words in **verses 7-8** are personal precise and precious.

They are honest and sincere.

Paul is filled with deep love and thanksgiving to God for the saints at Philippi.

To show the seriousness of all that Paul has written and all he is about to write relating to the believers at Philippi, Paul adds **verse 8** "**for God is my record....**

The word **record**, means **a witness**, Paul is stating what I am writing about you, how I pray for you, the love that I have for you, the joy that you are to me, it's not false, or pretend.

I am not wasting words, I am not writing this just for the sake of it, rather **God is my record....**

In fact this word **record meaning witness** is a strong word, it is a legal term, **a term under oath or to make a vow**, the evidence given is true, and in the presence of almighty God, under sovereign oath

(Paul words to the saints at Philippi, and the union between them and Paul, are as strong as a marriage vow, and union between man and woman, in the presence of God.)

(When a male and female enter into marriage union, they make a covenant before God, they take an oath in the presence of God, they make a vow that what they are saying is true, and sincere, because God is their record, their witness.)

Paul said *God is my record*, my witness, He is my judge, He alone searches the heart, He alone knows the mind of man, He sees right through me, I cannot fool God.

Therefore, under sovereign oath, by the court of heaven, I vow in the presence of God, He is my record, He is my witness, the words I write about you and how I feel towards you, my prayer for you are true, sincere, and real.

Why can Paul make such a claim, because the love, Paul has for God's people flows, from God's grace in Christ.

God is witness of Paul's love for the Philippians, and lets consider what is exactly witnessed by God.

I FIRST, THE EXPRESSION OF PAULS LOVE FOR THE PHILIPPIANS IS WITNESSED.

verse 7, "***Even as it meet for me to think of you all....***"

The Church at Philippi sent Epaphroditus to Paul with a gift, to help and support him in this difficult time, such was their love for Paul.

In return, Paul expresses his love to them, as it was **meet** for him to do so, in thinking of them all.

The word **meet** means **right, righteous or upright**, Paul is saying It is right for me as your Pastor, your servant, and fellow-labour, to acknowledge and express such truth about you all.

Because this is how I “*...think of you all....*” the word **think** is a wonderful word, it means *to feel, to be mindful, to have concern, to have a mindset.*

It is right for me to feel this way about you, and show concern for your spiritual growth which he prays in **verses 9-11.**

Furthermore, the word **think** is in **the present tense meaning,** Paul continually expresses his mindset for their spiritual growth.

When Paul thought of Christ, and the fruits of Christ’s redeeming labour, he thought of the Philippians and their fellowship in the gospel.

Likewise, when the Philippians consider Christ, their salvation, they express their love for Paul by their support and thoughts for him in prison.

May this ever be, in this congregational family, to think of one another in Christ, be concerned for spiritual fruit, growth, and the needs of one another. To Pray for one another.

Because we are ever upon the mind of Christ, He expresses His thoughts upon us, in how He enriches us, as **Psalm 40:17** “ *I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me*

Jeremiah 29:11 “*For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.*

He always views and treats His people in the grace, peace and the fellowship of the gospel, blessing them with all the benefits of Christ’s atoning blood, giving hope for the eternity.

II SECOND, THE EVIDENCE OF PAULS LOVE FOR THE PHILIPPIANS IS WITNESSED.

Verse 7 “*....because I have you in my heart....*”

The heart refers to the centre of feelings, the actions that spring forth, feelings brought to life. **Proverbs 4:23** out of the heart **are the issues of life**

So, Paul's thoughts and feelings inwardly are recorded for all to read openly.

Don't miss the word **because**, it means **for this reason, on account of upon the basis of**, it points back, but prepares for what comes after.

In other words, ***I have you in my heart for this reason, I think of you all. Or I have you in my heart upon this basis I long after you all, in the bowels of Jesus Christ.***

It is interesting to note that the words, ***I have you in my heart....***, in the original language refer to a mutual love.

For this reason commentators agree, just as Paul writes ***I have you in my heart....***, likewise, they could be read, ***because you have me in your heart.***

These are strong words of love. The words **I have** are one word in original Greek, it means ***to hold and so to possess***.

The idea is when you hold or possess something, you keep it close to the heart, you become protective of it, It is special to you.

(Once again, the phrase is in the present tense.)

The Philippians have a special, and secure, place in Paul's heart, mind and thoughts. He was protective of them. They are continually in his thoughts and prayers. They are his spiritual family.

Likewise, the saints at Philippi continually keep Paul close to their heart. He is on their mind, and in their prays, so much so they went beyond any other church to help and support Paul.

They are protective of Paul. To turn on Paul is to turn on the Philippians.

This is a close bond, a special bond which is evidenced by action, they stood with Paul, supported him in gospel ministry, ***in his bonds, defence and confirmation of the gospel.***

This is the evidence we desire in this congregation, a family of God's people, that I can say by word and deed, ***I have you in my heart....***" and you can say of me, preacher ***I have you in my heart....***" or ***we have you in our heart.***

This is the way it ought to be, Pastor and people, people and Pastor, hearts close together. To Joy and sorrow with one another.

We see this illustrated in the OT by the High Priest of Israel. In **Ex 28** whenever Aaron the High Priest entered into the presence of God, at the altar of incense, to pray for the people of God, He wore a breast plate, and upon the breast plate, **verse 29** and ***Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the LORD continually.***

There were 4 rows, and the 12 tribes of Israel were written in groups of three. The tribes of Israel were the sons of Jacob, they represented the people of God.

As the High priest entered the presence of God, the names of God's people written on the breast plate were close to heart. He continually remembered them prayer.

Remember Tabernacle and the ministry of the priests in the tabernacle, were objects lessons to teach spiritual truth.

They were signs pointing toward Jesus Christ the Great High Priest of His people. Christ in heaven continually prays for His people.

His very presence in heaven is a ministry of prayer. They are close to His heart, upon His thoughts, engraved on the Palms of His hands.

hear Christ say to you believer, ***I have you in my heart....***”

I ask the question to all gathered today can you say of Christ, “..***I have you in my heart....***” if not, confess your sin against Him, and ask Him to forgive you.

III THIRD, THE EARNESTNESS OF PAULS LOVE FOR THE PHILIPPIANS IS WITNESSED.

Verse 8 “...***how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.***”

Its easy to see Paul’s passion and panting after the saints at Philippi. The phrase **long after** means ***to have a strong desire for something, to desire earnestly, to pursue with love.***

The same word is used in **Philippians 2:26** in reference to Epaphroditus longing after the saints a Philippi.

(It is used in **Romans 1:11** of Paul's longing to see the saints at Rome. it is used in **2 Timothy 1:4** of Paul's longing to see his son in the faith Timothy it is also used in **2 Co 5:2** of Paul's longing to receive his glorified body.)

It is also used in **2 Peter 2:2** for newborn babes in Christ to desire the sincere milk of the word.

There is another picture of this word in the natural realm to apply spiritually in **Psalms 41:1** ***As the hart (deer) panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.*** The word **panteth** is the word ***long after, desire.***

The point is the deer longs after water because it is natural to do so, and so the spiritual application is the believer longs after, desires after God because it is natural to do so when there is spiritual life.

The believer in union with Christ, has received new life, a new view of the Bible and the people of God, and so it is only right and proper to long after Christ, to desire the Bible for growth, to be in company of the redeemed.

With these thoughts and meanings, Paul is motivated by Christ.

(There is no other company he would rather have than the company of God's people.)

Paul longs after, desires after, pants after the saints at Philippi, and in the truest sense we can say the saints at Philippi, where earnest in their desire.

They desired after Paul, they longed to be in his company.

As the Church of Christ beloved, chosen, purchased by the Saviour's precious blood, is it right to love one another, desire after one another's spiritual well being, motivated by Christ to love like Christ.

We are brothers are sisters in Christ, the adopted children of God. Paul in writing to the churches at Galatia in **Galatians 6:10** said "***as we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.***"

Paul in instructing believers ***do good unto all men,*** then emphasised "***...especially unto them who are of the household of faith.***"

The word **especially** means ***chiefly, particularly.*** In a sense above all. why because, the Church of Christ are called **the household of faith.**

Christ longs and desires after His church. He always does good to them, because, **Ephesians 5:25** states ***Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it;***

Acts 3:26 ***“Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”***

You see if you are not saved you, are not in the family of God, Christ said of unbelievers, in **John 8:44** ***Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.*** You held captive in the kingdom of darkness, only Christ can set you free, only Christ can set the captive loose. trust in Christ for deliverance just now.

IV FOURTH, THE EXTENT OF PAULS LOVE FOR THE PHILIPPIANS IS WITNESSED.

Verse 8 ***“...how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.”***

The word bowels **naturally** refers to inwards parts, the organs of the body, such as, lungs, intestines, liver and so on.

For instance, when Judas died, we read in **Acts 1:18** ***“...falling headlong, he burst asunder, in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.”***

but spiritually **the bowels** refer to **affections**. It centres upon the heart which is the seat of emotions, passions, compassion, sympathy, love, tenderness, **it effects the whole person.**

when you love someone or show feelings of affection for them, you are not the same, you get stirred up, your heart beats faster, stomach tightens, they are on your mind, there is a reaction, you long after them, desire their company.

Paul is saying my whole being, reacts toward you, I am stirred up when I remember, pray and think of you. It is a strong, deep love for you.

(In **Philippians 2:1** *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any **bowels** and mercies”* **Col 3:12-13** *“Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, **bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;**¹³ **Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**”*)

When Paul refers to **the bowels of Jesus Christ**, he is referring to Supreme compassion. He is really saying I love you because Christ loves you, or I strive daily with all my imperfections, to love you, pray for you, have you in my mind, as Christ though He is perfect.

I desire fellowship with you, because Christ desires fellowship with His people. I aim for Christ likeness

it is interesting this word **bowels** used in **Luke 1:78** is translated as **mercy**, *Through the tender mercy (bowels) of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us.*” God’s mercy, compassion love, sympathy is revealed through Jesus Christ.

Notice the **verses** before and after **verse 78**, **verse 77** *to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,* **verse 79** *To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.*

the greatest demonstration of the bowels or mercy of Christ was seen at Calvary, He died to restore sinners back to God.

Believer His mercies are new morning by morning. God’s mercy follows us all the days of our lives.

therefore, men and woman I, “..***long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ***, with the love of Christ, the forgiving attitude of Christ, the praying example of Christ, the fellowship with Christ.

Believer love one another, “..***long after (each one) in the bowels of Jesus Christ***,

long after, A love that is expressed, a love that is evidenced by loyalty to the Gospel, a love that is earnest in motives, a love which such an extent that it longs for fellowship and partnership with the people of God.