

Please turn with me in your copies of God's Word to Philippians chapter 1. Today we are beginning a new series on Paul's letter to the Church at Philippi. Paul is writing this letter while in chains, imprisoned in a Roman jail. And this letter is a letter of encouragement, it's a letter of joy, it's a letter of thanksgiving, it's a letter of hope to those believers who are in Philippi. While Paul wrote this letter with a particular group of people in mind, I pray that you see the Holy Spirit's preservation of this text to be for your hope and joy as well. So hear now the Word of our Lord from Philippians chapter 1, and I will be reading the first eight verses.

Read Philippians 1:1-8

Pray

We here at Westminster Reformed Presbyterian Church are in the midst of some incredibly exciting times. Things are changing according to the providence of the Lord, and because of that we have much to rejoice in. I'm incredibly thankful that I have been called here to serve this visible body of Christ's Church, and I'm looking forward to what lies ahead. And in coming here the Lord has seen fit to also cause an increase, however small, in this local body. For that we ought to rejoice. More covenant children have been brought into this congregation, and we even have one more on the way. Yes, there is much to rejoice in the Lord over concerning where He has us right now and what He is doing in our midst. But just as we are experiencing some great and joyous times, many of us here are also going through some particularly difficult situations. There are those who are sick or ailing among us. those who are experiencing the pains of completing school, those who are exhausted from a strenuous workload, those who are dealing with difficulties at home, and even those who are facing the very real prospect of having to bury loved ones in the not-so-distant future. Friends, we live in a world that tainted and marred by sin, and so we have to face the reality of the effects of sin in so many different areas of life. But we also must understand the reality that Jehovah

God is merciful and gracious and has blessed us more abundantly than we could ever begin to comprehend. Yes, you will face difficulties in this life; yes, you will be tempted to throw in the towel and give up fighting the good fight; but take heart, dear saints, because if you are in Christ then the Lord is with you through it all and He is the one who will sustain you even in the midst of adversities. So, brothers and sisters, the exhortation to you this morning is to persevere to the end as those who are in Christ. And we will consider this exhortation by looking at three reasons you can persevere to the end: first, you are servants and saints in Christ; next, you are remembered in Christ; and lastly, you are loved in Christ.

So first, brothers and sisters, persevere to the end as those in Christ because you are servants and saints in Christ. We see this in the opening verse of our passage, “Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints which are at Philippi, with the bishops and the deacons.” Here Paul describes himself and Timothy as servants of Jesus Christ, or as other translations render it ‘slaves’ of Jesus Christ. The word that Paul uses here is not one like what we typically see in his greetings of his letters in order to denote his apostolic authority. Instead of emphasizing his authority he chooses here to emphasize his submission; he is a servant, a slave, of Jesus Christ. He and Timothy have given themselves up to another’s will. They have willingly placed themselves under the yoke of Christ and devoted themselves to the cause of seeing Christ and His Gospel advanced among men. They have laid aside their own interests and have taken upon themselves the interests of the Kingdom of God. Paul is not placing himself and Timothy above anyone else in the Church, but instead is expressing the equality within the Church. Friends, no one here this morning is greater than another. Yes, we recognize that there are those among us who have been placed in positions of authority, but that does not make them greater or you lesser. The very same God who took Paul out of his bondage and slavery to sin, who cast off the yoke of oppression and made him free in Christ Jesus is at work in you today if you are in Christ. Paul did

not receive an extra-abundance of grace upon his conversion, but the very same grace that brought to life that dead man has brought you to life in Christ Jesus. And friends, if you are in Christ, if you have been brought from death unto life, if you have been freed from the shackles of enslavement to sin, what else can you do but submit yourself to the one who freed you and place yourself under the yoke of Christ Jesus? And I can assure you that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. His grace and mercy that He has shown you necessitates your service, not serving Him out of a sense of obligation but out of a true and sincere heart of thanksgiving and gratitude for the work He has done in your lives. Brothers and sisters, you are servants in Christ Jesus.

But not only that, you are saints in Christ Jesus. Paul addresses this letter “to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi.” Paul doesn’t use this term to speak of the Philippian believers because they are such an excellent congregation, because they have done such marvelous and wonderful things within the city of Philippi. No, he uses this term because it is true of who they are in Christ. There is a recognition of Paul of the work which Christ Jesus has done by the the power of His Spirit among those in Philippi. Paul knows these saints; he spent intimate time with them; he was their church planter, if you will. These are his spiritual children, and so he seems to have had a very particular kindness for the church at Philippi; and, though he had the care of all the churches, he had a particular fatherly tender care of this one as we will see later on in our text. These Philippian believers have been united with Christ; they have been made partakers of every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies; they have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ and adopted into the heavenly family. Having been sanctified by the blood of the lamb, they have been given the title of saint because they are those who are in Christ. And so, brothers and sisters, this is true of you as well. You have been called according to His purpose. You have been washed clean by the blood of the lamb. You have been and sanctified and set apart for His holy purpose. This why Paul gives the apostolic greeting in verse 2, “Grace be unto you, and

peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” The grace and peace of Jehovah rests upon you because you are His. You, dear friends, are saints in Christ Jesus. You have the Lord of glory, the alpha and the omega, the Sovereign King of the universe by your side; so what do you have to fear? You can face anything that comes your way: famine, nakedness, the sword, the loss of a job, the heartache of a wayward child, the death of a loved one; all because you are saints in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters you can and will persevere to the end, because it is Christ who preserves you. Take comfort in that fact. Find your refuge in that truth. When Satan comes to deceive you and cast doubt upon you by bringing to mind all the many ways in which you fail to conform to the law of God, tell the enemy to be gone for you are a saint of the Most High and you are clothed in the righteousness of Christ. When you are tempted to throw in the towel and simply give up, look to your risen Savior who endured to the end in order to purchase your redemption. Brothers and sisters, persevere to the end as those in Christ because you are servants and saints in Christ.

And that encouragement to persevere because of who you are in Christ is only strengthened by the fact that you are not alone in this life. Yes, you have the Triune God of the universe on your side, but you also have one another to come alongside you as well. So let now turn to consider our second reason for persevering: persevere to the end as those in Christ because you are remembered in Christ. Paul makes clear his remembrance of the saints in Philippi in verses 3 through 6, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” At Philippi Paul was mistreated; there he was scourged and put into the stocks, and for the present saw little of the fruit of his labour; and yet he remembers Philippi with joy. He looked upon his sufferings for Christ as his credit, his comfort, his crown, and was pleased at every mention of the place where he suffered. So far was he from being

ashamed of them, or unwilling to hear of the scene of his sufferings, that he remembered it with joy. Paul was thankful for the work that the Lord had done among the saints at Philippi, and this led him to rejoice in his remembrance of them. The joys and blessings of Gospel ministry among the fellow laborers there far surpassed the momentary affliction that he had face there previously and that he was facing in Rome presently. Paul thanks God upon every remembrance of them for their “fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” The apostle longed to spread the gospel! And so did they. He was earnest to carry it to the regions beyond— so were they. If he preached, they would be there to encourage him. If he held special meetings, they were ready to help. If money was required, every man was ready according to his means, without pressing. Each one felt as earnest about the work as did his minister. They were enthusiastic for the furtherance of the gospel—they were heartily with him where he most valued their sympathy.

And we must meditate upon the things the Lord has done among us, how He has used the sweet fellowship here in the advancement of the Gospel, by remembering one another in our prayers. “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.” Every time Paul bowed his head in prayer unto the Lord the names of the saints at Philippi were on his lips. He knew of the salvation that they had received in Christ Jesus; he knew of the good work and the faithful labors that the saints had diligently done in that place; he knew of their faithfulness in supporting the efforts to see the advancement of the Gospel; and so Paul was ever reminded of them in prayer and thankfulness before God. Friends, this is how it ought to be with us. We must be a people of prayer, not just for the wants or needs of ourselves, but a people praying for one another in every instance. This is why it is so crucial to be involved in one another’s lives. By living among each other, by having the simple conversations about how things are going, by being in each other’s houses you will begin to see how to pray for one another, not just in a general sense, but specifically. Join the weekly prayer meeting on

Wednesday nights where we bring our burdens and our needs to each other and lift one another up in the name of Jesus Christ. Saints, you have been united to Christ in His death and resurrection; and if you have been united to Him you have also been united to one another in Christ Jesus. We are all one body comprised of individual members. Just as if one member of your physical body is hurting or in need then your entire body knows, so too ought it be for us here in this body. If one of us is hurting then everyone should know and should seek through prayer to lift up that individual. If anyone here is in need then the need ought to be made known to the body so that we can provide out of our abundance and pray the Lord of all creation would provide in the day of want. Friends, if you are not diligently praying for one another then I implore you to make it a regular practice. If you are faithful in remembering one another in your prayers then I can promise that you will be surprised how the bonds of unity in this congregation will be strengthened and the Lord will work in a mighty way among us. You are not alone in this life, but can be empowered to persevere through whatever life may bring you because you have the fellowship and prayers of the saints encouraging you in all remembrance.

And Paul makes clear that in this remembrance of the saints he is confident that they will persevere. Look with me again at verse 6, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Friends if you are in Christ then that good work has begun in you. We can be assured that a good work is begun in us, when faith, hope, and love, show themselves to have been formed in our hearts. From day 1 of your Christian life until the very end, God is working that good work in you. Brothers and sisters, He that has begun a good work in us will not only give us perseverance until death, but what is even more, He will give us perfection in the day of Christ! That is our surety; that is our hope and expectation; that is our confidence; because it is Jehovah Himself who works the good work within you, not anything that you could do yourself. Charles Simeon, a great

Anglican minister, writes, “If this work were wrought by man, the Apostle would never express such confidence respecting his completion of it; since no dependence can be placed on the stability of man’s virtue. But since he that accomplishes this great work is God, we may be assured, that ‘he will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ.’” We as believers ought to exercise ourselves in constant meditation upon the favors which God bestows, that they may encourage and confirm hope in our time of need. God does not forsake the work which his own hands have begun, as the Scriptures bear witness in Psalm 138:8 and Isaiah 64:8; we are the work of His hands; therefore He will complete what he Has begun in us. When I say that we are the work of his hands, I do not refer to mere creation, but to the calling by which we are adopted into the number of His sons. For it is a token to us of our election, that the Lord has called us effectually to Himself by His Spirit.

Examine yourselves with with great care, concerning the quality of your faith, and hope, and love. Is your faith operative in purifying your heart? Is your love working in all kinds of way, not with respect only to people’s physical needs, but to their souls also? And is your hope such as carries you forward through all difficulties towards the attainment of the heavenly prize? Friends you must remember it is no outward work that is here spoken of, but is a work in us: and a work which nothing less than almighty God can effect. To deceive yourselves in relation to it, is vain, since you cannot deceive the heart-searching God. Be careful then to try your work, of what kind it is; and be satisfied with nothing that does not evidently bear the divine stamp and character upon it. But maybe you are sitting here this morning and none of this is true of you because you have never been united with Christ. Hear the call of the Lord, “Repent ye, and believe the gospel.” Place your trust in Christ Jesus as the only one who can bring you out of darkness and into His marvelous light, the only one who can make alive you dead heart by taking your heart of stone and giving you a heart of flesh, the only one who can free you from the bondage of slavery to sin.

Then you too will be numbered among the saints here who persevere to the end as those in Christ because you are remembered in Christ.

Let us now turn our attention to the final portion of our text and the third reason for persevering: persevere to the end as those in Christ because you are loved in Christ. Look with me at the last two verses of our passage, “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” Here you can see the heart, the true affection, that the apostle Paul has for the saints at Philippi. David Dickson says it is as though Paul is saying, “God, who hath united my soul to you, is witness in how greatly I love you in the bowels of Christ, or in the most near affection of Christian love, and how I desire to enjoy your fellowship.” Friends this is the love and affection that I have for each and every one of you here. In my absence from you over this last month, this has been the crying of my heart, how I love you and long to be with you, how I long to have that sweet fellowship with you in the Gospel, and how I long to come alongside you in the advancement of the Kingdom of God in this place. And the Lord, in His great kindness, has seen fit to answer the longing of my heart and bring me here. Oh, how I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. We have been united to one another through the sufferings of Christ Jesus in our stead, and we have been made fellow sufferers together in the cause of the Gospel. That is a bond of unity which demands great affection. Fellow sufferers should be dear one to another; those who have ventured and suffered in the same good cause of God and religion should for that reason love one another dearly.

When Paul was bound they were not ashamed of his chains. When he was in prison the jailer washed his stripes and refreshed him at his table. When Paul was taken away to Rome, the Philippians took care that he should not be left in need—they sent out of their poverty to his assistance. It is a crazy thing in the view of

the world to see a prison to be a blessing from God, but if we understand this rightly, it is no common honor that God bestows upon us, when we suffer persecution for the sake of His truth. For it was not in vain that it was said, “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.” (Matthew 5:11) Let us therefore remember also, that we must with readiness and courage embrace the fellowship of the cross of Christ as a special favor from God. Friends, I do not know what the future holds for us Christians here in this country. Some of you here may receive the calling of the Lord to go into the foreign mission field, into a land that is hostile to the Gospel, and be persecuted for the sake of Christ. If this nation continues in its blasphemies and perversions then we should not be surprised if some of us here find ourselves imprisoned for the proclamation of the Word of God. You must rest on the love that you have in Christ Jesus, the author and perfecter of the faith, to sustain you if that time comes. You must rely upon the love you have for one another to provide for you in your time of need.

Brothers and sisters, the love that you have for one another ought to be the deepest of loves, the greatest of affections, so as to drive you to do whatever is necessary for the welfare of your fellow believers. Paul says that his longing for the Philippian church was a longing “in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” Friends that is the innermost part of a man. You must stand beside your elders in their protests against the errors of this world which could cost them dearly. Your faithfulness in this will give your elders great confidence concerning you just as Paul had concerning the Philippians. And this should extend out not only to the elders but to the entire congregation. This love that you have for one another, this longing in the bowels of Jesus Christ, must effect everything that you do. When eat, when you sleep, when you work, when you pray, when you worship, love for one another should be at the forefront of your mind. And you should know that everyone else is experiencing that same love for you as well. Friends, you have the Church to come alongside of you, to care for you, to bear your burdens, to

provide for you in your time of need, to pray for you, to love you. Do you see how encouraging that is? Do you see how the love that you have in Christ and your union with His body is a further motivation to keep pressing on, to keep running the race, to keep fighting the good fight? Beloved, persevere to the end as those in Christ because you are loved in Christ.

Friends, perseverance to the end is a necessity in the Christian life. It is to those who persevere to the end that is given the crown of life. It is to those who persevere to the end that this given the right to eat of the tree of life and dwell in the midst of the New Jerusalem with Jehovah for eternity. Brothers and sisters, we must mix up our constant service with more prayer and praise if we desire it to be largely effectual. If the work is worth anything, it is God's work in us and by us—He begins it, carries it on and completes it! What, then, can we do, if we do not draw near to Him? Persevere to the end as those in Christ because you servants and saints in Christ, you are remembered in Christ, and you are loved in Christ.