

PICK A PARTNER

Philippians 1:1-11

During the World's Fair in 1904 there was a very unlikely partnership that formed. It was extremely hot and people were searching for something to cool them off. They found what they were looking for ... A vendor by the name of Arnold had set up an ice cream booth. People lined up for what seemed like miles to cool off with Arnold's ice cream. In fact, there were so many that Arnold ran out of paper bowls to put the ice cream in.

In the meantime, there was a pastry chef by the name of Earnest in a booth located next to Arnold's booth. His specialty was a Persian wafer desert. But no one was buying. Ice cream was their choice. When Arnold ran out of paper bowls Earnest came up with an ingenious idea ... roll up his Persian Waffle desert into a cone and put the ice cream in the cone. The result of that partnership is what I usually order when Vicki and I go to Good's ice cream ... Ice Cream in a waffle cone.

A Creative Partnership ... Sermon Central Staff

Amazing things can happen when people are willing to partner up!

We are starting a new sermon series this morning titled "Enjoy Life No Matter What". It is a 7 weeks series on the book of Philippians. I would like to suggest to you that you read completely through the book of Philippians each week for the next 7 weeks. It is only 104 verses ... less than four pages. The Apostle Paul has much to tell us in this fairly short letter.

Paul wrote the book of Philippians in 51A.D. from a Roman prison. And ... contrary to what most people think ... The purpose of the Philippian letter is not to tell the Philippian people to have joy in their hearts.

Paul writes the letter for five reasons ...

- to tell the church what his present circumstances were
- to express appreciation for their concern for him and a gift they had sent to him by Epaphroditus

- to tell them that Epaphroditus had done a great job taking care of him and that Epaphroditus had been ill but was now well enough that Paul was going to send him back to them.
- to urge them to fulfill their Christian duties
- to warn them against the danger of false teachers

The reason that Philippians seems to be about joy is because as Paul writes the letter he bubbles over with joy in his own heart. There is no doubt that he tells the people to rejoice ... but the reason for that rejoicing is clear ... it is Jesus Christ in his life.

The letter of Philippians contains only 104 verses and in those verses Jesus Christ is referred to 61 times. Friends ... an old camp song captures that truth so well ... "You want joy, real joy, wonderful joy ... let Jesus come into your heart."

With all of that in mind we find that Paul begins his letter with joy because of the partnership in Christ that he shares with the Philippian Church.

Turn with me to **PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11** and let's read the passage.

Notice in **VERSES 4-5** the Apostle Paul says ... ⁴ **In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy** ⁵ **because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.** There is that JOY word again ... but notice what causes the joy ... it is the partnership that the church has with him in the gospel.

What does that partnership look like? ...

1 ... THEY WERE PARTNERS IN THE WORK OF THE GOSPEL ... SO ARE WE

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

There was a young salesman who was disappointed about losing a big sale, and as he talked with his sales manager he lamented, "I guess it just proves you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink." The manager replied, "Son, take my advice: your job is not to make him drink. Your job is to make him thirsty."

Preaching, November-December 1985.

And that is exactly the duty of the Christian ... to make the lost thirsty for the gospel.

The gospel that Paul speaks of here is simply the “Good news that Jesus Christ has died so that mankind could be saved from the punishment of their sins. So they can have life eternal. The Apostle Paul spent his entire Christian life sharing that gospel with those who were lost.

The fact is ... as Christians ... that is our job as well! Our jobs as Christians is to partner up with the Apostle Paul ... and every Christian down through the ages to infiltrate the lost world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

2 ... THEY WERE PARTNERS IN SALVATION ... SO ARE WE

VERSE 6 ... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

What is the good work that Paul is talking about here? It is the work of salvation!

Our salvation did not begin with us. It began with God ... He is the one who began the good work of salvation. But he did not only begin it ... but he will finish it!

When I was in Junior High ... my cousin and I began building a soap box. We got most of the frame done when he had to leave to go home. We put the frame in the crawl space of the mom and dad's house. Months later I finally pulled the frame back out and threw it away. We never finished that project.

The good news is that God does not work that way! He did not promise you salvation and then give up on you and just stick you in the crawl space.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12 says ... ¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

His purpose is to save us from the eternal punishment of Hell. He will not give up on that purpose! And Paul tells us that we are partners in God's purpose. As

Christians ... we are the recipients of his salvation and partners with all who accept God's offer!

3 ... THEY WERE PARTNERS IN SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL ... SO ARE WE

VERSE 7 ... ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

We have been very fortunate in America when it comes to suffering for Christ. We have never been put in chains for defending the faith. We may have been made fun of ... or maybe even isolated by what used to be our friends. But to truly suffer ... we are definitely on the lower end of the scale. That does not mean that it will always be that way. Christianity has become a target ... not only in the Middle East but here as well. There will come a time when you might have to choose between defending your faith and being persecuted ... or by turning your back and walking away.

But there is a subtle message in this verse. No matter what level of suffering you might face ... God gives you the grace to get through it! In the same way that God gave the Apostle Paul grace to face all that he went through ... we are partners with him in that grace ... God gives us the same grace when we need it.

I remember years ago when a young lady lost her husband to a motorcycle wreck. She was so strong through the funeral and the weeks and months following. Several people were amazed at her ability to be so strong. They even made comments like ... "I could never be that strong if my mate died." A wise person's response to that statement was ... God does not waste his grace on something unneeded. He only gives it when it is the right time for it.

When you see Christians, whose heads are being cut off by ISIS and you think that you could never be strong enough to endure that ... remember ... you are a partner in God's grace ... and he always dispenses it at the right time!

4 ... THEY WERE PARTNERS IN DISCERNING TRUTH ... SO ARE WE

VERSES 9-10a ... ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best

One of the reasons that Paul wrote the book of Philippians was because of the presence of false teachers. There were those who were among the church who were teaching things that were not consistent with Christ's teachings. The same is true today.

- T.D. Jakes says that God eternally exists in three manifestations, not three persons.
- Greg Boyd says God knows some aspects of the future, but that other future events are outside of his knowledge.
- Creflo Dollar says because we are created in the image of God, we are little gods.
- Mormonism says God revealed new scripture to Joseph Smith that supersedes the Bible.
- Roman Catholicism says we are justified by faith, but not by faith alone.

<https://www.challies.com/articles/test-every-doctrine-test-every-teacher/>

Let me share with you **5 Tests of Truth** from Tim Challies blog titled "Deadly Doctrines" that you can use to help you discern truth

1 ... The Test of Origin ... Sound doctrine originates with God; false doctrine originates with someone or something created by God

2 ... The Test of Authority ... Sound doctrine grounds its authority within the Bible; false doctrine grounds its authority outside the Bible.

3 ... The Test of Consistency ... Sound doctrine is consistent with the whole of Scripture; false doctrine is inconsistent with some parts of Scripture.

4 .. The Test of Spiritual Growth ... Sound doctrine is beneficial for spiritual health; false doctrine leads to spiritual weakness.

5 ... The Test of Godly Living ... Sound doctrine has value for godly living, false doctrine leads to ungodly living.

Truth originates with God, is recorded in the Word of God, is consistent with the whole revelation of God, and leads to both spiritual health and godly living. False

doctrine originates with men or demons, is foreign to the Word of God, is inconsistent with the whole revelation of God, and leads to spiritual weakness and ungodly living.

Paul tells us that as Christians ... we are to partner in discerning what is true and what is not.

5 ... THEY WERE PARTNERS IN RIGHTEOUSNESS ... SO ARE WE

VERSES 10b-11 ... and may 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.

The last thing that Paul lists in this passage where we are partners with him and every other Christian that has ever lived and those that live today is that we are partners in how we live.

Let me tell you ... you cannot be filled with the fruit of righteousness own your own efforts! See what it says here in these verses ... **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.** Our righteousness comes from Jesus Christ and what he did ... not what we do!

Listen to **ROMANS 5:18-19** ... ¹⁸ Consequently, just as one trespass resulted in condemnation for all people, so also one righteous act resulted in justification and life for all people. ¹⁹ For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Friends ... we cannot live a righteous life unless it is through Christ. He is the one who empowers us to do so. And yet ... we still find ourselves doing the things that we ought not do and not doing the things we ought. Aren't you glad the God sees Christ's righteousness when he looks at you and me! Aren't you joyful that you are partners in the righteousness of Christ!

CONCLUSION

Christianity was never meant to be lived out in isolation! It is a "we" thing! That is why the church exists! Listen to the lyrics of a grand old hymn titled "Called as Partners in Christ's Service ...

Called as partners in Christ's service
Called to ministries of grace
We respond with deep commitment
Fresh new lines of faith to trace
May we learn the art of sharing
Side by side and friend with friend
Equal partners in our caring
To fulfil God's chosen end

That is what Paul is telling us in the first 11 verses of Philippians ... we are partners in Christ to do his work! It gives me great joy that Arnold and Earnest partnered together and came up with ice cream in a waffle cone! BUT ... it gives me far more joy that we are able to partner up with every Christian that has ever existed and to serve Christ together ending in our righteousness and salvation!