

Philippians

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[0 : 0 0] Seeking the Lord's help I direct your attention this evening to the epistle of Paul to the Philippians the first chapter reading verses 5 and 6 Epistle of Paul to the Philippians the first chapter reading verses 5 and 6 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now being confident of this very thing that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now being confident of this very thing that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ

The apostle was writing this letter at a great distance from those to whom he wrote yet there was a bond which transcended time and distance which bound them together it had a beginning the first day he refers to the beginning of it and he refers to the unbreakable nature of it it was a divine bond of divine origin it was the union of heart which he felt with these Philippian Christians the bond of the gospel the gospel which he had known and which they had known and it united them and we know this that this precious bond which was begun here in this earth to which he alludes here and that they are there in the fullest enjoyment of the fellowship which he refers here begun in this world and as he refers to it here the day of Jesus Christ

God the good work which in you will be performed until the day of Jesus Christ in that great morning of the resurrection body and soul united he looks to the final consummation of the gathering of the whole church to glory and there are a number of parts of this text tonight we would desire to dwell upon the first one is the opening word of fellowship what is fellowship what is its blessed reality what is this sacred subject which the apostle alludes to here something which was very precious to him and which transcended all the distance between Rome and Philippi and which was centered around the throne of God in heaven they met as the hymn writer says around one common mercy seat in sweet fellowship and union and they met in the blessed knowledge of that one God and father of all he who watched over them that is the first subject we would desire to look at tonight and then to speak a little of the first day beautiful subject the apostle speaks here of the beginning of the work of grace in their hearts one gathers that he is referring to the preaching of the gospel and its fruit in their souls the first day until now and there is something very precious here it tells us that the Philippians had a beginning in their spiritual work of God in their souls there was a beginning there was a first day and there had been a period that had gone on as he refers to it as he penned this letter until now there had been a growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord and then the apostle goes on to refer to it again he which hath begun a good work in you who desired to look at that this evening the beginning of what he describes here so simply as that good work in you oh can we look back to a beginning what do we know in our souls of this good work brought out in our hearts by God and the apostle again refers to this and goes on to speak of the performing of it that is the finishing of it bringing it to a conclusion we'll perform it as he says here until the day of Jesus Christ when we read in the

Lord's Prayer that concluded the Last Supper according to the 17th of John that they may behold my glory when they are gathered to be with him in glory let us look then a little at these parts of our text and firstly the apostle speaks here always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy for your fellowship in the gospel I thought with this word upon my mind here was a communion which centered around their knowledge that is the apostles and the Philippians of Christ I felt that in prayer John's words in the first general his first general epistle and the first chapter truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son

Jesus Christ and here is the substance of this fellowship they knew him whom to know was life eternal they knew that is the apostle Paul in his prison could look back in his own experience no doubt as he penned this word that the man of God thought back to the Damascus road the first day he had a first day a very blessed first day a very extraordinary first day a powerful first day the call of the Lord in his heart whom he did predestinate then we also called the Lord came to him God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners

[8 : 28] Christ died for us and the apostle could look back to this first day we do not know what he looked back to here in his ministry he knew in the preaching of the gospel in all that he suffered as he records in the second epistle to the church at Corinth in the 11th chapter he records the catalogue of his suffering sorrows as he preached the gospel for the church of God but we see that there was fruit to his labour and we see that as he looked back to the preaching of the gospel at Philippi and the blessing of his labour his labour's there he could speak of thanking God upon every remembrance of you always in my prayer for you all none were left out we don't know who they all were for you all making requests with joy and this request for them for your fellowship in the gospel and no doubt there had been among them sweet union and communion as he saw the work of the fruits of the spirit of his labourers being blessed in their hearts and can there be any greater joy than to have spiritual children as he speaks of them here they were peculiarly his not he says many fathers in Christ forgotten under his labour loved of him he carried them in his heart and in his prayers with joy as a sacred burden and peculiarly with them his children he had sweet fellowship in the bonds of the gospel in love and union oh the sweet union as he looked upon the fruits of his labours and could feel that blessed fellowship in his prison cut off as he was isolated in the palace at Rome yet as his mind went back and he penned this epistle full of love full of sacred wisdom to the church members at Philippi his heart went out to them and he knew that sacred bond of love in Christ to them they were in his prayers and he rejoiced as he remembered the mighty work of God in their souls and could see in them the sweet fruits of the spirit oh how sacred this fellowship is and he went on in that

John the Divine went on in that first epistle and he speaks of that fellowship and he says if we confess our sins he is faithful to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and he goes on and if we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship one one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleanses us from all sin and here was in the hearts of these Philippians and in the heart of the apostle Paul precious union in the knowledge of the blood of Jesus Christ that cleansed from all sin I tell you this the apostle Paul looked across to Philippi from his prison he knew the work of God in its divine reality in the application of that precious blood upon the hearts of these dear

Philippian Christians and here was the centre and substance of this joy it was a bond in the sweet experience of the finished work of Jesus Christ in their hearts it was not a social bond something vastly different the sorrows and sufferings of the apostle Paul did not allow any place for such he had suffered and suffered in preaching the gospel day and a night in the sea and the catalogue of all his sufferings had burnt up everything that was of the flesh but there remained as he came toward the end of the journey and could speak of that precious truth for me to live is Christ and to die is gain and I'd rather depart to be with Christ which is far better there were things which remained in his heart which were like gold they were treasured they were valuable they were real they were rich they were the blessed union here which he describes fellowship in the gospel oh I do ask you here tonight what do you know what do you know of this fellowship in the gospel precious fellowship it's made in heaven originates in heaven dutifully spoken of in the prophet Isaiah where we read that the government is upon his shoulders the working out of this fellowship is in the hands of God it is he that teaches and brings the sinner into a sweet experience of the gospel of Jesus Christ then there's fellowship our mind goes at this moment to the road to Mayas or the fellowship on that road that night and the sweet fellowship in that lovely word abide with us and it is so sacred it's toward evening no that wasn't the reason there was something far more than that that was one of the reasons but there was another reason far greater did not our heart burn within us they wanted more of it fellowship fellowship with Christ his word to be sweetly known in its power and unction and dew and savour and sweetness in their souls and where there is fellowship it is eternal never to be broken

I would say here in this pulpit this evening I've come to this little chapel now for over 30 years I have witnessed a generation taken to glory here and I've loved them I think of them here tonight and it would not be invidious at all to name them I named one as I came here tonight dear old Albert Jenkins dear man of God to whom I felt a sweet love and union and fellowship I shall never forget on my honeymoon with my first wife coming down from the Lake District to Hadon calling in there to see him going into his room his dear wife had just passed away and he was alone and bereaved I came with my wife just married we sat on his bed he took his Bible

I shall never forget the scene he said in his broad Berkshire let us see if the Lord will lead us to a suitable portion he opened the book and he alighted on the passage instantly in the prophecy of Isaiah as a young man as a young man taketh a bride and as he opened and saw the words before his eyes he broke down and wept and wept fellowship all the union I felt to him that day never to be broken a sweet precious love I don't come past these villages without remembering dear Albert Jenkins dear old Cecil Gantlett here and many others Kate Pepler and dear Mr. Pepler here who I knew in my youth these dear saints of God oh the fellowship this little sanctuary of God has known in the generations past the dear servants of God who constantly came here to Stockholm and the sweet union and communion that existed here in sweet precious fellowship and as we know there are others dear Katie Pepler and the blessed truth that was shown in her heart the union she felt to so many of the Lord's dear people oh this little sanctity of God has known this sacred subject which the apostle speaks of here in its blessed reality it is the foretaste of glory it is indeed this world will pass away but the fellowship of the saints is but a glorious foretaste of heaven for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now we would speak of the time of this in the hearts of the dear apostle there was a beginning to this fellowship there was a day in his own heart in his own soul when he had no fellowship with the children of God he hated them oh how he set out to go to Jerusalem to Damascus how he stood by the dying Stephen consenting to his death no fellowship you know I believe there came a day when the Lord had worked in his heart that he could look back to the scene of Stephen dying and that solemn hour when he consented to his death and he could realize the blessedness of that end of Stephen no fellowship with him then but I believe when the Lord had begun in his dear heart there was a looking back in sorrow and a sweet union and bond with dear Stephen for as the Lord so often works to speak to speak

[20 : 50] I believe when the Apostle Paul was cast out and stoned at Antioch he had fellowship with Stephen cast out for dead as Stephen was stoned to death the Lord brought his dear servant the Apostle Paul into that same solemn place and I believe spoke in his dear heart to the sufferings that Stephen passed through to glory and we see the fellowship and there is what the Apostle speaks of here and how many of the dear saints of God have not come this way that I may know him and the power of his resurrection having fellowship with him in his suffering oh when we see the dear saints of God walking together in solemn sufferings and here was the Apostle now a prisoner at Rome in deep suffering oh how the

Lord Lord was to bring him in that trial that judgment scene and the death he was to pass through which he spoke of in his letter to Timothy I'm now ready oh the answer to his prayer in this letter to the church at Philippi that I might know him power of his resurrection having fellowship with him in his suffering I believe this is one of the deepest footsteps of the flock that their fellowship one with the other is in suffering sorrows together and they commune one with the other in the depths of the path that is ordered of their God for them and there in fellowship with their Lord they have fellowship one with the other in his suffering oh what a sacred bond this is and the Apostle knew something of it here I believe when he spoke of this blessed bond of fellowship fellowship and union what a blessed tie it is when we might speak just for a moment in passing of the sweet union and fellowship not only between God's living family but between his dear people in their marriage union sweet fellowship one with the other sweet fellowship one with the other as they walk together in life's pathway sweet communion together and to go on in this subject to the precious nature of the union between parents and children in the sweet bonds of the Gospel oh how it is the sweet bonds oh how it is the desire of

God-fearing parents that the Lord would so work in the hearts of their children that there might be an entrance into this fellowship here below with their children before they're taken home to glory oh what a sacred privilege to be brought into a little of this sweet union and communion in the family and for prayer to be heard and answered and for there to be that living union for children to feel that same precious union with their loved ones and when they see their parents laid in the grey to know in their hearts that they have communed one with another when my late mother died in 1966 my dear father was left alone for two years he said they were the worst two years of his life although he had in fact passed through many deep waters before that but in that time peculiarly he and I and I was carrying the burden of the ministry at the time he and I had precious fellowship one with the other of a nature that we never had afterwards we were close together we were alone we communed one with the other and oh I look back on those two years from 1966 to 68 peculiarly precious in that fellowship in the bonds of the gospel heart opened to heart in pathways of sorrow and temptation and darkness but the first day until now oh have you known this fellowship in your heart and can you look back to the beginning of that union or to look back to that blessed union and communion one with the other and be able to mark the beginning of it and its continuing oh how precious it is you see there are some solemn things that we wouldn't pass without mentioning them

David had in a hitherto a friend and they walked together to the house of God in sweet communion one with the other but there was a solemn end to it oh some of the solemn things in the psalmist life the glorious life were very solemn to him deep mysteries that the blessed union the apostle speaks of here with the church of Philippi is one that was eternal it did not break we may at times and we're poor creatures feel perhaps and I've had it in my own experience those to whom I felt a union and felt there was a work of grace in their hearts and felt that they were gracious companions but they fell away I haven't given them up even now but they have gone married in the world left the sanctuary of God gone into deep darkness suffered terribly been divorced of course left alone now terribly cynical and dark yet I have a hope oh will the Lord bring them out at the end and manifest that it was truly his work the first day the first sweet union sometimes we may have a word regarding someone and it is deeply deeply tried and we wonder whether it was ever true we think you know of characters like Samson and how solemnly he went on son of godly parents but in the end there was a bringing forth and when we look at the blessed fellowship of saints in the eleventh of Hebrews he's there so is Rahab the harlot and many others they're listed there in that blessed catalogue there was a beginning there was a first day and there was a bringing forth and a manifestation of the work of grace in the heart and how vital how vital that in every heart of a child of God there be this first day this beginning this work of Jesus Christ spoken of in the third of John he must be born again the call the old

Puritans used to refer to it as the effectual call of God the manifestation of the irresistible grace of God the first day beautiful expression there is a first day naturally in our lives when we were born in this world and we uttered the first cry on earth and so there must be spiritually a first day the apostle knew and could mark in his own pathway that first day oh what a day that was in his heart no date it brought him to write this word and he could mark that first day in the church at Philippi but he must go on being confident of this very thing that he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ and we would dwell a little upon this work he which has begun a good work in you it is the work of God the work of grace he is the author and the finisher of it he is the alpha and the finisher of this the omega omega oh the blessed nature of this work it is God's work the apostle speaks so simply and so beautifully he which has begun a good work in you

[31 : 47] I do ask you tonight has he begun this good work in your heart what a simple expression for such a divine act of creation new the scriptures speak of it the apostle speaks of it in his letter to the church at Ephesus and in the second chapter of that letter he says this we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus created it is a divine work of creation the hymn writer speaking of it the mighty works of God says this yet one strange work exceeds them all what is so remarkable is this that in that work of creation the Lord has determined and we hear this as in the wisdom of God it pleased him that man by wisdom should know not God so it pleased him by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe one is reminded of the manger at Bethlehem the manger at Bethlehem he chose the manger as his place of entry into this world the humblest place he could find in this earth and he has chosen the foolishness of preaching to use human instruments in his purposes for his glory and oh he has chosen to use his servants in that blessed world and use preaching as the God ordained means of this work of salvation of this work of salvation and when the apostle speaks here in this way a good work in you he is speaking of his preaching at Philippi the ministry of the gospel the power of God unto salvation oh how he saw himself as the least of all the apostles not worthy to be called an apostle but he says this so beautifully by the grace of God

I am what I am and that is true of every one of his dear sent servants they must be sent of God how says the apostle shall they preach except they be sent and how shall they hear without a preacher well lying here at the root of this good work was a sent servant of Christ sent indeed he was beautifully spoken of when the Lord spoke to Ananias regarding the apostle Paul go thy way he is a chosen vessel chosen vessel chosen vessel unto me and I will show him what great things he must suffer for my name's sake and behold he prays beautiful words of God I thought if ever there was a real prayer it was there in the street called Strait the Lord the Lord viewing his dear servant in prayer behold said the Lord to Ananias he prayed he is a chosen vessel unto me he was sent to this good world how shall they preach said the apostle except they be sent and once they are sent they carry a divine commission the Lord goes with them and he anoints them foolish as they feel to be and are they go with an empty vessel for the Lord to fill and never does the Lord fill it more than when it is most empty the emptier they are the deeper their poverty the more the Lord is able to fill that vessel and put more in it they don't like that but that is the way the Lord leads his dear servant and here we see the apostle referring so blessedly to the work of the ministry he which has begun a good work in you there he could see as he lay in his prison in Rome he could look across the sea to Philippi and there he could see the good work begun in those dear

Philippian saints he could see the sweet nature of it and there was in his dear heart joy it was a sacred joy holy heavenly joy was in his heart and he could watch that work and he saw the beginning of it and he had in his soul being confident of this very thing you see what the dear man of God was confident of was this if they had indeed been blessed under his preaching if indeed he had been sent of God then the government was upon his shoulders they were safe in the hands of their God that work could not be destroyed they were like dear Job over the Philippians came that sacred word touch not their soul they're God's dear children and the apostle knew as he viewed the scene that there was a right beginning there'd be a right end how replete with teaching that is to us how vital the beginning can you look back to the saint servant of God that was used in your case

I do I look back to one night one Thursday night many years ago in Manningford Chapel dear Ebion Clark preached and he preached from that word in the Acts of the Apostles confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith and that through much tribulation ye shall enter the kingdom and oh the power of God's word that night that night I for the first time ever entered into the experience that I wished he'd go on I was sad when he sat down he went well over time that night but oh I was sad he could have gone on to midnight as far as I was concerned dear man of God oh the power that rested in that word sent indeed he was of God and used and blessed mercy if we can look back to that first day in our hearts and lives when the Lord opened our ears to hear his word with divine power and we walked out the sweet experience of the men on the road to Emmaus did not our heart burn within us whilst he talked with us by the way and whilst he opened to us the scriptures there was a sweet power in it and you know

I was always afraid of Mr. Clarke I was always very fearful in his presence I looked upon him with awe and yet I had a sweet fellowship with him a love to him a precious union always to him not many fathers in Christ he which hath begun a good work in you will continue it unto the day of Jesus Christ oh this blessed divine performance the margin says here will finish it oh he will the Lord will finish his own work and gather his dear church into his immediate presence and here are two blessed aspects of truth this performance it is God's work ye are his workmanship he will perform it blessed mercy if we have a performing God in our hearts and lives one who has loved us with an everlasting love and who has promised

[41 : 40] I will never leave thee nor forsake thee we have been faithless unbelieving doubted him he that keepeth Israel says the psalmist in the 121st Psalm neither slumbers nor sleep and that beautiful word spiritually the Lord is thy keeper the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand the sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night the Lord shall preserve thee that is eternally from all evil and then this beautiful word he shall preserve thy soul here then we have this precious truth precious truth perform it until the day of Jesus Christ a few thoughts in conclusion upon that day of

Jesus Christ I would say this it will be his day peculiarly every knee will bow to him will bow to him the entire creation will bow to him in that day it will be his day that solemn day of the resurrection morning when the dead in Christ will rise first we have laid them one by one in the dust of this earth and so many many in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection they have left behind them a most precious memory and they lie here around us their dust sacred in the Lord's eyes waiting that glorious morning for Christ is the first begotten from the dead and his dear church their bodies lie in the grave awaiting their redemption for that great morning is rapidly hastening on the day of Jesus Christ and the apostle looked to that day it is yet to come in the fulfillment of this word perform it until the day of Jesus Christ but oh that sacred performing which will bring his dear church and we would add tonight this precious thought and it is peculiarly precious they will come from every nation tribe and town they will be gathered his people throughout the whole world are coming a number which no man can number for whom he shed his precious blood on Calvary's cross to wash away their sins for whom in this earth he perfected in his incarnation a sacred holy righteousness in his obedience to his father's holy law in that final obedience he was obedient unto death even the death of the cross there the king's daughter we read in the psalm is all glorious within her raiment is of raw gold she will be brought under the king in raiment of needlework and that raiment of needlework is the righteousness of Christ there she will be clothed and we read of her in the seventh of the revelation who are these and whence came they these are they which came out of great tribulation washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb beautiful path they are called to walk out and the final conclusion of that lovely word

God himself will wipe away all tears from their eyes oh the fellowship then of saints in that glorious hour that is spoken of here he which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ Amen