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God's Good Work

Need some encouragement for the new year? Read the letter to the Philippian church. Full of heartfelt joy and inspiration, it affirms many basic truths for believers that will keep you going.

The apostle Paul wrote it from a Roman jail about 61 AD, some 10 years after establishing at Philippi the first Christian church in Europe. With the impending threat of losing his life, Paul points his dear friends to what is most important to remember and to do. And he reminds them what God will do, in them, for them, and through them.

He also emphasizes genuine affection for them. Philippians 1:3 says, ***"I thank my God in ALL my remembrance of you, ALWAYS in EVERY prayer of mine for you ALL, making my prayer with joy."*** He explains why the Philippians are so dear to him in verse 5, ***"because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."***

Acts 16 records the Philippian story. First, Lydia and her household received Jesus as Lord and Savior. Then Paul and Silas were imprisoned for delivering a slave girl from a demon. Then the Philippian jailer asked the crucial question, *"what must I do to be saved?"* and his response to *"believe on the Lord Jesus Christ"* led to the conversion of his entire household.

This was the birth of a new church, and the beginning of a great relationship. In Philippians 4:16, Paul says only the Philippian church entered into partnership with him in "giving and receiving." The word partnership is translated from the Greek *koinonia* which is also often translated "fellowship." It carries the meaning of two fellows in a ship – a joint investment in something bigger than both partners.

The occasion for Paul writing this letter was to thank the Philippians. Not only for 10 years of partnership, but also for a recent gift, as part of their ongoing support of his ministry and his sufferings for the gospel. But it's much more than a missionary support letter, as Paul encourages the Philippians to continue to trust and obey the Lord.

In Philippians 1:6 Paul says, ***"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."*** What a great verse to memorize! New life in Christ is grounded in the reality that God is both the beginning and end of it all, through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. Lydia and the jailer and their households could all testify they were "born again from above" as the Holy Spirit opened their hearts and minds to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

New life in Christ will grow as believers send their roots down deep into the Lord. This will result in bearing the Lord's fruit. If there's root, there will be fruit. You energize that growth by reading the Bible each day – receiving your necessary daily intake of spiritual nourishment from God's Word. This also displaces the lies of the world, the flesh, and the devil, replacing them with God's truth. This empowers you to live out the good work God has begun in you, as you rely on the Holy Spirit's power.

The apostle Paul reminds us the gospel is all about what Jesus Christ HAS done for you, and what He IS doing for you even now today, and what He WILL do tomorrow and in the future, as He works out His plan and purpose for your life, and for the Church, and for His creation.

That's good news for "real life" – as you, like the Philippians, become living proof of the transforming power of Jesus. It's directly related to how you put God's Word to work in your daily life. So keep on reading your Bible, trusting and obeying, as the Lord's power in your life makes you more and more like Him.