

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost October 12, 2014
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Philippians 1:2-5

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3) I thank my God every time I remember you. 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.

Fellow servants of Christ;

How often do you pray for your fellow servants of Christ? The apostle Paul frequently reminded the members of the congregations which received his letters that he was praying for them. In our text, Paul indicates that he prayed for the individual members of that congregation. **In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.** In his letter to the Christians in Colosse Paul wrote: (Colossians 4:2-4) **Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3) And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4) Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.**

Our modern missionaries make the request, “Pray for us and our work.” Whenever we pray the second petition of the Lord’s prayer – thy kingdom come – we’re seeking the Lord’s blessings on the spread of the Gospel and ultimately on those workers who are involved in mission work. That’s why this petition is often called the “Mission Petition.”

As we pray for the Lord’s blessing on the spread of the Gospel we also have opportunity to pray for each other – because each of us by God’s grace is a fellow servant of Christ. Our text for today suggests some specific prayer requests that we can bring to God for each other.

Theme: Let’s Pray For Each Other

1. Asking for God’s Grace and Peace
2. Joyfully thanking God for our partnership in the Gospel

After introducing himself to his readers, Paul wrote: **Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

As an inspired writer of the Bible – Paul was extending a divine greeting and divine gifts to his readers. As a pastor called to share with you the truths of God’s grace, I follow a practice which is quite common in our congregations as I greet you before the sermon with similar words: “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Each of us needs God’s grace because we are all sinners who deserve nothing at all from God. Grace is God’s undeserved love and kindness for sinners, given freely out of his bounty. Grace is God’s unmerited favor. It is his love for the unlovable that moved him to sacrifice his Son for the salvation of a world of sinners.

God’s peace flows from his grace. It is given to us for Christ’s sake as the prophet Isaiah reminds us: **he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him.**

God the Father planned the salvation of sinners and showed them grace and love. The Lord Jesus achieved salvation for sinners. He bore the guilt of sin for the whole world. He suffered the punishment that

sinner deserved to suffer. He gave himself as a ransom for sinners, being pierced and crushed for their sins. He died for them so that they might no longer live for themselves but for the Lord. Jesus satisfied God's justice for us, appeased God's wrath and delivered us from God's curse and judgment. He removed the sin that separated us from God and declared war on him. Jesus established peace between our heavenly Father and us.

Grace and peace – we all need these blessings! Each day our flesh struggles with sin. We feel the attacks of Satan. We often fail in our lives as servants of Christ. At times, we forget our calling all-together as we live to serve only ourselves. At times, our service to the Lord is hindered by our selfishness. We are all too aware of our weaknesses and our shortcomings. Grace and peace – that's the answer isn't it? That's what each of us needs -- Grace to cover our sin and Peace to calm our troubled consciences.

Without grace and peace, we would not be fellow servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. Without grace and peace, we would not have a mission in life or a message to proclaim. Grace and peace – this blessing from God fills our hearts with joy. Grace and peace -- This blessing from God binds us together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Grace and peace -- Those words remind us of the joy of salvation. Grace and peace -- Those words remind us of all that God has done for us in Christ. Grace and peace -- Those words remind us of the message that bind us together in Christian fellowship as members of a Christian congregation. Grace and peace -- Those words remind us of the message that we have for a world that is still struggling to find a way to deal with its own sin. Grace and peace -- Could there be a more fitting blessing for which you can request for your fellow servants of Christ?

Let's Pray For Each Other

1. Asking for God's Grace and Peace
2. Joyfully thanking God for our partnership in the Gospel

As the apostle Paul wrote the words of this text he was thinking about the partnership which he shared with the Christians in Philippi. It was a partnership based on the grace and peace of God. It began when the Lord called him in a vision to share the Gospel with the people of Macedonia. When he arrived in their city, he conducted his first worship service on the banks of a river with a small group of Jewish women. One of those women, Lydia, accepted his message and opened her home to Paul and his fellow missionaries. That home served as the meeting place for the Christians in Philippi.

However, the memories of their partnership in the Gospel were not all so happy. While he worked in their midst he was imprisoned – yet God used that to add the jailor and his family to the number of Christians in Philippi. After Paul left their city these Christians generously sent him a gift to support his gospel work. Even now, he continued to hear glowing reports about their faith, love, and loyalty to the gospel.

When we recall that Paul wrote this letter from yet another prison cell – we understand the joy and the reason behind his words: **I thank my God every time I remember you.**

Experiences like this are repeated over and over again in the Lord's church. Today the Lord still calls and sends pastors to congregations in need. As a pastor and the members of a congregation work together to share the message of God's grace and peace – they naturally grow close to one another. They have opportunities to support each other with prayer and to encourage each other in times of joy and hardship. They rejoice together over the victories the Lord accomplishes with the Gospel as more and more souls are added to the Lord's church; and they shed tears when their pathways separate.

As a pastor it's easy for me to relate to the words of Paul – as I reflect on the people the Lord has allowed me to serve here at Good Shepherd and in the many other congregations I served in the past – joyful

memories turn to prayers of thanks. It has been a long time since I sat in a pew as you are doing today – yet as I think of the pastors the Lord used to encourage me, to comfort me, to strengthen my faith – joyful memories turn to prayers of thanks. I'm sure you have similar feelings for the men the Lord has called to serve you with his Gospel – that wonderful message of grace and peace.

Every time we think of each other, we have reason to thank God for the wonderful blessings he has given to us as fellow servants of Christ. We will especially want to pray for each other as we joyfully thank God for our partnership in the Gospel.

Just what do we mean when we speak of our partnership in the Gospel? Sometimes we call it fellowship. It is a mutual sharing in the blessings of forgiveness and salvation won by Christ and in the new spiritual life the Holy Spirit creates in sinners' hearts through faith in Christ.

Believers who have been brought together into a partnership by the Gospel express their partnership in the Gospel in a variety of ways. They worship, pray, and study God's Word together. They forgive each other as brothers and sisters in Christ when necessary. They show one another special measures of love and helpfulness. They acknowledge each other as fellow servants of the Lord. They encourage each other in Christian living and they work together to promote the cause of the Gospel in the world.

We thank God for this wonderful partnership not just with our words of praise addressed to him but also with our actions as we live and work together in partnership with our fellow servants of the Gospel. We rejoice when we have the opportunity to gather in the Lord's house because there we will be in the company of our brothers and sisters in Christ who know and appreciate the grace and peace of our Lord. We joyfully pray for our pastor and our other Gospel partners as we strive to encourage, uplift, and strengthen each other in our joint ministries of the Gospel. We gladly support the Lord's work with our time, our talents our treasure. We eagerly look for ways to reach out with the message of God's grace and peace to others at home and abroad.

We also thank God for this wonderful partnership as we fight against the temptations of Satan that seek to undermine and disrupt our partnership in the Gospel. The grace and peace of our Lord will enable us to overcome these temptations and, with the Lord's blessings, our fellowship with each and with him will grow and increase.

When we think of the privilege we share as Gospel Partners working together to support the Lord's work in our congregation with its various ministries including our programs of Christian education, we realize that we also enjoy a partnership with other Christian congregations. That's why we are part of synod – a group of partners joined together to further the Lord's work.

Through our association with our sister congregations in the synod we are parts of ministries that train, equip and send forth pastors, teachers, missionaries and a host of other workers – gospel partners. In partnership with other WELS congregations and members we can become involved in a wider range of ministries than we could ever hope to carry out if we stood by ourselves. Programs such as the OWLS – a WELS organization for seniors or the Kingdom Workers or Builders for Christ, or joint youth rallies or shared workshops and training seminars are a few examples of activities we can enjoy with our Gospel partners in the WELS. Once again, we need to seek out or perhaps even create opportunities to express our partnership in Christ.

Most earthly partnerships will eventually be disrupted or come to an end. It may be that in this lifetime some of the Gospel partnerships we enjoy will also be disrupted. Congregation members may move away or

be called to eternal life. Pastors may accept calls to other areas of ministry. Joint ministry efforts may come and go. Yet the grace and peace of Lord Jesus Christ will endure.

The tie that binds us all together in Christ will assure us of a lasting partnership in heaven where together with the saints of all ages we will join in serving our loving God and Father.

Let's Pray For Each Other

1. Asking for God's Grace and Peace
2. Joyfully thanking God for our partnership in the Gospel

Please stand and open your hymnals to hymn 494. Let's say this hymn together.

Blest Be The Tie That Binds

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.

When here our pathways part,
We suffer bitter pain;
Yet, one in Christ and one in heart,
We hope to meet again.

From sorrow, toil, and pain
And sin we shall be free
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity. Amen.

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