

## **Blest Be the Tie that Binds - Philippians 1:3-6**

**Introduction:** John Fawcett had been the pastor of a small church in Wainsgate England for seven years. He had a growing family but a small income, so he felt he had to move to a larger church that would pay him a decent wage on which to support his family.

On moving day, many parishioners came to help, but they mostly stood by and wept over the prospect of losing their beloved pastor. As the movers loaded the last piece of furniture onto the wagon, Fawcett's wife turned to him and said that she didn't know how to go. Fawcett confessed that he had the same feelings, so he ordered the movers to unload the wagon and put everything back. And out of genuine Christian love for that congregation, he wound up staying and ministering to them for 50 years. That incident was the inspiration for Fawcett to write:

*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 we asunder part, it gives us inward pain;*

*But we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.*

What is the tie that binds us together? That is what I want us to think about tonight. What has held this church together for the past 100 plus years? And what is it that is going to keep us together in the future?

Tonight we turn to the church in Philippi to find the answer to that question. Paul had written to this church to thank them for helping him. They had reached out to him both spiritually and financially many times.

Throughout the book of Philippians Paul alludes to the tie that bound them together. Let's read **Phil 1:3-6** and see for ourselves. First, Paul acknowledged in vs. 5 that they were in fellowship with each other because of the:

### **1. Gospel of Salvation in Jesus Christ**

He said they were "*partners in the gospel.*" The church at Philippi was in agreement with Paul about the gospel; that it was the central message that was to be proclaimed. They shared the same beliefs – that the gospel – the good news - was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They believed together that the good news was the power of God unto salvation.

Now how can sharing in the gospel of salvation offered through Jesus Christ unite and hold a group of people together? It's because of what it does. First:

**A. Salvation offers freedom from the past.**

**Isaiah 1:18 (NIV)** says, *"Come now, let us reason together," says the LORD. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

When a person turns to Christ and repents of their sins they don't have to worry about their past sins. They may still have to face the consequences of their sin, but in God's eyes they have been washed clean and completely forgiven. It's a source of joy and unity to know that we're united with a group of believers whose past sins have been forgiven. But not only that:

**B. Salvation offers purpose for the present.**

In **Mark 16:15 (NIV)** Jesus said, *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation."*

Our purpose in this life after receiving salvation is to proclaim this good news to everyone. That ought to unite us like nothing else. To have the singular purpose of spreading God's good news to everyone we meet.

But that's not all:

**C. Salvation offers hope for the future.**

**Philippians 1:6 (NIV)** says, *"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."*

Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior can look forward to spending an eternity in heaven worshipping Him forever. The assurance that one day Jesus Christ will some day come again and take us home to live with Him gives us hope for the future.

So we stand united together because of the Gospel message of salvation. It offers us freedom from our past, purpose for our present, and hope for our future.

Paul also mentions that was a uniting force was their:

**2. Servanthood.**

Paul wrote in Phil. 4:10 (NIV) *"I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it."* Phil. 4:14 (NIV) *"Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles."*

The Philippian church took care of Paul. We don't know exactly what they did to help him, but whatever it was, it helped Paul out tremendously. They were there for Paul when he needed them. They were his servants in

the gospel.

In our Christian walk today this spirit of servanthood can help bind us together and keep us together. In at least four ways:

**A. Bearing one another's burdens.**

**Gal. 6:2 (NIV)** says, *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."*

We are commanded to bear one another's burdens. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we need to be there when we are needed. And you have done this many times. By taking food and offering to do other things when there is a sickness, by helping the hurting, and bearing their burdens that are weighing them down.

It's called putting aside your own needs and helping out someone else in their need. That helps bind us together. But also:

**B. Praying for each other. (Phil. 1:4)**

Paul says in vs. 4 that he is praying for the church at Philippi and that every request is made with joy. If our church want be bound together, then we must spend time in prayer for one another. Not just when there is a sickness or problem, but all the time. 1 Thess. 5:17 says, *"Pray without ceasing."* We need to pray for each other that we'll become better teachers, more spirit-filled leaders, more faithful fathers and mothers, and more obedient children. We need to keep on praying that we'll grow in grace and service to the Lord. And we need to pray that nothing will come between our relationships with Jesus or each other. Prayer will hold us together. But not only that, something else will help bind us together:

**C. Loving one another.**

**1 John 4:7 (NIV)** says, *"Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God."* When we love one another we are showing that we belong to God.

**1 John 2:9 (NIV)** says, *"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness."* In contrast, if we hate our brother we are showing that we are still walking around in the dark and haven't experienced the love of Jesus Christ. If we want our church to remain bound together then we have to love one another. One other thing that helps bind us together is:

**D. Esteeming others better than ourselves.**

**Phil. 2:3 (NIV)** *"Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves."*

This verse wraps everything together. If we bear one another's burdens, if we pray for each other, if we show genuine love for each other, then we can honestly say that we have put the needs of others ahead of our own. That is what being a servant is all about. A servant is there to tend to the needs of others. He doesn't think selfishly about himself.

That will help bind the church together like nothing else.

**Conclusion:** Where does our church stand today? Where will it stand in the future? Think about how you can make a difference.