

“GLP-0” // Philippians 1:1–11 // Secret to the Good Life # 1¹

Announcement

Summit family, before we jump into Philippians, I want to let you know about a very important event coming up in a couple of weeks: our quarterly Night of Prayer and Worship, coming up on May 29 at 7 p.m.

Every spiritual awakening that has ever happened in history came because God’s people got serious about prayer. Every single one. If awakening happens here, we won’t be the exception to that: It will come because we get serious about prayer too. Listen, it’s great to come together to listen to God’s Word—I love that; it’s great to organize ourselves for outreach and evangelism, but the heart and power behind real awakening is prayer. So I’m asking you to prioritize prayer meetings like this and be here.

If you’ve been to one of these before, you don’t need me to tell you how powerful these are. It’s an hour and a half of worship and prayer mixed together that just FLIES by. We worship, we pray, and we give the Spirit some space to do what only he can do. These have been some of the most incredible moments I’ve had at this church—when we get done, we know we’ve met with God for an hour—and I want you to be here for this next one.

Again, it’s **May 29, 7 p.m.** The programming will go until about 8:15–8:30, which is the official end time, but then for those who want to, some of us will stay for a bit to continue pressing in together until midnight, asking God to pour out his power on our families, our church, and our communities, and I’d love a bunch of you to join us for that too.

Check out all the details on our website, and make plans to be there!

Introduction

Now, if you have your Bibles, open them to Philippians chapter 1, and let’s all stand for the reading of God’s Word.

Philippians 1:1–11: Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Sources consulted: Tim Mackie, “[The Book of Philippians Summary](#)”, November 15, 2016, The Bible Project; Joby Martin, “[Relationships Matter](#)”, February 12, 2023, The Church of Eleven22; Kyle Idleman, “[MOVE with Gratitude](#)”, January 25, 2026, Southeast Christian Church; John Mark Comer, “The Story Isn’t Over Yet”, April 29, 2012, Bridgetown Church; Dr. David Jeremiah, “[The Joy of Community](#)”, February 7, 2025, Shadow Mountain Church; Chip Ingram, “[Understanding the Power of Focus](#)”, Undated mp3 series from Living on the Edge website. Cornelius Plantinga, *Gratitude: Why Giving Thanks is the Key to our Wellbeing*, Kindle Edition. And others as noted throughout.

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 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.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

9 And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so 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.

Leader: *This is the Word of God for the People of God.*

Congregation: *Thanks be to God.*

Philippians is a letter Paul wrote to a little church that he loved—the first church he’d planted in Europe. This is the church he’d planted in Acts 16—the one where he gets redirected into Philippi because his plans for another place fell through, and there he sees three people come to faith in Christ: The first was Lydia, a young up-and-coming female entrepreneur; the second was a demon-possessed slave girl; and the third was a Roman jailor and his family.

(I’ve told you how odd it is that the first worship service in Philippi consisted of a young female entrepreneur, a slave girl, a Roman jailor, and a former Jewish rabbi. It was an odd group, but that’s the miracle of the gospel.) And as I mentioned, Paul loved this little church. They’d supported him financially when no one else did. In fact, thanking them for their financial gift was the primary catalyst for Paul writing this letter.²

The city of Philippi where this church was located was a young, happening city—it was kind of a “new kid on the block” as far as Roman cities go. It had grown really quickly because it sat right at the crossroads of a couple of major Roman trade routes *and* in recent years, they’d discovered gold in the nearby hills, and so young, ambitious people from all over the Roman Empire were moving there to make their fortune. And so lurking in the back of everyone’s mind was this question: ***What is “the good life,” and how can I find it?***

That’s a big question for people here in the Triangle too, and we have all kinds of answers to it. (PIC)

² Philippians 4:15

- Some say it is found in success—building the right career, gaining influence, making money; finding the job that unlocks your inner potential.
- Others say it consists of freedom—getting to a place where you don't have to work, and you can fill your schedule with creature comforts and leisure activities.
- Others define “the good life” as authenticity—being true to yourself, unlocking your potential, becoming the best version of you.
- Still others think the good life consists of maximized health—fitness and supplements and cold plunges.
- Others say the good life is all about relationships—romance and friendship and family.

Just out of curiosity, if I asked you to rank these, how would you rank them? Which one would you make #1?

People today are making literal billions offering answers to this question.

- The self-improvement industry in America alone is worth about \$23 billion right now, and get this ...
- The global wellness market is approaching \$8 trillion.
- Millions of people in our country wake up every morning asking, “What do I need to become happier, healthier, calmer, richer, more fulfilled, more authentic, and more at peace? ***How do I find ‘the good life’?***”

Studies would suggest we're not doing a great job answering it: Antidepressants are now among the most commonly prescribed medications in America. And listen, I understand there can be times when these drugs are helpful, even necessary—but still, America is the most prosperous nation on earth, with more of THESE THINGS than any nation in human history, and some of our most prescribed drugs are *anti-depressants*?

So I'd say that this is a fairly relevant question *here*: **What is “the good life,” and how do you go about obtaining it?**

Now, at first glance you might think that Paul is not in a very good spot to answer this question: I mean, he's writing this letter while chained to a guard in a Roman prison, unsure if he's going to live or die. His career is in shambles. He's got no money. A lot of his core relationships have fallen through: Friends have betrayed him; some of the churches he's planted have abandoned him. His health and exercise regimen are, shall we say ... poor. Roman prisons didn't offer a “wellness” track. And yet, the word “joy” appears no less than **16 times** in this letter; this is arguably the most joy-filled book in the Bible.

So in this series we're going to give you Paul's prescription for “The Good Life,” and today I'm going to give you the first three elements of his prescription.

Believe it or not, Paul says the secret to the good life is a GLP.

But not the GLP you're thinking of. Not GLP-1. Paul gives us the OG-GLP, so let's call it **GLP-0**: and his GLP is **GRATITUDE (vv 3–5); LOVE (vv 7–8); and PROMISES (vv 6–7)**. These are the first three elements Dr. Paul prescribes for “the good life,” and in the first 11 verses of Philippians, he gives you a big ol' injection of it.

Here we go. The first element in Paul's "good life" compound is ...

I. GRATITUDE (vv 3–5)

Literally the first words out of Paul's mouth in **vs 3** are, **"I thank God"** for you. A friend of ours, Pastor Kyle Idleman (who spoke here at the Men's Conference a few years ago) says,

"You know, if I'd been Paul, I probably would have opened this letter like this: 'Paul, a prisoner, wrongly accused and unjustly sentenced and honestly, OVER IT.

I hope this letter finds you well. I wish I could say the same for myself. I'm writing to you from a Roman prison cell, which, in case you're wondering, is exactly as miserable as it sounds. Zero stars. Would not recommend. TripAdvisor even ranks it below Spirit Airlines, which is saying something!

I'm currently chained to a guard named Brutus. The man has not bathed since the reign of Augustus. His breath smells like the inside of Lazarus' tomb on day four.

My back aches from this stone floor. I haven't had a decent meal in weeks.

I think about you sometimes when I'm not thinking about how my life has completely fallen apart. I gave up everything for this mission! And look where it's gotten me. Arrested, beaten, shipwrecked, stoned, and now I sit rotting in a cell while the church argues about circumcision and whether or not I'm a 'real' apostle.

*I hear some of you are doing well. That's nice. Really. I hope you're enjoying your church potlucks and your small group socials. Anyway, if you could send warm clothes and prayers and maybe some incense to cover the smell of Brutus, that would be great."*³

That's how I would have opened Philippians. Instead, Paul opens, **vs 3** with: **I THANK God ...** (for this and that in my life).

³ Much of the original is from Kyle. I added a bit with his permission :)

Don't miss the significance of this: The definitive book on joy in the Bible—the book that shows you how to have joy in the most impossible of circumstances—opens with a statement of gratitude that makes almost no sense to us.

Gratitude is the first element in Paul's description of "the good life." Did you know: Psychologists have concluded that gratitude is the single best predictor of human well-being? A psychologist named Robert Emmons from the University of California, who is like the nationwide expert on this, has published a number of studies *showing that grateful people have higher energy and lower blood pressure; experience less frustration and less insomnia; live with more peace and less stress; have better relationships and stronger immune systems.*⁴

So I'll say it again: Gratitude is the first—and maybe most important—element of "the good life."

The million dollar question—literal million-dollar-question in our culture—is, **How can Paul feel gratitude in a moment like this?** I mean, nothing in his life is going right!

Let me show you four things Paul teaches you about gratitude in this passage. First,

A. Gratitude is a practice, not a feeling (vv 3–4)

Look closely at what Paul says in vs 3: I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

Notice the **intentionality** in Paul's words:

- "In all my remembrance." "Always... in every prayer." Paul thanked God every time he thought of the Philippians: not occasionally or only when he was in the mood.⁵
- In vs 4 Paul says he's "making [his] prayer with joy." "Making" is the language of choice, intentionality.

Gratitude is a practice, not a feeling. A **PRACTICE** is something you do regularly and intentionally, whether you feel like it or not. Again, **psychologist Robert Emmons** says that those who do some intentional practices to keep gratitude before them are the ones reaping all the positive benefits.⁶

So I would suggest you figure out some ways to keep gratitude in front of you:

- One of my daughters, Ryah, keeps a list on her phone of things she's thankful for.

⁴ Plantinga, Loc 105.

⁵ Idleman

⁶ Idleman

- Some families keep a “gratitude jar.” A couple of our pastors here came up with a thing called a “GratiKube” for families to use around the dinner table that makes gratitude fun.
- Make a habit of sending one text a day for 21 days to someone for something you’re thankful for.
- I know a couple of people on our team who use a thing called a “5-year journal” that has space each day for SUPER short daily entries—and I mean super short, where you only have space to write down a couple of things you’re thankful for, but they say it’s really helped them stay more present in the good things of their lives.
- My point here is not that you have to do any one of these things. My point here is that gratitude is a practice you must intentionally cultivate.
- Our family has adopted five family values we work to cultivate—we try to talk about them all the time. My kids mercilessly make fun of me for this—They’re like, “Oh, Dad, is it time for another lesson on THE GREEAR FAMILY VALUES?” (even now ...) but I think deep down, they really like it. The **five Greear Family Values**: Faith, Family, Integrity, Gratitude, and Generosity. Five things we are trying to cultivate, because we believe they are essential to “the good life.” And the one that takes the most work in our home is GRATITUDE.

Gratitude is a practice, not a feeling. But that raises a question, doesn’t it? You say, “Well, isn’t it inauthentic to act grateful if you don’t feel grateful?”

Great question. One of the most insightful and yet least appreciated chapters in C.S. Lewis’s *Mere Christianity* is a little one in the middle called “Let’s Pretend.”⁷ In that chapter, Lewis says there are times we must choose to act in certain ways even when we don’t feel like it, because God uses our obedience as a way of cultivating the *right* attitudes in us. For example, if you know you should be friendly toward someone, but you just don’t feel friendly toward them, Lewis says if you choose to act friendly anyway, you’ll usually find that after a few minutes your feelings toward them get friendly-er. This is “good hypocrisy,” Lewis says. Bad hypocrisy is when you act in a way contrary to the truth; good hypocrisy is when you act in ways consistent with it.⁸

If you choose to act grateful, soon you will feel grateful. Gratitude is a practice, not a feeling.

But Paul’s counsel here goes deeper than that. He also shows us:

B. Gratitude perceives the world through the lens of grace (1:2, 7)

Paul opens the letter, **vs 2**, by saying, “**Grace** to you ...” He closes Philippians with the same sentiment: “**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your Spirit**” (4:23).

These were not just little throwaway lines for Paul; grace was the atmosphere in which he lived his whole life. **In vs 7**, Paul saw the Philippians themselves as part of God’s grace toward him. He says the Philippians are “**partakers with me of grace both in my imprisonment and in the defense**

⁷ Book IV, ch 1.

⁸ Plantinga, 446.

... of the gospel.” Paul even saw his imprisonment as part of God’s grace. Paul saw his whole life as undeserved kindness given to him by a good God.

Cornelius Plantinga, a Christian philosopher who wrote one of the best little books on gratitude I’ve ever read (it’s called, very simply, *Gratitude*), said that the primary enemy of gratitude is **entitlement**.

Entitlement looks at every good thing in your life and says **(CHART)**:

- “I deserve this.”
- “God owes me.”
- “People owe me.”
- “Life owes me.”

Gratitude, by contrast, recognizes that the primary source of goodness is outside of you.⁹ And so it looks at the world and says,

- Creation is a gift.
- Salvation is a gift.
- Daily bread is a gift.
- Friendship is a gift.

The question is whether you think the source of goodness is you or God. By the way, did you know Paul lists the root sin of humanity in Romans 1 as ungratefulness? He summarizes fallen humanity like this: **“Although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him” (Romans 1:21).**

I’ve always wondered: Of all the sins Paul could mention there, why would Paul list ungratefulness as the *root* sin of humanity? It seems like a rather minor sin to list as the ROOT one. Yes, but it is ... because ingratitude is a kind of idolatry; it believes the source of goodness is from inside of us, instead of recognizing that all goodness comes from God.

So many statements in Paul’s letters underscore this concept:

- **Like 1 Corinthians 4:7**, Paul says, **“For what do you have that you did not receive? And if you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?”** If you recognize all good things in your life are actually gifts, how could you ever feel proud or entitled?
- Or **Romans 11:35–36**, **“Or who has given a gift to (God) that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.”** For nothing in our lives do we say, “I’m so good that God owes me this.” “Ah,” but you say, “I’m a good person, and I deserve good things. That’s what Oprah told me.” Yeah, but even where you’re good, where does that capacity for good come from?

⁹ Plantinga, Loc. 143.

- **Ephesians 2:8–9**, “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” Even your faith was a gift of God.
- Or right here in Philippians, **Philippians 2:12–13**, Paul says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling [gratitude!], for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” God is the one who puts desires for good in you. From him and through him and to him are all things.
- I could go on and on with verses like this.

****Entitlement says, “I earned this.” Grace says, “What do you have that you did not receive?”** Gratitude is what grows when you finally realize the answer to that question is: *nothing*.

Paul shows us a third thing about gratitude:

C. Gratitude sees God’s good providence in everything (v 7)

Again, notice the word BOTH in vs 7. The Philippians are “partakers with me of grace **BOTH** in my imprisonment and in the defense ... of the gospel.” Paul saw both his ministry and his imprisonment as gifts of God’s grace.

Most people would see being imprisoned unjustly as evidence God had forgotten them. Or maybe they would just say it’s part of living in a messed-up world, but Paul called even his unjust imprisonment *grace*—because, and here’s the key, he trusted God’s promise that he was using even the bad things in his life for good.

For example, vs 12, Paul says that God was using his imprisonment as a part of God’s good purposes. He said, vs 12, “I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel ... and in that I rejoice!” And then he throws in a little humorous aside in vs 13 “... it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.” In other words, Paul was like, “My imprisonment has resulted in the whole Roman army hearing the gospel.” Poor Brutus, chained up next to Paul in the prison, had literally nowhere to go as Paul explained the gospel to him FOR HOURS. AND every few hours, the captain would send a new soldier to sit with Paul, and that was another one Paul got to evangelize. Paul was like, “God has literally given me a captive audience, except I’m the captive and they’re the audience.”

At the end of Philippians, Paul concludes the book by saying (rather cheekily, I might add), “All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar’s household.” Which is a total flex!! Because Paul is saying, “All the Roman guards in here who are now brothers in Christ because they got chained up next to me wanted to say ‘hi.’”

Do you trust that God is working this way in your life? You see, this kind of assurance wasn’t just a special privilege for Paul and the apostles. Paul says it’s true for all believers.

One of Paul's most famous teachings: **Romans 8:28**, "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." All things, church, ALL things! Not some things. All things.

- God uses **all** things in your life, which includes bad things, for good.
- Now, let me be clear here: Paul is not saying that God is the one doing the bad things, just that he's using them for good.
- You and I have the assurance that, to quote Senator Ben Sasse, talking about his pancreatic cancer, there's not one maverick molecule in all the universe. God is using every molecule, even the bad ones like the cancer ones, for your good and God's glory. **Not one maverick molecule.**

Gratitude grows when you embrace that. That nothing in your life is wasted, nothing—not prison, not pain, not a failed job, not cancer—NOTHING.

Gratitude is like putting on one of those sets of **night vision goggles** that enable you to see things in the dark. Night goggles don't change what's there in front of you **(PIC)**; they just allow you to see things that you can't otherwise see in the darkness. Gratitude doesn't close its eyes to the bad things; it simply enables you to see (or at least trust in) God's good purposes in the bad things.⁴⁹

Listen, given time, **like Paul, you'll see that God used every gray sky, every unjust imprisonment**, as part of his good plan for revealing Christ in you and through you to the world.

- I've **always loved the story of Corrie Ten Boom**, a Dutch Christian who was put into a German concentration camp because she was caught helping Jews escape the SS. She said that one of the things she hated the most about her time in the camp was all the fleas in the barracks, because the German soldiers made them live in filth. But one day her sister Betsie, who was there in the camp with her, said, "You know, God says we should thank him in all things, which means we should thank God even for these fleas." Corrie said, "There's no way I can thank God for the fleas." But then a few days later, they were having a secret worship service in their barracks, and some German soldiers suddenly came up next to their window—had the soldiers discovered what they were doing, they would've been beaten. But Corrie overheard one of the guards say he wasn't going in the barracks because his wife wouldn't let him in the house with fleas on his clothes. "*And so I begrudgingly acknowledged,*" Corrie said, "*that even in those cursed fleas God was at work!*"
- So can you thank God for the fleas in your life? Who is a flea in your life? (No, I didn't say point at them or say their name out loud or write their name in the margin of your Bible. But thank God for them.)

And that leads me to the last observation on gratitude from Paul's words:

D. Gratitude embraces the Gain, not the Gap (vs 7)

These are terms I take from a really popular leadership psychology book out there called *The Gap and the Gain*. It talks about two different kinds of people and how they see the world. "Gap" people look forward, measuring themselves against what they don't yet have or what they haven't

¹⁰ Idleman

achieved. “Gain” people measure backward—recognizing how far they’ve come and how much they’ve been given. People living in “the gap” are chronically dissatisfied; people living in “the gain” are consistently grateful.

Paul is a “gain” person because he sees everything, even his imprisonment, through the lens of grace. He recognizes that God is at work in all things, pouring out on him undeserved goodness. They see literally everything as undeserved goodness. Old Testament Jews had an interesting way of teaching themselves to see the world this way. Their celebration of Passover always began with something called the Seder, a ritual feast with a set of ritual prayers. One of those prayers was called **the “Dayenu,”** which literally means, in Hebrew, **“it would have been enough.”** In the liturgy, the leader reads through 15 of God’s mighty acts of rescue, and after each one, the family says, “Dayenu: It would have been enough.” You do it with me:

- If God had only rescued us from the Egyptians and not also given us the Egyptians’ wealth, **“Dayenu, it would have been enough.”**
- If God had given us their wealth and had not split the Red Sea for us—***Dayenu, it would have been enough!***
- If he had split the sea for us and had not taken us through it on dry land—***Dayenu, it would have been enough!***
- If he had brought us before Mount Sinai and had not given us the Torah—***Dayenu, it would have been enough!***
- If he had given us the Torah and had not brought us into the land of Israel—***Dayenu, it would have been enough!***

Gratitude celebrates the gain, not the gap—because it recognizes that all that it has is an undeserved gift and rejoices in it.¹¹

So make gratitude a practice in your life.

Ask God to open your eyes to his grace in your life.

Make it one of your family (or personal) values.

A spirit of gratitude enables you to rejoice even when life stinks and you're chained up in a Roman prison next to a smelly guy named Brutus.

In Africa, there is a fruit called the “taste berry,” and it gets its name from the fact that when you eat it, it changes your taste buds in such a way that everything eaten after it for the next several minutes tastes sweet. Literally, it has a molecule in it called “miraculin” that binds to the tongue's taste buds, which makes acidic foods taste sweet. A spirit of gratitude is the “taste berry” of Christianity.

OK, that’s the main point of the message, but there’s two other things I want to at least introduce to you as part of “the good life,” because we’ll see them surface again and again throughout this book. So I’ll mention them very briefly.

II. Love (vv 7–8)

Part of Paul’s happiness flows from the fact that he is genuinely in love with this church. I don’t know how you could read vv 7–8 and not see that: **7 “I hold you in my heart ... 8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”**

¹¹ See [this Wikipedia article](#). Adapted from Plantina, Loc 299

Sitting here in prison, my heart is filled with delight in thinking of you. Genuine love for others puts a joy in your heart that nothing else can.

I have sometimes joked with you that after we had our fourth kid, Veronica and I concluded we'd never be happy again, because as a parent you can never be happier than your least happy kid, and with four kids, just the odds say that at any given point, one of them would not be doing well, which means our happiness is always struggling.

And there's some truth in that, but the deeper truth is that the greatest joys in life come through love, even when love brings pain and hurt in your life.

C.S. Lewis said there's a way of living where you shut off your heart from love and focus only on yourself—which feels safe, and now you can't be hurt or disappointed—but that produces the most unhappy people on earth, even when they overflow with success and health and freedom—and that's because God created us in his image, and we are most like him when we love. When you love someone—even when it's painful, and even when it's causing you great sacrifice, you taste and touch the very heart of God!

Hebrews 12:2 says that joy was most manifested in Jesus when he went to the cross. Of course, the cross was painful; Jesus did not love going to the cross. But Hebrews says that joy carried him through it because what drove him to the cross was love, and love brings joy.

When you love, you participate in that joy. 1 John 4 says that when we love, we literally participate in the nature of God.¹² Or to use the words from the final song in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables*, "To love another person is to see the face of God!"

The amount of love in your heart is directly equal to the happiness in your heart.

It's like my Sunday School teacher taught me. **JOY** is spelled:

Jesus
Others
You

Keep the affections of your heart in that order and you'll have joy.

(You say, "But J.D., this is the problem: I don't have much love for Jesus and others. I mainly love me." (I'm into me; I'm tired of talking about me ... why don't you talk about me. Love me some me, me and Terrell Owens.)

¹² 1 John 4:16

That's the kind of honesty that will get you somewhere in the Christian life." Remember what Paul says, **"It is God who works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13)**. Love in your heart has to come from God. So ask him for it. The gospel is that God will give these things to you as free gifts of his grace on Jesus' behalf if you'll ask him for them in faith.

So ask him to put love in your heart, because love is the absolutely essential second element in "the good life." Your happiness quotient is directly proportionate to the love in your heart.

And that brings us to our final element ...

III. Promises (v 6–7)

Now, this last element I'm just going to touch on, because we've already covered it a good bit. But Paul's joy came from his confidence that God had promised good to him and God would keep his promises.

6 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.

I am sure that what God started, he'll complete. Listen, if something good is happening in you, that's from God. It may feel overwhelming and impossible to you, but if God started it, he'll complete it!

"It may look like I'm in prison," Paul says, but the gospel is not imprisoned. **"What has happened to me,"** Paul says in vs 12, **"has really served to advance the gospel."** The things that look like setbacks will actually, in time, prove to be advances. Already, he explains in vs 13, I've been able to tell a bunch of Romans about Jesus. By the way, a bunch of your new Roman soldier buddies say "hi." And it's pretty interesting: If you read some of the historical documents of the early church in the first century, you'll see that many of the leading converts to Christianity were Roman soldiers. That all came from seeds Paul planted when he was a Roman prisoner.

Do you believe that he is working that way ... in your life? Again, the promise that God is working in all things for good—meaning, he is using all things, good, bad, and indifferent—to form Christ in you and to show off Christ through you—is not just a special privilege for Paul or the apostles or super Christians. Paul says it's true for all believers.

I brought up **former senator Ben Sasse** a moment ago. If you don't know what is going on, Senator Sasse, former senator of Nebraska, a very committed believer, was diagnosed this past year with stage-four pancreatic cancer that had already spread to his liver, lungs, and vascular system. Doctors initially had given him only a few months to live. However, through what he calls "providence, prayer, and a miracle drug," Senator Sasse has been able to stay alive for a few more months than anticipated, and that's allowed him this opportunity to be interviewed by outlets like *60 Minutes* and the New York Times and People magazine. And it's been incredible. On *60 Minutes*, and you should watch this interview if you haven't,

he said to literally tens of millions of people, “I hate cancer. But I’m also grateful for it, because it exposed the illusion that I was in control. That any of us are in control.” He said the diagnosis forced him “to tell the truth” about his life—that he’s not the center of the universe, and he cannot “atone for [his] own brokenness.” That he has a problem bigger than anything in the world can fix, one that only Jesus can fix. This cancer, he says, while he hates it, has allowed him to testify to the world that there’s something greater than success or health or relationships or anything life supplies. It’s allowed him to testify that Jesus has given him something even more important than the cure to cancer. **That’s Philippians 1.**¹³ Paul says, “You see prison; I see grace. You see chains; I see God advancing the gospel ... you see cancer; I see grace. You see disappointment; I see God creating a platform for me to tell people that in Jesus, I possess something better than anything else this world can give me and something even cancer can’t steal from me.”¹⁴

That’s it. **Gratitude, Love, and Promises.** That’s **Paul’s GLP-0**, his first three secrets to the good life.

Which of these three do you most need? Ask God to cultivate all three in you! I’m going to leave these up for a moment of reflection ... then our worship teams will come and lead us in “The Goodness of God.”

TIME OF REFLECTION/PRAYER/SIT WITH HOLY SPIRIT

¹³ John Mark Comer: "We're constantly being told that we need to live in the moment, not the future, but I think the real problem is we don't live far enough in the future. We live in the future of a few years from now and are full of concerns about schooling, work and family. We should live in the future of the Day of the Lord when God puts it all to right. That should be in the back of your head at all times."

¹⁴ My paraphrase based on his interviews.