

1 So today we're beginning a new study  
2 through the book of Philippians. We  
3 actually introduced the the book and the  
4 city last week, a little bit. Um  
5 Paul's letter to Christians in Philippi,  
6 some 2,000 years ago. What is it about  
7 this letter that that makes it worth  
8 studying? Well, there are several things  
9 to point out as we begin. One, it's a  
10 real letter. It's  
11 what many call the most intimate and  
12 personal of Paul's letters that are found  
13 in our New Testaments. It's firmly rooted  
14 in real-life circumstances, so at  
15 every turn in this letter, you find Paul  
16 addressing the the unasked question that  
17 lay behind a lot of what's going on. Do  
18 the convictions of the Christian faith  
19 that Paul commends really work? And I  
20 think Philippians answers that question  
21 for us very well. The Philippian church  
22 apparently held a special place in Paul's  
23 heart, despite their disappointing  
24 struggles. I guess they were kind of like  
25 church.  
26 Along with being a real letter, it's a  
27 profound letter. It's home of  
28 many of what my friend and mentor,  
29 Darrell Johnson, used to call the  
30 dynamite one-liners of  
31 Philippians. Those verses that  
32 Christians have been challenged and  
33 comforted by as they have committed them  
34 to memory over the centuries. Verses like  
35 Philippians 121 For me to live  
36 is Christ and to die is  
37 gain. OK, some of you have read this  
38 before. This is good.  
39 10 and 11, at the name of Jesus,  
40 every knee should bow in heaven and on  
41 earth and under the earth, and every  
42 tongue confess that Jesus Christ is  
43 Lord to the glory of God the Father.  
44 I could add a whole bunch, but let me  
45 just skip ahead to 4:13. I can  
46 do all things through him who strengthens  
47 me. Those were all found in Philippians.  
48 It's also a Christ-filled letter.  
49 spilling over from start to finish,  
50 with the uncompromising message, in  
51 the words of Gerald Hawthorne in his  
52 Philippians commentary, the  
53 uncompromising message of the  
54 overwhelming and life-shattering  
55 importance of Christ, the  
56 centrality of Jesus Christ in the  
57 universe, in the world, in an  
58 individual's life.  
59 The name Jesus is mentioned 17  
60 times. in chapter  
61 one alone. Now during the season of  
62 Lent, leading up to and including Easter  
63 Sunday this year, we were all encouraged  
64 to behold the man  
65 who is Jesus, our Lord and Savior.  
66 Well, we don't want to stop doing just  
67 that with ever increasing and  
68 always rewarding discipline and  
69 passion just because another Easter is

70 behind us. Let us keep looking  
71 for Jesus. And studying  
72 Philippians together is a tremendous  
73 way to do this.  
74 Philippians is also, finally, a  
75 joy-filled letter.  
76 We could all use more joy, yes?  
77 The word joy is used 16 times in the four  
78 chapters of Philippians. But what  
79 makes this all the more striking are the  
80 circumstances of the author as he  
81 writes. Paul is  
82 in prison, put there  
83 unfairly by false charges.  
84 We'll talk about that more later. He  
85 spends much of his time chained to a  
86 Roman soldier. Gee, that sounds like  
87 fun, doesn't it?  
88 He is awaiting a trial which  
89 could result in his acquittal  
90 or his execution.  
91 He has received reports of significant  
92 negative developments in Philippi.  
93 We all have our prisons, don't we?  
94 Disappointments, fears, painful  
95 social realities, difficult and  
96 unavoidable relationships,  
97 loneliness, financial worries,  
98 the daily grind, regret,  
99 unbelief, and forgive  
100 me if I haven't hit yours, but I bet it's  
101 in there somewhere. Do we have the  
102 kind of joy Paul exudes?  
103 I could use more joy in my life. How  
104 about you? Paul's  
105 letter to the Philippian church, written  
106 sometime around the year 60 AD,  
107 I believe can, and I pray  
108 will, lead us to the source  
109 of this transcendent joy.  
110 Let's take a look, shall we? Philippians  
111 chapter one, verses one through 11, hear  
112 the word of God. Paul and Timothy,  
113 servants of Christ Jesus, to all  
114 the saints in Christ Jesus who are in  
115 Philippi with the overseers and deacons,  
116 grace to you and peace from God our  
117 Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
118 I thank my God in all my remembrance of  
119 you. Always in every prayer of mine  
120 for you all, making my prayer with joy  
121 because of your partnership in the Gospel  
122 from the first day until now. And I am  
123 sure of this, that he who began  
124 a good work in you will bring it to  
125 completion at the day of Jesus  
126 Christ. It is right for me to feel  
127 this way about you all, because I hold  
128 you in my heart. for you are all  
129 partakers with me of grace, both in  
130 my imprisonment and in the defense and  
131 confirmation of the gospel.  
132 For God is my witness how I yearn for you  
133 all with the affection of Christ Jesus.  
134 And it is my prayer that your  
135 love may abound more and more,  
136 with knowledge and all discernment,  
137 so that you may approve what is excellent  
138 and so be pure and blameless for the day

139 of Christ, filled with the fruit of  
140 righteousness that comes through Jesus  
141 Christ to the glory and praise of  
142 God. Let's pray. Lord, thank you  
143 so much for  
144 your marvelous, wonderful word,  
145 your truth given to us.  
146 Lord, help us to listen well, to hear  
147 well, and then to think well,  
148 and to apply well the things that you are  
149 teaching us here. And we pray this in  
150 your name and for your sake. Amen.  
151 Years ago, and it's always more and more  
152 and more years ago, Funny how  
153 that works. But Janelle and I lived in  
154 Chico, California. I was an associate  
155 pastor at the Presbyterian Church there,  
156 right downtown. And there was a new radio  
157 station that got started. It was a  
158 Christian radio station. People were  
159 excited about it. Y105. I don't know if  
160 any of you ever lived in Chico and  
161 listened to Y105. I did.  
162 And they had an ad campaign  
163 that was sort of modeled on, borrowed  
164 from, the California dairy  
165 industry's popular ad campaign.  
166 Some of you may have heard this. Maybe  
167 they did it in Nevada too, but I wasn't  
168 here then. Ready? Got  
169 milk, right? Just got milk, question mark?  
170 Apparently it was very successful, very  
171 memorable, 'cause here we are years later  
172 and I'm talking about it. But the radio  
173 station actually borrowed from that, and  
174 their little motto that they set on air  
175 every once in a while, and they put it on  
176 bumper stickers, Y105,  
177 got Jesus, question  
178 mark? It was a clever  
179 slogan, fitting well into our  
180 acquisitive, materialistic, and  
181 individualistic culture,  
182 but honestly, I never liked it much.  
183 If Jesus is a commodity to be  
184 obtained, how is he going to be a  
185 saving Lord to be obeyed?  
186 Maybe a better slogan for a Christian  
187 radio station, or a Christian church,  
188 or for Christians in general would be,  
189 Has Jesus got you? Has  
190 Jesus got us?  
191 Too many churches these days, it seems to  
192 me, fit too well with our me  
193 first culture, and ask too many  
194 got questions. Got  
195 this? Got that? Johnny,  
196 our latest contestant has just got  
197 Jesus! Let's show everyone exactly  
198 what she has won. Yeah.  
199 Listen, to get the right answer, you  
200 must first be asking the right  
201 question. So what is the right  
202 church question? And  
203 good questions aren't always  
204 the best questions. What  
205 questions are we asking ourselves these  
206 days here at Covenant? How about,  
207 what do we need to do to encourage more

208 people in our community to come worship  
209 with us and join our family of faith?  
210 Got growth?How can we  
211 improve our worship services and other  
212 activities?Got attractive  
213 resources?How can we  
214 organize ourselves better?Get more people  
215 involved in ministry?Expand our  
216 facilities?Increase our financial  
217 stability?Got effective  
218 leadership?How can we keep things  
219 the way most people, especially  
220 me, seem to like them, or  
221 change things to meet the desires of more  
222 people, like me.  
223 Got comfort?Are we teaching the  
224 right things in the right way?Got  
225 truth?Are we doing  
226 church as well as the other folks in town?  
227 Got success?What is the  
228 right question for the Christian at home,  
229 at work, at school, in the community?  
230 What questions do we tend to ask  
231 ourselves?Am I doing the right  
232 things or the wrong things?Is my life  
233 getting better or worse?How  
234 can I get more of what I want?  
235 How did I get stuck in this mess?  
236 Got security, got comfort, got  
237 success, got joy, got hope, got peace,  
238 got love, got joy, got milk?  
239 So let's go back to the Christian radio  
240 station's question inspired by the  
241 California dairymen from Got Milk?They  
242 Got Got Jesus?  
243 It's a consumer question. But we  
244 followers of Jesus, it seems to me, are  
245 called to be more like the cows.  
246 Our essential question starts not with  
247 got or getting, but  
248 with giving.  
249 Paul's prayer for his dear friends and  
250 fellow followers of Christ in Philippi  
251 went like this, the one we find at the  
252 beginning of his letter to these folks.  
253 And it is my prayer that your  
254 love may abound  
255 more and more. The real question  
256 for the authentic church and the  
257 authentic Christian who is following  
258 after Jesus Christ, the one and only  
259 Lord and Savior, is  
260 giving loveNot  
261 What are you getting?or What have you got?  
262 or What will you get?but Are  
263 you giving?Like the cow  
264 for Got milk?Are  
265 you giving love?  
266 Perhaps the most tragically  
267 misunderstood and misused word  
268 in all the English language.  
269 In this case, we'd be better off if we  
270 all spoke Greek.  
271 The word Paul uses here is  
272 agape. Probably some of you have heard  
273 that word before. It signifies  
274 divine gift love,  
275 self-giving love,  
276 disinterested, unconditional love.

277 The kind of love God gives to us and  
278 calls us to give to each other. The kind  
279 of love that keeps its promises,  
280 that makes healthy human relationships  
281 between sinful people survive and  
282 flourish. The supernatural love that  
283 makes it possible for all the natural  
284 loves to exist without caving in on  
285 themselves. Paul doesn't  
286 use the word here,  
287 eros, which could also be  
288 translated into English as love.  
289 But this word refers to possessive love,  
290 object-centered love,  
291 desire love, what we might  
292 call face-to-face, maybe hot  
293 love. It is not  
294 inherently or necessarily  
295 evil. It's a good part of God's creation  
296 that people have and express this kind of  
297 love in the right places in the right  
298 ways, but it is quite  
299 corruptible. I know in our culture  
300 that's hard to see.  
301 That was supposed to be a joke. A  
302 couple of you got it, now more of you  
303 have. Some of you maybe driving home  
304 later will get it and laugh in your car.  
305 It's often foolish and fickle and so  
306 dangerous. Left to itself,  
307 eros cannot maintain even  
308 itself. It is  
309 self-destructive without some kind of  
310 external support.  
311 Neither does Paul use here the word  
312 storge, which refers to  
313 family affection.  
314 Also could be translated into English as  
315 simply love. But it refers to  
316 clan love, social  
317 biological love,  
318 duty love. It is the love of a  
319 parent for a child, or a child for a  
320 parent, et cetera. This kind of love is a  
321 good, natural instinct, but it is  
322 easily manipulated or  
323 demanded, and thus can become a source of  
324 great misery. C.S.  
325 Lewis, from whom I'm getting most of  
326 these ideas, in his book called The  
327 Four Loves, says this: If we try to  
328 live by family affection  
329 alone, affection will go  
330 bad on us. Love,  
331 having become a god,  
332 becomes a demon. Another  
333 word for love available to Paul, writing  
334 in Greek, was phileo.  
335 This means friendship love,  
336 side-by-side love, common interest  
337 club love, common  
338 viewpoint love. And let me just interject  
339 here. Friends, we  
340 are not called to be  
341 the friendliest church in town.  
342 Though this is a good thing, And I'm  
343 always delighted when people talk about  
344 how friendly we are here at Covenant, but  
345 that is not the essence of our call as

346 God's church here in Reno, Nevada.  
347 Fileo, friendship love, is  
348 resilient against outside  
349 opinion. It is inherently  
350 exclusive. C.S. Lewis again,  
351 Friendship is ambivalent. It makes  
352 good men better and bad  
353 men worse. Lewis,  
354 again, from the Four Loves, makes these  
355 concluding observations:  
356 The natural loves, family affection,  
357 friendship, and possessive eros,  
358 prove that they are unworthy to take the  
359 place of God by the fact that they  
360 cannot even remain themselves and do  
361 what they promised to do without God's  
362 help. The rebellious slogan,  
363 All for love, is really  
364 Love's death warrant date  
365 of execution for the. moment left blank.  
366 But divine gift love, love  
367 himself working in a man, is  
368 wholly disinterested and desires what is  
369 simply best for the beloved. Again,  
370 natural gift love is always directed to  
371 objects which the lover finds in some way  
372 intrinsically lovable. Objects to  
373 which affection or eros or a shared point  
374 of view attracts him, or failing that, to  
375 the grateful and the deserving, or  
376 perhaps to those whose helplessness is of  
377 a winning and appealing kind.  
378 But divine gift love in the man  
379 enables him to love what is not  
380 naturally lovable: lepers,  
381 criminals, enemies, morons,  
382 the sulky, the superior, and the  
383 sneering. Giving  
384 love, agape, that,  
385 Paul suggests to us, and prays for the  
386 Philippians, is the question.  
387 And immediately Paul tells us that we do  
388 so with our head still  
389 connected to our heart. And it is my  
390 prayer that your love may abound more and  
391 more with knowledge and  
392 all discernment. The love  
393 we are to give is selfless,  
394 but it is not mindless.  
395 Agape love is discerning and not merely  
396 simple, sweet and sentimental.  
397 A loving parent does not always  
398 say yes.  
399 Children in such an environment will  
400 wither and die under the  
401 weight of their natural ignorance  
402 and selfishness.  
403 Date of execution for the moment, left  
404 blank. A truly loving  
405 boyfriend or girlfriend.  
406 Tell this to your kids and grandkids.  
407 A truly loving boyfriend or  
408 girlfriend, contrary to popular  
409 opinion, does not always say  
410 yes, either. And neither does  
411 a church actively giving love after the  
412 fashion of Jesus and for his glory.  
413 Giving love, The results  
414 are awesome. And it is my

415 prayer that your love may abound more and  
416 more with knowledge and all discernment,  
417 so that you may approve what is  
418 excellent, and so be pure and  
419 blameless for the day of Christ.  
420 Filled with the fruit of righteousness  
421 that comes through Jesus Christ to the  
422 glory and praise of God.  
423 Giving love, we won't be settling for  
424 less than the best. You've probably heard  
425 it said that the archenemy of what is  
426 best is not what is clearly bad,  
427 but what is merely good.  
428 We will keep moving toward purity and  
429 blamelessness in preparation for Judgment  
430 Day, the day of the Lord.  
431 And this will be a sign of our bright  
432 future before God.  
433 We will be filled with the fruit of  
434 righteousness, Paul says. which  
435 means right relationships with our world,  
436 with people around us, with ourselves,  
437 and with God, which comes from our  
438 connection with God's son. And this  
439 means a healthy present with each other.  
440 God will be glorified, and  
441 this is the proper and best eternal goal  
442 for human living. Giving  
443 love, it is  
444 impossibly difficult work.  
445 But, good news,  
446 we don't do it alone. It is  
447 God's work in us from  
448 start to finish. We are  
449 not able to do it on our own. It's  
450 unnatural. Paul's reason for  
451 joy and confidence in his prayer is  
452 our reason for confident joy as we ask  
453 ourselves the right question and answer  
454 it with our words and our actions.  
455 Let us not forget that three verses  
456 before his prayer, Paul says this.  
457 Verse six, And I am sure of  
458 this, that he who  
459 began a good work in you  
460 will bring it to completion at the  
461 day of Jesus Christ. God  
462 finishes well and completely what  
463 he starts. God keeps  
464 his work moving along. He is always at  
465 work. God had made a start with  
466 the Philippians, and he has  
467 made a start with all of us who  
468 trust in him even a little bit. The  
469 Christians in Philippi, 2,000 years ago,  
470 had come to believe in Jesus. Verse  
471 seven, You are all partakers with me of  
472 grace. Us too?  
473 Yes, miraculously  
474 so. It is the work of  
475 our giving love, God. The  
476 Philippians had exhibited signs of their  
477 salvation. Paul speaks in verse five of  
478 their partnership in the gospel from the  
479 first day until now. They had given  
480 Paul financial support, apparently. They  
481 had participated with Paul in other  
482 costly ways, like sending Epaphroditus to  
483 him to help him. May we, too,

484 keep giving love, and so be  
485 showing signs of our own salvation in  
486 Jesus Christ. Paul's source of  
487 joy, and ours, is  
488 limitless. Grace to you and peace  
489 from God our Father and the Lord Jesus  
490 Christ. Paul's play on words  
491 here, the typical Greek letter  
492 word greetings, chorine, is  
493 replaced with grace, chorus.  
494 Good wishes from me, blessings from  
495 God. To all the saints in  
496 Christ Jesus who are at Philippi,  
497 Christ's work for us  
498 Christ's work completed  
499 for us makes us  
500 God's saints.  
501 Our task, as  
502 followers of Jesus, as those who have put  
503 our trust in Jesus, is not desperately to  
504 try to earn our way up to  
505 saint status, like some  
506 church traditions might suggest, but  
507 rather, for us simply to  
508 live into what is already  
509 true of us because of Jesus and his  
510 completed work. Not, Boy, you all ought  
511 to try to become saints. No, you all  
512 are saints. The righteousness  
513 of Jesus has been given to us. In God's  
514 eyes, we are saints, and I know you look  
515 at people around you and say, Really?  
516 And my answer to you is,  
517 Really, for we look  
518 not at what is seen, but what is  
519 unseen. For what is seen is temporary,  
520 but what is unseen is eternal.  
521 That's the eternal truth about all of us  
522 who have simply put our faith and trust  
523 in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.  
524 Hallelujah.  
525 The joy-filled church, then, keeps always  
526 before its people the essential question.  
527 How are we now giving out the love  
528 God has poured into us?  
529 And it knows that the ability to answer  
530 that question well must come out of its  
531 connection to Jesus Christ, who is the  
532 model and source, the model  
533 and source of real,  
534 life-changing, world-shaking  
535 love. So let me conclude with  
536 our message time today with something  
537 Special for eyes and for  
538 ears. For our eyes,  
539 we offer together a picture of what  
540 real love looks like. As once again, we  
541 gather around the Lord's table to  
542 celebrate his holy supper, to remember  
543 what he did because of his love.  
544 And then something for our ears, I'm  
545 gonna share with you a song that has  
546 meant a lot to me through the years. It  
547 was by Christian singing  
548 group called Glad, probably 40 years  
549 ago, but it's one that has stuck with me  
550 and has been a lot to me over the years,  
551 so I'd like to close by sharing that with  
552 you before we share in communion. It's



553 called Most of the Time.  
554 Sometimes I see you  
555 Through a glass that's almost  
556 clear Your  
557 power overwhelms me  
558 My illusions  
559 disappear  
560 Sometimes I hear you  
561 With your gentle, soothing  
562 voice Your words are  
563 always truthful And they  
564 cause me toBut  
565 most of the time I'm  
566 still not  
567 understanding  
568 The smallest part of what you're  
569 trying to say  
570 And most of the time  
571 And despised I  
572 come to you for  
573 comfort And you  
574 never act surprised  
575 Sometimes I love you  
576 With a passion and a  
577 zeal And then  
578 sometimes I realize  
579 Is it asking you too much  
580 to change me from  
581 inside?I know  
582 I haven't kept my  
583 promises even when I've  
584 tried. I'm  
585 becoming more aware  
586 how much I leave you  
587 out. Are these  
588 seeds  
589 of hope or seeds of doubt?But all of  
590 the time you say  
591 that you're perfecting  
592 meAnd  
593 every word you say, I  
594 know it's true  
595 And some of the  
596 time, I'm  
597 close to  
598 understanding  
599 That it isn't up  
600 to me, it's up  
601 to you  
602 No, it isn't  
603 up to me  
604 It's up  
605 to you  
606 We come now to the table of the Lord.  
607 It is the living God who is the host  
608 here. It is His invitation  
609 that we hear and respond to.  
610 And the living God is not fooled.  
611 He knows who we are most of the  
612 time. He knows who we are all the time,  
613 and He loves us. And if you  
614  
615 00:29:26,760 --> 00:29:28,1000  
616 wonder about that, look.  
617 He came for us in Jesus.  
618 He taught us what was right and  
619 true. He modeled for us how to live  
620 as an authentic human being. And we  
621 didn't listen, and we didn't follow.

622 Good news, that wasn't the main reason  
623 Jesus came. God knew that another good  
624 teacher wasn't going to do it for us.  
625 What we needed was not someone to teach  
626 us better. We needed  
627 someone to take our place,  
628 someone to represent us, someone to  
629 die for us, to take  
630 upon Himself the just penalty for our  
631 sin. And that is what  
632 Jesus did, essentially. And then,  
633 He rose from death. And  
634 the promise to us is if we  
635 die with Him, we too will  
636 be raised with Him. And all of  
637 this is made possible, is  
638 made real, is made actual in our  
639 lives because of the love of God. Amen?  
640 Amen. And so  
641 this is what we celebrate at the Lord's  
642 Table. The Lord Jesus, on  
643 the night He was betrayed, took  
644 bread, and when He had given thanks, He  
645 broke it, and He gave it to His  
646 disciples, saying, This is my body, which  
647 is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.  
648 And in the same way, after supper, he  
649 took the cup, saying, This cup is the new  
650 covenant in my blood. Do this  
651 whenever you drink it in remembrance of  
652 me. For whenever we eat this  
653 bread and drink this cup, we  
654 proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.  
655 Let us pray. Lord Jesus,  
656 thank you for what you did for us. Lord,  
657 help us. to embrace this  
658 truth, and so to make  
659 it an ever greater  
660 reality and presence and motivator  
661 in our lives as we decide who we  
662 are and what we do. Lord, help us to  
663 know the freedom that we have, because  
664 you have accomplished for us what needed  
665 to be done. Lord, help us to realize  
666 that you call us to live into the  
667 reality that you have made real for us.  
668 And so as we come to your table today,  
669 may we come well.  
670 May we come with praise for you on our  
671 lips and thanksgiving.  
672 May we come with empty hands,  
673 not thinking that we're coming to trade  
674 something, our presence here in your  
675 house today, our good thoughts, our  
676 worship, Our good works, our avoidance of  
677 sin every once in a while, Lord, that  
678 we're not, we're not.