

## Philippians 1:3-11

“I **think**. Therefore I **am**.” So wrote the 17<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher, **René Descartes**, who was actually on to something. To be able to **think** and reflect on our lives is a special gift of **God** to human beings. And so we **do** think. We think about **ourselves**, about where we’ve **come** from, where we’re **going**, and about how we are now **living** our lives. Some people are very **narrow** and **limited** in their thinking - continually thinking only of **this** world - of ways to make more **money**, or to make their **job** easier, or to make their **time-off** on the weekend last longer. They just can’t seem to think outside the box of **this** world, and its **temporary** pleasures.

But we **Christians** think **differently**. Oh sure, we give attention to thinking about our **jobs**, our **health**, and our **loved** ones. We even look for ways to more thoroughly enjoy our times of **fun** and **recreation**. But there’s **more** to our thinking. The Holy Spirit leads us to think **beyond** the box of this world. He has taught us about the **eternal life** that our Savior has **won** for us, and about the **Last Day** when Jesus will come to take us **into** that life. We call it the Day, because it’s the day that will **change everything** for us - a day that will open up a whole **new world** in our **heavenly** home.

Have you ever heard the question, “What’s the **thought** for today?” That question doesn’t imply that there is only **one** thought for each day, but rather asks, what is the thought you would like to **focus on** for today. Each day there are thoughts which occupy our minds. And as **Christians** who are watching for the return of our Lord, our thoughts aren’t **only** focused on **this** day, rather, they are also focused on the Day - the **Last Day**. Today, in our text from Paul’s letter to the Philippians, we’ll see how the Day affects our **thinking** in several ways. First of all, the Day leads us to thank God for our **partnership** in the **Gospel**, secondly, the Day gives us **confidence** of our eternal **salvation**, and thirdly, the Day leads us to **pray** for **holy lives**.

In his letter to the Philippians, the Apostle Paul bares his **soul** to them. He wrote, “*I **thank** my God every time I **remember** you. In **all** my prayers for **all** of you, I **always** pray with **joy** because of your **partnership** in the **gospel** from the first day until now.*” Paul had many **happy** memories of the time he had spent with the Philippians. He viewed their **partnership** in the Gospel as a **blessing**, and he was very **thankful** for that blessing. His experience there had started out with a handful of **women** who met with him at the **riverbank** to hear the preaching of the Gospel. Among them were

**Lydia** and her **family**, Paul's **first** converts to Christianity on the European continent. Lydia had provided Paul with **room** and **board** during his stay in Philippi. Paul also remembered how he and Silas had been **imprisoned** there for preaching the Gospel, but more importantly, how God had **used** that imprisonment to bring the saving Gospel to the trembling **jailor** and **his** family. The spread of the Gospel in Philippi had started out **small**, but very quickly a **flourishing** congregation of believers had emerged - a congregation which was **loyal** to the **Savior** and His **Gospel** - a congregation which was striving to **live** in **accordance** with the Gospel, and to **share** their faith in Jesus. All these things led Paul to **thank God** for this wonderful **partnership** they shared in the Gospel.

Today we **also** thank God for the partnership **with Him** in the Gospel, which He has allowed **us** to enjoy. Most of us were brought into that **partnership** with God when we were **infants** - when we were brought to **Jesus**, and became members of His **family**, through Holy **Baptism**. At that time God **changed** us from being **lost** and **condemned** sinners, to being reborn-**believers** in His Son, as our **Savior** from sin. Since that time our God has continued to **keep** us in partnership with Him in the Gospel, through His **Word** and **Sacrament**. Therefore, we never need to **despair** because of our sins. We **know** that those sins have been **forgiven** through the suffering and death of **Jesus**. We never need to fear **death**, or the **judgment** which will come on the Last Day, because we have been **assured** that just as **Jesus** rose from the dead, through Him we will **also** rise, to live **with Him** forever.

But there is **more**, because our partnership in the Gospel is also with **one another**. Our fellow **believers** are all **partners** whom God has given us, to **accompany** us on our journey to heaven. Those fellow believers have helped us carry our **burdens**. Their **hands** have helped us lift high the **cross** and **share** our faith. Their **hearts** have **prayed** for us and **comforted** us in times of **uncertainty**, and **illness**, and **loss**. They have **fought** for the **truth** of God's **Word** with us - the Word that keeps **reminding** us that Jesus will be returning **soon**. Let's remember to **thank God** for those wonderful **partners** in the Gospel. And let's **also** thank God for the believers who have shared that partnership with us in the **past** - our **parents** and **grandparents** - as well as former **pastors** and **teachers** who are now in **heaven**, but who graciously **taught us** to **know** and **believe** in our Savior.

Secondly, the Day gives us **confidence** of our eternal **salvation**. On that Last Day our exalted Savior will return to **judge** the living and the dead. He will come to take all His believers **with** Him into heaven, to **enjoy** His presence for all **eternity**. And although we haven't been told the exact **day** or **time** when Jesus will return, we **have** been told that He will come when people **least expect** it to happen. We know that the Last Day could come at **any** moment, and we know that Jesus has provided us with **signs**, so we can be **prepared** for His arrival. So, as **believers** in Jesus, we can approach the Day with **confidence**. The Apostle Paul writes, *"Be **confident** that he who **began** a good work in you will carry it on to **completion** until the day of Christ Jesus."* **God Himself** is the one who has called us to **faith** through the Gospel. **God Himself** is the one who gave us the **Holy Spirit** as a **down payment** on the inheritance of heaven. And because our God is **faithful**, we can be **totally confident** that the good work of **faith** which God **began** in us will **be preserved** to the very end.

And finally, Paul's words remind us of one **other** thought that will occupy our minds as we wait for Jesus to return. The Day leads us to **pray** for **holy lives**. Paul wrote, *"This is **my** prayer: that your love may **abound** more and more in **knowledge** and **depth** of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is **best** and may be **pure** and **blameless** until the day of Christ, **filled** with the fruit of **righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of **God**."* Those words also serve as **our** prayer, as we approach the Day.

We know that we are **not perfect** in our struggle to live truly Christian lives, and we know that in **this** life we never **will** be. Our knowledge of **God's** will is incomplete. We wrestle with **questions** about what we **should** and **shouldn't** do every day. Our sinful flesh **clings** to us, and often causes us to speak unloving **words**, and to carry out unloving **actions**. But that's **not** what we **want**. We want to let the light of **Jesus** shine brightly through us, so in **prayer**, we ask the **LORD** to **help** us.

Our lives are constantly **changing**, and we want them to change for the **better**. So, let's strive to **grow into** the kind of people that Jesus has chosen us to **be**. Let's pray that the LORD will help us to know His love more **deeply**. Let's pray that by His **Word** He will teach us to know **His** holy will, and that He will continue to give us His **Holy Spirit** to lead us to make **better choices** in life - choices which are more consistent with the lives **He** wants us to live. Let's pray that God would fill our lives with the

**fruits of faith** - love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, and self-control - fruits which give glory to **Him**.

Jesus became **like us**, becoming **human**, so He could take our sins to the cross of Calvary, where He **died** to set us free. Now through Jesus let's strive to become more **like Him** - clothed in **His** righteousness - because only then will our hearts and our actions be as **pure** and **spotless** as the Lamb of God who **saved** us.

Descartes said, "*I think, therefore I am,*" but **Jesus** said, "*As a man thinks, so he is.*" May **our** thoughts truly reflect who we **are** in **Jesus**. He has brought us into a **partnership** in the **Gospel** with our **God**, and with **one another**, and so our thoughts give **thanks** to **God** for this wonderful blessing. Jesus has given us the **assurance** that He will **complete** His plans, and **return** here to the earth to take us to **heaven**. Our thoughts are filled with **confidence**. And finally, the LORD has worked in us a desire to live **holy** and **blameless** lives to His glory, and we **pray** for that we will always **strive** to live that kind of life each and every day, right up to the day - the **Last Day**. Our thought for **today** - our **focus** for this Advent Season - really comes down to **Thoughts For The Day** - the **Last Day** - a day leads us to **thank God** for our **partnership** in the **Gospel** - a day gives us **confidence** of our eternal **salvation** - and a day that leads us to **pray** for **holy lives**.  
Amen.