

PHILIPPIANS

Paul's Account Of His Present Circumstances (1:3-30)

Prayer Of Thanksgiving

Philippians 1:1-6: Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

As Paul opens his letter, as he does in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon, appeals to the strong and association with the church in Philippi, not his apostleship, unlike the majority of his letters. There is no need as this a letter of thanksgiving and fellowship in which he includes some instructions.

Paul often identified himself as *bond-servants of Christ Jesus*, as did other writers of the New Testament. A bond-servant (*doulos*) was a slave not a hired servant (*diakonos: the overseers and deacons*). Here Paul includes Timothy as a joint/fellow slave of Christ. ***Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1***

Paul's inclusion of Timothy would encourage Timothy; he recognizes and acknowledges how important Timothy was to his success. Paul desired to build up Timothy and instill confidence in Timothy to fulfill his ministry. ***1 Timothy 1:3-4; 18, 19, 4:16***

At every remembrances of the Philippians, Paul, with joy (this is the first of 19 occurrences of this word or its cognates), thanks God for the all the members of the church at Philippi. Paul's circumstances did not dampen his joy; he was in jail and he found joy in prayer. Joy is dependent upon the inward condition of an individual and not the outward circumstances.

Koinonia (to have in common): participation / fellowship / partnership - the Philippians have been providing support from the beginning of the church. Anything believers can share together is koinonia (prayer, Bible reading, celebrating the Lord's Supper, and giving). Their support of Paul made the Philippians partners in his work, and he was thankful to them and the Lord. Acts 2:44; Romans 15:26, 16:1-2

What is the good work the Lord has begun in the Philippians? Their financial support of Paul, for which he is thankful and confident, will continue. Paul's continued confidence in the Philippians rests upon the faithfulness of the Lord, who is supporting Paul, through the church in Philippi; their financial support is symbolic of their desire to spread the gospel. The Philippians desired to spread and preserve the Gospel; they had a unity and affection among the body of believers, which inspired joy in Paul. ***Colossians 1:3-4; 3 John 4-6***

Philippians 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus

Who takes responsibility for perfecting us? It is Christ. When will it occur? Christ is working and will continuously work in us to bring us into conformity to His image, until we are complete (*perfect*), which will happen when wither we go to be with the Lord or the Lord returns (*the day of Christ Jesus*). ***Romans 8:29-30; Titus 3:3-5; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:3-5***

This is Paul's first references the *day of Christ* in Philippians; he refers to the *day of Christ* three times in his letter to the Philippians (1:6, 1:10; 2:16). The *day of Christ* is the rapture of the Church of Christ. God will continue to work in believers to transform them into the image of His Son, until the day the Lord Jesus Christ comes back for His church. ***1 Corinthians 15:49; Hebrews 9:27-28; 1 John 3:2-3***

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Philippians 1:7-11: For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The Philippians had been there for Paul through thick and thin: *in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel*. Their support and assistance too Paul was not merely as trite, superficial concern for the success of Paul in his ministry. They viewed themselves co-workers, they were *partakers* in his ministry, this is fellowship compounded and speaks of the close relationship between the Philippians and Paul. Being there for one another, in times of trials (imprisonment and defense), need, and loneliness builds the relationship and strengthens the bond of love. The Philippians sharing and cooperation to get the gospel out, expressed their heartfelt concern for Paul's ministry and his well-being, encouraged and inspired Paul.

The believer is to exercise love in knowledge and discernment. We need to know the individual and then exercise judgment and not love indiscriminately. Discernment calls for making decisions and choices based on truth, not from prejudice. Why does Paul instruct believers to us knowledge and discernment to approve *the things that are excellent*? Exercising love in knowledge and discernment will direct our paths to live a life exemplified by love, *sincere and blameless until the day of Christ. 1 Thessalonians 4:1, 2, 9-12; 2 Timothy 4:14-15; Philemon 6; Hebrews 10:23-25*

Afflictions Promote the Gospel

Philippians 1:12-14: Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13 so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, 14 and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

The Philippians were concerned for Paul and his imprisonment affected his ability to preach the gospel. Paul assures the Philippians; his imprisonment was extending the reach of the gospel. *Acts 21, 23, 24, 26; Genesis 45:5-8; Romans 8:28, 37; 2 Timothy 2:8-9*

The Jews and Rome believed Paul was their prisoner, but it was the Praetorian guard of Caesar's palace, who were guarding the apostle, that were the prisoners, they could not escape the preaching of the Gospel. *Acts 28:16*

Believers may have felt inadequate in witnessing with Paul actively witnessing, but now felt free to go. Seeing Paul's faithfulness while in chains may have encouraged and motivated believers to share the gospel. God does not guarantee our comfort or convenience - to achieve His purpose. Although not mentioned by Paul, his imprisonment allowed Paul to write these prison epistles. *John 12:23-26; Acts 8:3, 4; 14:5-7*

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Philippians 1:15-18: Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; 16 the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice

Paul does not identify those who were *preaching Christ ... from envy and strife*. It seems there are two possibilities. Some may have been attempting to build their own “ministry” on the coattails of Paul’s ministry for their own personal financial gain, of whom Peter warns. The other likely possibility would be Judaizers, envious of Paul’s influence (in prison or out), those who claimed Christ as their savior but held to and compelled others to comply with the Mosaic system, of whom Paul rebuked, and admonished the believers, in his letter to the Galatians. **1 Peter 5:2**

Not all preach the gospel out of love, there were some (*some also from good will*); some preached purely for selfish gain or to build a personal following. Paul knew the power of the Gospel is in the word of God; he recognized it is the message not the messenger that changes lives. He was not concerned with the motives so long as the Gospel was preached; the adversaries would answer to the Lord. **Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:17-18, 23-24, 2:2; 2 Peter 2:3**

Those that reject the gospel meet the preaching of the gospel with resistance and will use whatever means possible to stop the spread of the gospel, including persecutions and lies. **Hebrews 11:32-34; 1 Peter 5:8**

Philippians 1:19-20: for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Though Paul did believe God was going to deliver him from prison (*my earnest expectation and hope*), through the prayers of the saints and the power of the Holy Spirit to influence / direct the hearts and minds of his incarcerators (*through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*), Paul greatest desire was not his release from prison. His greatest desire/concern was that through and in his circumstances (*whether by life or by death*), he might glorify Christ and not fall short of his high calling (*I will not be put to shame in anything*). **Proverbs 21:1**

Proverbs 21:1: The king's heart is like channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes. NASU

Paul saw that both his anticipated release and his faithfulness to his calling were dependent upon the work of the *Spirit of Jesus Christ* and the prayers of fellow believers were instrumental in his deliverance. Prayer changes things – activating the working of the Holy Spirit, encouraging, and strengthening believers, changing the unbeliever, glorifying God, no matter how difficult the situation/circumstances. Paul was confident that he would be delivered – because the Church was praying for him, not because of his righteousness. Paul was concerned that he would glorify God *whether by life or by death* – he was not indifferent, but focused on his calling and purpose. **Psalm 32:6-7; Ephesians 6:18-20; Colossians 4:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2; 1 Peter 1:6-9**