

**Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Philippians
Philippians 1:3-8
Part 3**

This morning we will be continuing our study of the book of Philippians. We have considered Paul's greeting in VV. 1-2 and we have now begun to consider Paul's prayer of thanksgiving for the Philippians in VV. 3-8.

Let us read this section of Scripture, **"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. (7) 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."**

Three weeks ago we began to examine this passage of Scripture and asked the question: What is Paul thankful for? The first thing Paul was thankful for were his memories. Look at V. 3, **"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you."** The Philippians effectively erased Paul's tape of negative memories because their love for him and the Lord was so overwhelmingly powerful.

The second thing that Paul was thankful for was their participation (KOINONIA) in the gospel. Let us read VV. 3-5, **"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."**

The Philippians and Paul, because of their mutual participation in the gospel, were enjoying true Christian fellowship (KOINONIA). They were joint participants in the saving grace of the gospel. They were joint participants in the defense and proclamation of the gospel. They were joint participants in the pursuit of holiness. They shared a camaraderie. They viewed each other as brothers and sisters in Christ and felt close to one another.

Hopefully, when we see a brother or sister in Christ doing hard things in order to live a life pleasing to the Lord, when we see a brother or sister in Christ doing hard things in order to live a morally pure life, we will be drawn to them. Hopefully we will feel close to them. Hopefully we do not need them to invite us over for pizza in order to feel close to them. Hopefully we don't need them to go out of their way to say hello to us. Hopefully we don't even need them to know our name. Hopefully all we need is to see their desire to live a godly, holy life as an outflow of their devotion to Christ. Hopefully all we need is to see them as joint participants with us in the gospel.

This weekend we will be going on to a third thing for which Paul is thankful in this section of Scripture. Paul was thankful that the work, which was begun in them, will be completed.

PAUL WAS THANKFUL THAT THE WORK BEGUN IN THEM WILL BE COMPLETED

Let us read **Phil. 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.**” Paul was confident. Paul was assured of something. What was it? Paul was assured that the work of salvation that was begun in them would be completed.

How important is the assurance of salvation in respect to ourselves and others? You are all familiar with the story of the Titanic. On her maiden voyage, the Titanic left Southampton, England, on April 12, carrying 1,312 plus a crew and service staff of 914, heading for New York. As she crossed the North Atlantic, the Titanic received a warning at 9:40 AM on April 14 about “much heavy pack ice and great number of large icebergs.” But wireless operator Jack Phillips placed the warning underneath a paperweight and continued sending personal messages for passengers.

Five more warnings were received - and five more warnings were discarded, the last one because no one wanted to awaken the captain. Why should he be disturbed? After all, no one believed the ship could ever go down.

But at 11:40 p.m. Frederick Fleet, sitting lookout in the crow’s nest, spotted an iceberg five hundred yards away and called the bridge. But it was too late. The Titanic struck a skyscraper sized iceberg, ripping a fifteen foot gash along the right side of the ship, resulting in the flooding of six of her sixteen watertight compartments.

At 12:45 a.m., the first lifeboat was lowered into the chilly waters below - half empty. Others tried to seek safety, but for most it was too late. Some jumped into the water and tried to swim, but hypothermia set in and they sank into a watery grave.

In all, only 753 lives were saved. The few who believed and acted upon what others initially refused to accept, namely that the ship had struck an iceberg and was sinking, got into the lifeboats and were saved.

When news was telegraphed ahead to New York City, thousands of people gathered outside the White Star Shipping Line office to await the grim news. Who had been rescued? Who had perished?

On that day, it did not matter whether one had first, second, or third class tickets. It did not matter if one had been sailing on the starboard side or the port side. It did not matter if one had been the captain of the ship or merely a crew member. When the cruise line posted a one-word status report of each passenger, all that mattered were the words “saved” or “lost.”

Nothing has changed, like the Titanic, this world is sailing proudly full speed ahead, ignoring constant warnings from heaven. Already she has struck the massive iceberg of sin -- a grim reality many choose to deny. The people of this world, because of sin, are slowly sinking toward

the icy waters of physical death and the abyss of God's final judgment. Do you believe this? If you do, then we must ask ourselves the question: Is there any hope? And the answer is yes! A lifeboat has been provided and that lifeboat is Christ.

Let me ask you a question in light of what the Scriptures teach. What would you treasure more, the assurance that your family and loved ones are in fact saved or that they are successful? What would you treasure more, the assurance that your family and loved ones are in fact saved or that they are well known or popular? What would you treasure more, the assurance that your family and loved ones are in fact saved or that they are talented and accomplished? I would propose to you that in the end all that will really matter are these two words: saved or lost. How important is the assurance of salvation in respect to ourselves and others? Being assured that we and the people around us will not slip into the abyss of God's final judgment far exceeds anything that this world has to offer.

Let us look at this verse more carefully and see if what I have been sharing with you is in fact true. I shared with you that I believe the work that Paul is speaking about in this verse is the work of salvation. Why would I say this?

The only work that Paul could possibly be referring to would be the work of salvation. It fits with the flow of the passage. Again, let us read the first three verses of this section of Scripture. **"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."** Paul had been talking about their wonderful participation and their wonderful fellowship with him in the gospel "from the first day until now."

When he looked at the Philippians and knew how they were living their lives, he was drawn to them as his brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul, on the basis of what he had seen in them, was assured that they were in fact a part of his spiritual family. What is the work that Paul is referring to in **V. 6**? Based on the immediate context, we would have to conclude that it was the work of salvation.

Paul, because of their participation (KOINONIA) in the gospel from "the first day until now," was assured that they were in fact saved (VV. 3-5). But what about the future? Did he believe that he would continue to enjoy this same assurance? And the answer to this question is, yes. Listen carefully to **V. 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 Jesus Christ."** Why was he so confident?

Paul was confident that their participation in the gospel would continue because he saw it as a continuing expression of God's ongoing work of salvation (V. 6). Paul attributed what he saw in their lives to God. What does the passage say? **"For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."** The Philippians did not begin the work of salvation in their lives and neither would they perfect it. Salvation is totally and completely the work of God (Rom. 8:28-30). Listen to **Romans 8:28-30**, **"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined**

to become conformed to the image of His Son, ... (30) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified." This sequence of events is ascribed totally as the work of God and God alone. We have no part in our salvation.

Someone might say, "Yes, God was responsible for everything in respect to our salvation, accept our faith." And of course hopefully you would quickly answer, "No, this is not true. God is responsible even for our faith." **John 6:29** says, **Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom he has sent."** If salvation is the work of God and we have from the first day until now seen the work of God in the lives of people that we know and love, then how confident should we be that the work which he has begun will be completed? Totally confident.

Some professing Christians invariably remove **Phil. 1:6** from it's context in an attempt to comfort themselves with the thought that someone who has wandered away from the things of the Lord will ultimately be saved.

It is true that Christians can sin. It is true that Christians can even wander away from the Lord for a period of time. But we should never try to use the teaching of **Phil. 1:6** to support our belief that a so-called Christian brother is saved, while they are indulging themselves in the cares and pleasures of this world. Why? This is not the context of Paul's statement. Paul was confident that the Lord was at work in the Philippians and would complete that work in the Philippians, not in spite of their conduct but because of their conduct.

When will God's work be over in respect to His church? God's work in respect to His church will be over on the "Day of Christ Jesus." The Day of Christ Jesus relates wholly to the reward and blessing of saints at His coming. (1 Cor. 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). Why will his work be over on this particular day? There will be nothing more that needs to be done in respect to the church. The church will be enjoying fellowship with Christ in their resurrected and glorified bodies, perfectly holy and blameless, which is the ultimate goal of our salvation.

This day is the hope of the church and could be experienced by us at any moment. What can we expect on this day? Listen to **1 Thess. 4:13-18**, **"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as do the rest who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and thus we shall always be with the Lord. (18) Therefore comfort one another with these words."** This is a description of the Day of Christ Jesus.

Should this day, the day of Christ Jesus, be on our minds? Listen to **1 Cor. 1:4-8**, **"I thank my**

God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus, (5) that in everything you were enriched in Him, in all speech and all knowledge, (6) even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, (7) so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, (8) who shall confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” What does Paul communicate to us here in this passage? He communicates to us that we should be waiting eagerly for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Why? The Day of Christ Jesus is our finish line. Everything that we have been striving for with our fellow Christians will finally be realized.

CONCLUSION

The world, because of sin, is slowly sinking toward the icy waters of physical death and the abyss of God's final judgment. Do we believe this? If we do, then I would propose to you that when the end finally comes, all that will really matter in terms of ourselves and others are these two words: SAVED OR LOST.

Paul was assured on the basis of his participation in the gospel of Christ with the Philippians that God was at work in their lives. And because he believed that God was at work in their lives, he was fully persuaded that the Lord would complete the work that He had begun and both he and the Philippians would, on the Day of Christ Jesus, stand before Him holy and blameless.

Hopefully each of us here, because of joint participation in the gospel of Christ, enjoy this same assurance.