

**Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving for the Philippians
Philippians 1:3-8
Part 4**

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."**

As we have been examining this passage, we have been seeking the answer to the question: "What is Paul thankful for?" I have highlighted for you three different things.

Paul was thankful for his memories of the Philippians (V. 3) Look at V. 3 "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you."

Paul was thankful for their participation (KOINONIA) in the gospel (VV. 4-5) Let us look at VV. 4-5, "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."

And lastly, Paul was thankful that the work which was begun in the Philippians would be completed (V. 6). Let us read 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 Christ Jesus." The work that the Lord had begun in them was the work of salvation. Paul was assured that this work would be completed in the Day of Christ Jesus.

It is true that the church is saved in respect to the penalty of sin. Certainly no one here this weekend who knows Christ as their Lord and Savior needs to fear God's judgment. But it is also true that we are not yet saved in terms of the presence of sin. The church today is not perfect; it has spots and wrinkles. But on the day of Christ Jesus, when Jesus presents the church to himself as His bride, we will be flawless. Listen to **Eph. 5:25-27, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; (26) that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having not spot of wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and blameless."** It is on this day, the day of Christ Jesus, that the ultimate goal of salvation will be realized. On the day of Christ Jesus, we will not only be saved from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin but also from its very presence.

Paul was not only confident that he personally would enjoy that future glorious day, but he was also confident that the Philippian church would enjoy that future day with him as well. Why was he so confident of this? Why was Paul so assured that when Christ presented His bride to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that the Philippians along with himself would be there? The answer, though alluded to in **V. 5** when he spoke of their participation (KOINONIA) in the gospel, is now elaborated in **VV. 7-8**. So how does Paul explain his assurance or confidence?

The subjective answer to the question of Paul's assurance is that he had the Philippians "in his heart." Let us read **V. 7**, "**For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart.**" It was only right for Paul to be confident, to be assured, because he had them in his heart.

What does Paul mean when he refers to the "heart"? The word "heart" both in Hebrew and Greek came to mean that which is central. It encompasses our mind, will, and emotions (2 Cor. 2:4, 4:6, 9:7). We see each of these aspects in the book of 2 Corinthians. We see the heart referring to our minds or the way we think in 2 Cor. 4:6, "**For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.**" We see the heart referring to our wills or the way we choose in 2 Cor. 9:7, "**Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver.**" And finally, we see the heart referring to our emotions in 2 Cor. 2:4, "**For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears; not that you should be made sorrowful, but that you might know the love which I have especially for you.**"

Perhaps a simpler way of understanding what Paul is saying is simply to rephrase it this way, "**it is only right to feel this way about you all, because I have a sincere affection for you.**" If a sincere or true affection is present, it will affect our mind, will, and emotions. What is Paul in essence saying? He is telling the Philippians that at the very core of his being, he cares for them.

Why was Paul so assured that when Christ presented His bride to Himself without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that the Philippians along with himself would be there? The subjective answer to this question that Paul initially shares with us in **V. 7** is that he had the Philippians "in his heart," or in other words, at the core of his being he had a deep affection for them.

This explanation of his assurance on the surface may seem unreasonable. Just because we, as a born again believer, may care for someone deeply who professes to be a Christian it does not guarantee to us that they will be there with us on the Day of Christ Jesus. But this confusion is quickly cleared up when we consider the rest of the verse as he explains why he feels this way. His explanation of his deep affection for them provides us with an objective answer to the question of Paul's assurance.

The objective answer to the question of Paul's assurance is that they were joint "partakers of grace" with him in his imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. Let us continue to read **V. 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.” The grace that he is talking about is not saving grace but sustaining grace.

Paul and the Philippian church were dependent upon God’s grace to sustain them during Paul’s Roman imprisonment (2 Cor. 8:1-3). Certainly Paul was dependent upon God’s grace. Every day he woke up chained to a Roman guard. Every waking moment and every activity of that day was conducted while being chained to that Roman guard. I would certainly think he would have had at times wanted to cry out, “Lord help me.” Every day as he was thinking about the churches and their various needs, but unable to go to them to assist them and guide them, he must have cried out to God, “Lord help me.” As various Roman Christians were seeking to cause him distress in his imprisonment, as we will see later in the chapter, he must have cried out “Lord help me.”

But he was not the only one that needed to draw upon God’s grace during his imprisonment. The Philippians also needed to be sustained by God’s grace in his imprisonment. The Philippian Church gave money to Paul while he was in prison, which is clear from **Phil. 4** and it is also clear that they were not in a very good financial position to do this according to **2 Cor. 8:1-3**.

Listen to 2 Cor. 8:1-3, “Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia (this includes Philippi), (2) that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. (3) For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord.”

The Macedonian churches, which would have included Philippi, gave out of their poverty to the Christians in Judaea. We would therefore, I believe, have to assume that they gave out of their poverty to Paul in his imprisonment.

Both Paul and the Philippian church were very dependent upon God’s grace to sustain them during Paul’s Roman imprisonment. Therefore Paul considers, in respect to his imprisonment, that the Philippian church was a joint partaker with him of God’s grace. But this was not the only cause for Paul and the Philippians being dependent upon God’s grace. Paul and the Philippian church were dependent upon God’s grace to sustain them in the defense and confirmation of the gospel (Phil. 1:27-30).

Let us again read **Phil. 1:7, “For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all (being so confident, so assured) because I have you in my heart (because at the very core of my being I care for you with a deep affection) since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.”**

The word “defense” implies the defensive side of the Apostle’s preaching, the process of removing obstacles and prejudices. And the word “confirmation” denotes the aggressive side, the direct advancement and establishment of the gospel.”

The work of defending and confirming the gospel message is not without challenges. Certainly

this cannot be debated in light of the fact that Paul was presently in prison because of these activities. And I would have to assume that he continued to be challenged in prison because of these same activities. But he was not alone. Anyone who involves themselves in this activity will be challenged. Why? Listen to **1 Cor. 1:18**, **“For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”** Apart from God’s work in the heart of man, it will only have disdain for the message of the cross. That disdain can very easily, depending on the circumstances, spill over into the persecution of those proclaiming the message.

This certainly was happening to Paul. Was it also happening to the Philippians? And the answer is yes. Listen to **Phil. 1:27-30**, **“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; (28) in no way alarmed by your opponents -- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. (29) For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake; (30) experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”**

Paul knew that he was a partaker of the grace of God as he actively defended and confirmed the gospel. But he also knew that the Philippians were also partakers of that same grace with him as they were actively seeking to defend and confirm the gospel.

Yes, Paul was deeply confident and assured that the Lord would complete the work He had begun in the Philippians because he had them in his heart, or in other words, he had a deep affection for them. This was the subjective reason for his assurance. But this deep affection did not come because they played bridge together. Or because they helped one another out when someone had a need. No, rather Paul said he had them in his heart because of their participation or fellowship in the gospel. He had them in his heart since both in his imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, they all were partakers of grace with him.

I am experiencing this same kind of confidence in respect to large numbers of people attending this fellowship. Why? Because I see them as partakers with me of God’s grace in the defense and the confirmation of the gospel. Let me share with you a few of these instances so you can understand what I am sharing.

In our growth group there were several men who had made it very clear that they would never consider going through our evangelism training. Not because they were opposed to being trained, but because they were fearful. Fearful that they would not be able to memorize the material. Fearful of approaching people at the mall, or the college, or laundromats or in door to door canvassing with the gospel of Christ. Fearful of rejection. But not only did they decide to be a part of it, they will in just a matter of weeks complete their training. All of this I see as an expression of their desire to be actively involved in the defense and the confirmation of the gospel of Christ and in doing this they have become partakers of the grace of God with me.

My son-in-law, Tom Barnes, does not have an easy life. He is trying to juggle many different

responsibilities. He is the husband to my daughter Erin, the father to two very active twin boys, and a brand new infant daughter. He commutes to a full time job in Valencia. He is actively involved in our music ministry in the church which takes up time not only during the week but on weekends. He is also very active in his growth group and feels a responsibility to minister to the men as best as he can. In the midst of this, a man who he knew from work had become terminally ill. He could have ignored this. He could have said, "I am just too busy." But this past week he took another man from our fellowship and drove out to Littlerock to share the gospel. I saw this as an expression of his desire to be actively involved in the defense and the confirmation of the gospel of Christ and in doing this he became a partaker of the grace of God with me.

Phil Hamory's, another member of our growth group, father passed away and his funeral service was on Wednesday this past week. He has been burdened for his unsaved family members and was determined to seize the opportunity that he had to present the gospel of Christ in his eulogy at the funeral. This was not an easy thing to do. He shared with me that he woke up in the middle of the night and was shaking. But he did it. I saw this as an expression of his desire to be actively involved in the defense and the confirmation of the gospel of Christ and in doing this he became a partaker of the grace of God with me.

When we see this in the lives of professing brothers and sisters in Christ, it leads us to have them in our heart, to have a deep affection for them which leads to our confidence that when all is said and done, when Jesus comes to take us home, they will be there with us, standing before Christ without any spot or wrinkle or any such thing. It leads us to be confident that the work that Jesus began will be completed.

How deep can this affection be? Look at **Phil. 1:8, "For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus."** This is a lot of affection.