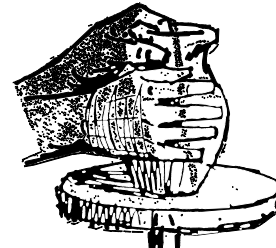


His Workmanship at Westside

"For we are His
workmanship, created in
Christ Jesus for good works."
—Ephesians 2:10



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Isaiah 64:8

Philippians 1:3-11 Prayer of Thanksgiving *by Nick Hengeveld*

In every true Christian's life the most obvious evidence of the experience of God's grace and peace is prayerful gratitude and joy, Phil 4:4-6. Thus in his earliest letter, to a church that was experiencing severe trial, Paul concluded by exhorting, "**Rejoice** always; **pray** without ceasing [*continually*]; in everything [*all circumstance*] **give thanks**, for this [*rejoicing, praying, giving thanks*] is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you," 1 Thes 5:16-18. Philippians is the clear evidence, some twelve years or so later, that Paul was as good as his preaching. It had long been Paul's habit to begin his letters with a thanksgiving and prayer report. This is not merely thanksgiving and prayer in general, however, but it is a preview of matters taken up in the body of the letter. In these prayers starting his letters, we often find Paul's expression both the immediate urgencies and the theological basis for much later in the letter. Philippians is no exception.

Three matters make up most of our letter: (1) genuine gratitude for the Philippians' partnership with him in the gospel over many years, evidenced most recently by a material gift brought by Epaphroditus; (2)

news about his present imprisonment and what he expects to come of it; and (c) an appeal for steadfastness and unity in light of some relational breakdowns, present opposition, and the danger of false teaching.

These concerns predominate in Paul's thanksgiving and prayer. First, he is genuinely **grateful** for them. Indeed *every time* he thinks about them in prayer, he not only thanks God for them—and for their lifelong *partnership* with him *in the gospel*—but also prays for them with great *joy, confident* that God will bring His own *good work* in them to full fruition, 1:3-6. Second, Paul's present **joy** and confidence stem from his deep sense of personal relationship with them, evidenced both by their partnership with him in the gospel and by his profound *affection* for them, 1:7-8. They *share in God's grace* with him even in his present *chains*. Finally, he reports the content of his **prayer**, whose concern is primarily (1) that their love may abound for one another in knowledge and discernment, (2) that they may approve excellent things, (3) that they be sincere and without offense, and thus (4) that they be filled with the fruit of right-

eousness to the glory and praise of God, 1:9-11. So through prayer, joy, and thanksgiving Paul anticipates the various concerns of the letter—their partnership with him in the gospel, his deep concern for them, and the need for love to replace internal bickering. [Are WE praying this prayer? Do we hear this prayer in public assembly?]

Thanksgiving—to God for His people (1:3-4). At this point in letters between friends, writers usually inquire about their friends' present well-being, as in "I trust that everything is finally going better for you and that you have gotten over the bug that has been plaguing you." Ancient letters of friendship also began in this fashion, very often in a similar, somewhat standardized form, usually as a prayer to God (e.g., "before anything else, I pray that you are well"). In Paul's hands these standard conventions become transformed by the gospel. Paul's various thanksgivings reveal some generally consistent patterns. First, they are always directed toward God on behalf of the people who are receiving the letter. Paul is first of all grateful
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"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." —Philippians 1:9-11 (good to memorize)

for them, for the special gift of brothers and sisters whom God has brought into his life, not for physical blessings or material goods. Second, he gives thanks whenever his thoughts focus on these people in prayer (*every time I remember you*). Third, for Paul both prayer and thanksgiving blend. His thanksgiving for them always takes place in his regular habit of praying for them (*in all my prayers...always*). What is different in Philippians is the mention that he makes his prayer and thanksgiving *with joy*. Whatever else, the Philippians were for Paul a cause of great joy. The letter's theme is **JOY**. The Greek word order ("with joy the prayer making") gives joy special emphasis; indeed this is the first of 16 mentions of this word group (*joy*) in the letter. Joy lies at the heart of the Christian experience of the gospel. It is a fruit of the Spirit in any Christian's life, serving as primary evidence of the Spirit's presence, Rm 14:17; Gal 5:22. Joy transcends present circumstances; it is based altogether on the Spirit; it is God's way of being present with His people under the New Covenant. Hence joy prevails for Paul even in prison. He will urge that it prevail for the Philippians as well in their present suffering in the face of opposition. Here, then, is the paradigm of Paul's spirituality: **thanksgiving and prayer**, filled with **joy**, on behalf of *all* God's people in Philippi.

Basis for Thanksgiving—the Past (1:5). Verses 3-4 focused on the Philippian believers themselves and Paul's joy in remembering them in prayer. Next he indicates the basis of his joy, which serves as further reason for his thanksgiving: their *partnership in the gospel*. They had given him

emotional, spiritual, and financial support in furthering the gospel. The Greek word *koinonia* is usually translated into English as "fellowship," first referring to participating in something then to sharing something in common with others. Its basic sense here is "participation in the spread of the gospel," which in light of verse 7 very likely carries the further connotation of doing so in "partnership with Paul." God placed in the Philippians both the desire and the ability to be financial partners with Paul to share the gospel. [How are we having "fellowship in the gospel"? By living the gospel daily? Has God put sharing into our heart?]

It does not take much reading of Paul's letters to recognize that *the gospel* is the singular passion of his life; that passion is the glue that holds this letter together. *The gospel*, for Paul, especially in Philippians, refers to the body of teaching about Christ and the proclamation of that teaching. Above all, the gospel has to do with Christ, both His person and His work of redemption. To preach Christ, 1:15-16, is to preach the gospel, which is all about Christ. To preach the gospel is to proclaim God's good news of salvation that has been accomplished in Christ. Thus Paul's joy in prayer is prompted by their *partnership in [the furtherance of] the gospel*.

The present focus is on the Philippians' longtime association with Paul in the gospel, *from the first day* (Ax 16:15) *until now*. According to the rest of the letter, this took place in two ways: first by their sharing with him of their material goods as he is imprisoned for the sake of the gospel, 4:15-16; second by their proclaiming, and living in keeping with, the gospel in Philippi,

where they are urged to "*contend as one [strive together] for the faith of the gospel*," 1:27, as they there "*hold out [fast] the word of life*," 2:16.

Basis for Thanksgiving—the Future (1:6). Paul still has not finished his thanksgiving. His mention of their participation in the gospel *from the first day until now* leads him to add that he is fully *confident* that what was true *from the first day* and is still true *now* will be true at the end as well. But this confidence has very little to do with them and everything to do with God, Who both *began a good work*, which is still in evidence, and will *carry it on to completion until the day of Christ*. Thus, having reminded them of his joy over their good past and present, Paul turns now to assure them of their certain future.

The *good work* that God has begun and will bring to full fruition may very well include their giving or perhaps their continued participation in the gospel in every way. More than that, however, it refers to God's *good work* of salvation itself, of creating a people for His name in Philippi. This anticipates 2:12-13, where Paul urges them to keep working out their common salvation in the way they live together as God's people in Philippi, since God is at work in them both to will and to do for the sake of His own good pleasure. Thus the concern is for their participation in the gospel in yet another sense, their sharing it as they experience it and live it out in Philippi.

The day of Christ, on which God will bring His *work* in them *to completion*, points to the final consummation of salvation at Christ's (second) coming. The reason for this clause is related to

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Psalm 133:1



**Fill your can-
teen in 2013**

“May you be filled
with all the full-
ness of God.”

—Ephesians 3:19

Prayer for Philippi, from p. 2 another concern that surfaces at several points in the letter: that some of them have apparently begun to lose the basic future orientation that marks the true Christian's life. In 3:15-17 Paul urges them to follow his example to desire to know Christ above all, 3:6-11, and eagerly to pursue the prize of knowing him fully at the end, 3:12-14. Here Paul anticipates that exhortation by focusing on God's own commitment to bring them to *completion unto the day of Christ*.

Believers in Christ are people of the future, a sure future that has already begun in the present. They are citizens of heaven, 3:20, who live the life of heaven, the life of the future, in the present in whatever circumstances they find themselves. To lose this future orientation, and especially to lose the sense of *“reaching [straining] forward toward what is ahead...toward the goal to win the prize of the upward call of God in Christ [for which God has called us heavenward],”* 3:13-14, is to lose God's promises. Thus their present gift, which also reminds Paul of their long association in the gospel, leads him to remind them that even in the midst of present difficulties, God has guaranteed their future and blessed their present situation in Philippi.

**Basis for Confidence—and Thanksgiv-
ing, 1:7-8.** Paul is still not finished with his thanksgiving. With the comparison *“just as”* (7), he offers reasons

for the confidence in v. 6 and elaborates on the grounds for thanks in vs. 4-5. *It is*, after all, Paul goes on, quite *right for me to think [feel] this way about all of you*. The verb translated *think [feel]* is especially prominent in this letter. It has to do with having or developing a certain “mindset,” including attitudes and dispositions—the sense of having you in mind—being well disposed toward you. This is the proper verb to introduce the clause that follows and its companion in verse 8, a passage full of friendship motifs; it also anticipates the kind of “mind” Paul will urge later in the letter, 2:2-5; 4:2-3. In giving reasons for his having them in mind, Paul again emphasizes their mutual relationship, one side of the three-way bond around which this letter focuses. Certain realities—three are singled out—about that relationship call for such an attitude: his own deep affection for them, 3-4, their past partnership with him in the gospel, 5, and the extension of that partnership to his imprisonment—and the defense of *the gospel*.

The basic reason for such affection is that (literally) *“you all are partakers together with me of grace.”* But which grace? Many take it to refer to God's saving grace, others to Paul's apostolic ministry. But in light of v. 29, where the verb form of this noun occurs in conjunction with their mutual suffering for Christ, Paul very likely is referring to being “participants together in this grace,” namely, in *defending and confirming the gospel* in the face of suffering (*chains*). The gospel, as always, is the primary matter. Both he and they have had a part in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. But the Philippians are also partners together with him (NIV *share*) in his present circumstances of being *in chains*. Here is the first glimpse of the suffering motif that will recur throughout the letter. The purposeful repetition of *chains* in vs. 13-14 and 17 indicates that

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Discipleship Here At Home

**PRAY FOR healing, protection,
help, and comfort here and away**

Delmar Hice, Pat Campbell's father—bronchitis; in rehab at Legacy Heights Nursing & Rehabilitation, 900 W 12th St, Russellville, AR 72801

Mark Campbell—in group home with Rocky Mtn Brain Injury Svc in CO Springs; cards to 2535 Brady Dr, CO Springs 80917

Forrest Corray, Jordan's brother—meth addiction has estranged him from family

Eric Perry's co-worker, **Tony Ortega**—stroke

Remember **Megan Aki** and the girls; the **Andrew Tope** family; the **Reames** family

CHRONIC CONDITIONS

Logan Corray; Rocco Sangellino Jr;

Addison Tope; Pat Wilkes—asthma

Pearl Chapman—leg pains; pancreatitis

Nell Free—pacemaker, heart; back pain

Rod Green—thyroid trouble

Jonathan Hadders—RA

Autumn Hadders—epilepsy

Danielle Huelsman—vertigo, CV syndrome

Kirk Johnson—worsening MS; needs help around his house

Menards—aging; **Lloyd**, diabetes, weak; **Virginia**, worsening rapid macular degeneration; high BP

Sandra Perry—neuropathy from diabetes

Cheryl Reames—diverticulitis; fibromyalgia

Judy Sartin—spinal stenosis; severe arthritis

Judy Sartin's grandson **Tristen**—autism

Lynda Szymanski—COPD, lung

Traveling The **Reingrovers** are in MI this week. **Jim** will be back from vacation 10/2. **Gary Boyd** is spending the next couple of weeks camping in CO with his brother.

Job concerns **Megan Aki, Lorenzo Gonzalez, Rod Green, Linda Szymanski,** and **Andrew Tope** are seeking jobs.

Bereaved **Gary Boyd's** cousin, **Mike Boyd**, from FL, passed away last week.

Expecting **Liz Kosik**, early April

Paul's Prayer of Thanksgiving, *from p. 3*

he is smarting under the imprisonment. But how do the Philippians *share in this grace with Paul*? Certainly the recent gift is immediately in view; that, after all, is the immediate occasion of his thanksgiving. But their own defense of the gospel in Philippi, especially in the face of hostility similar to what he has suffered, is intense and thus requires grace more intensely. The hostility, after all, comes from the empire itself, of which both they and he are citizens, now in trouble because they hold allegiance to a citizenship in which Lord Christ holds sway even—especially—over lord Caesar. [What about our own grace in suffering? Are we showing God's presence and salvation as we suffer? Or...see 2:14-18.]

"God is my witness," which the thanksgiving finally concludes, v. 8, reveals the depth of feeling out of which Paul wrote the letter. The *affection* that we sense throughout the thanksgiving now spills out as open and sincere feelings toward the Philippians. At the same time, however, Paul is experiencing a measure of distress, because not all is right with them, and he can only sit in prison and pray. Pray he will, but now, having just noted their own love for him in Christ, he returns to the affirmation in verse 7 that he has them in his *heart*. This brings into focus once more the three-way bond between him and them and Christ that holds the letter together. For his part he longs for them, not simply to see them again, 1:24-25; 2:24, but *for* them, his dearly beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, see 4:1. Whatever was going on among them, reported to him by Epaphroditus, he wants them to know how strongly he feels toward them—toward *all of you*. Nonetheless, this relationship serves as only the second basis on which the letter rests. The first basis is their own relationship to Christ, which is the ultimate urgency of the letter. Thus Paul's own deep longings for them come *with the affection of Christ Jesus himself*—almost certainly meaning "the love that Christ has for you, which is also at work in me for you."

Such an uninhibited display of affection makes it clear that Paul was, in fact, a passionate lover of Christ, which made him an equally passionate lover of Christ's people. We can learn here about pastoral care of any kind, including parents for their children. Paul's emotion, after all, is simply the outflow of his understanding of God and the spirituality that issues from such understanding. His theology has to do with the gospel, which has God as its source and sustainer. Whatever else, those whom we love in Christ first of all belong to God. God has begun the *good work* in them that He has committed himself to concluding. That good work is the result of *the affection of Christ Jesus*, through Whom God has brought this "good news" on behalf of His people.

The teaching here for those giving pastoral care, such as parents or teachers, is thanksgiving and joy for the people themselves, for *all of them*, even those whose antics often seem to bring more grief than pleasure. They belong to God. It is ours to be grateful and prayerful for what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do in their lives. All of this works much better if the caregiver/pastor also shares in *the affection of Christ Jesus*, by having a good measure of the same affection, based on being participants together in the gospel.

Next week: The four things Paul prayed for in Philippians 1:9-11.



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Larry Campbell (303) 462-4987
DeWayne Howell (303) 973-7283

Preacher

Jim Reingrover (303) 973-5102

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Assembly Schedule

Sunday

Bible classes	9:00 am
Morning assembly	10:00 am
Afternoon assembly	1:30 pm

Wednesday

Bible classes	7:30 pm
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This morning: "Chinese Characters and Genesis 1-11," Larry Campbell

This afternoon:

Paul's Prison Epistles Series
Philippians 2, DeWayne Howell

A graphic with the word "Thanks" in a stylized, colorful font. The letter "T" is large and purple, with a hand holding a pencil writing the letter. The rest of the word "hanks" is in a smaller, multi-colored font.	to the men who are teaching and preaching today in Jim's absence.
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