
"I Thank The Lord For You!"

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

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PASTOR BRIAN SMITH

WILDWOOD CHURCH

EAST MOLINE, ILLINOIS

AT A GLANCE

The Philippian church held a very special place in the Apostle Paul's heart. Whenever he thought of them, he was filled with joy and he thanked the Lord for them. What was it that made Paul feel this way? In a word, partnership. This small church was all in just as Paul was all in. There's something special about the people that go all in with you!

INTRODUCTION

There are occasions that warrant telling people how you feel about them in no uncertain terms. I have something that I really want you to know. If I could tell you one thing, church, it is that I thank the Lord for you. You have blessed me. As I reflect on the last seven years with you, I am left with one response: thank you, Lord.

I believe I feel the way the Apostle Paul felt toward the Philippian church. I'd like to read what Paul had to say to them and in so doing, I want you to hear my heart for you.

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-11

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

JOYFUL PRAYERS

Verse 3-4 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, Paul had been among the Philippians for just a few months on his third missionary journey, and only briefly five years earlier on his second journey. Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned in Rome about 10 years after his initial ministry to the Philippians. How remarkable that such little exposure to these Christians caused this kind of response from Paul. Every time he prayed for them, he was filled with **joy**.

What was it about them that produced this response? He tells us in **verse 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.**

MORE THAN FRIENDSHIP

Partnership is the same root word found in Acts 2 for *fellowship* and in Romans 12 for *contribute*. It's the Greek word *koinonia*. This is much deeper than friendship. There is a bond created between people who join in the work of the Lord that goes much deeper than friendship ever could.

Paul's life revolved around Jesus and His gospel. The only thing that mattered to Paul was that Christ be glorified. The Philippians resonated with Paul and joined him in that endeavor. This forged a bond between him and this little church. They partnered with him in tangible ways, suffering and sacrificing for the sake of the Gospel. That's real fellowship.

The way we describe fellowship or partnership here is in the phrase "more hands on the rope." It's everyone using what they've been given to build up the body and impact the kingdom. What a blessing when a church partners together in the gospel mission! There is such a deep feeling of connection between believers whose lives are sold out for Christ!

CONFIDENT ASSURANCE

Their partnership was evidence that the Philippian church had truly been affected by God's grace. **Verse 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.** Paul was confident based on how they endured trials and how they gave sacrificially to the spread of the gospel that the only explanation was Jesus truly got ahold of their hearts.

That they were willing to give sacrificially to ensure the gospel went to more people and that they would suffer while defending the faith were clear signs to Paul that they truly believed the Gospel themselves.

Paul's confidence was that Jesus had begun a work in them and therefore He would complete it! When Jesus begins a good work in you, you can be absolutely sure that the work will be completed because it is Jesus who completes it.

The **day of Jesus Christ** is judgment day. It's the day we're all looking forward to. It's where we put our hope. It's when we find rest and where we'll receive our reward.

Paul is confident that his audience would in fact enter that rest and receive that reward because it wasn't up to them to ensure it. It wasn't up to them to complete it. The work of salvation from start to finish is the work of Christ in us. Salvation is completed the same way it was started – by grace through faith. But the evidence that Christ had begun a work in them was their partnership in the gospel ministry.

YOU NEVER SHRANK BACK

He said in **verse 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.**

There was a special bond between Paul and the Philippian church formed around a mutual share in the pains of ministry. They were **partakers** with him of **grace**. The word partakers is the noun form of partnership in verse 5. They were his partners through thick and thin. They had his back, even when it could have been humiliating for them.

Not only did they not shrink back when he was imprisoned, they participated in his ministry of the **defense and confirmation of the gospel**. Paul was all in and they were all in! They not only believed the gospel, they saw it as their sacred duty to advance it despite suffering and poverty.

They ministered *with* Paul, and thereby *to* him. They were in his heart. Defending and confirming the gospel is no easy task, not in a pre-Christian world in which they lived and not in a post-Christian world in which we live. They could have faced ostracism, harassment, rejection, humiliation, possibly the loss of jobs, loss of social status, and more. Yet they endured in the faith and in the gospel ministry. They didn't abandon Paul; they stuck by him arm in arm!

DEEP DOWN LOVE FOR YOU

This had an endearing effect on him throughout the years of separation. **Verse 8 For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.** It's hard not to yearn for people who link arms with you; who take up the banner of Christ, invest in the gospel ministry, and genuinely seek to honor God with their lives. What a breath of fresh air when you've given your life to something and you come to people who go all in with you! That's an incredible feeling and it endears a pastor to those people and those people to that pastor.

Paul said he yearned for them with the **affection of Christ**. The word affection in Greek signifies that the entrails are involved. We might say from the bottom of my heart, or more to the point, from the core of my being.

Paul conveyed that deep down within him, in the pit of his stomach he longed to be with these people. This little church meant the world to Paul because they were his people. They were his partners. The whole world could abandon him and it would matter not so long as they were on his side.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

In **verse 9** Paul said **And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,** I can't help but see a connection between the **affection of Christ Jesus** that Paul felt for them and **love that abounds with knowledge and discernment** that he was praying for them. Paul felt a deep affection toward them and he prayed that their love would continue to grow, not just emotionally, but with knowledge and discernment.

He said he wanted their love to **abound more and more**. Paul wanted them to mature in the faith, which would inevitably mean growing in love.

Not just any kind of **love**, though. He used the term *agape*, which is a distinctly Christian love. It's a self-sacrificing love. It's Christlike love. He prayed that they would grow in *agape*, so that when they had to make difficult decisions, when they had to navigate trials, when their lives were on the line, they could honor the Lord.

WE LIVE FOR THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD

He said in **verses 10 and 11, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,** ¹¹ **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

Paul wanted them to be able to make right decisions when decisions were hard to make. Both individually and corporately. That they would do what the Lord wanted them to do as Christians and as a church. That they would prioritize what honors the Lord.

That as a church they would shine as a pure beacon of light in the dark and evil generation. That they would stand out from the crowd for the glory of Christ Jesus. And that at the end of it all, they would be **pure and blameless for the day of Christ**.

That they would be **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ**. Not only that they would overflow with righteous virtues such as truth, love, joy, patience, humility, kindness, and gentleness.

Not only that their church would be filled with righteous acts and attitudes as they walk in love toward one another. But also, that their church would be filled with sinners made righteous by the blood of Christ. That the fruit of the gospel ministry among them would be evident in transformed lives of those once dead in sin now made alive in Christ!

This is what contributes **to the glory and praise of God**. Paul prayed that these beloved partners in the gospel would do everything they could to contribute to God's glory. That they would live for it. That they would orient their lives individually and their priorities as a church around the glory of God. That they would see Jesus is worthy of giving their entire lives.

I THANK THE LORD FOR YOU!

If I could tell you one thing, church, it is that I thank the Lord for you. I thank Him for your partnership in the gospel. You have lived circumspectly in the Quad Cities. You've modelled Christlikeness that was attractive to people who want more than the world has to offer.

You've put your hands on the rope and you're pulling in the same direction. You've owned the vision of the Lord for our church – Every member a missionary: taking the gospel across the street and around the world.

You've kept coming back, kept serving, kept volunteering, you've invited your friends and family to come to Wildwood. You're supporting. You're being transformed by the renewal of your mind.

You've welcomed me and my family into your community with open arms. You've embraced me, the velvet-hammer, cowboy boots and all. You've put up with my corny jokes. You've forgiven me when I confessed to being harsh. You supported me while I was in the Army Reserve.

You've wept with me and my family through the loss of Kellye's sister and now my uncle. You've been so accommodating of me as I've grown into the man I am today, with room to grow, no doubt. You've encouraged me to take time to be alone with the Lord. And you've encouraged me to take this sabbatical. For all of these reasons, I thank the Lord for you.

JESUS IS WORTHY OF IT ALL

Wildwood, I thank the Lord for you. I thank the Lord for how He has used you to shape me, correct me, mold me, and in many ways break me. Ministry here has been hard, but I thank the Lord for you because Jesus is worthy.

Do you see that Jesus is worthy? My prayer for you, Wildwood, is that you approve what is excellent. I pray you honor the Lord Jesus Christ with your lives individually and corporately because you see that Jesus is worthy.

I want you to see the glory of Jesus! I want you to be captivated by His majesty and holiness and power. I want you to see that Jesus is worthy of whatever it costs you and whatever it costs us.

Jesus is ruling and reigning in glory and He's coming back to collect His Church. Wildwood, Jesus is worthy of it all. Jesus is worthy of our sacrifice. He is worthy of our commitment. He is worthy of our unity. Jesus is worthy. Do you see that? I pray that you see it. And I pray that the Lord wrecks your lives in such a glorious way that in 35 years when, Lord willing, I preach my last sermon, we can all look back and say, without even so much as a hesitation, Jesus is worthy! Jesus is worthy of it all.

Wildwood, I thank the Lord for you.

