

## Philippians 1:3-8ish

1. Grateful to God for His People's Progress
  - a. "I thank my God"
    - i. There is a personal intimacy in this small segment
    - ii. God is not distant to Paul. He is near and He is his
      1. Not in a dominative or possessive sense of authority, but in the language of love and intimacy
      2. Similar to "my friend" or "my King" or "my president"
        - a. Shows an approval, acceptance, and joyfully willing participation in the person and his/her works
  - b. Gratitude goes first and foremost towards God
    - i. There are two basic reasons that Paul is thankful to God:
      1. Immediate: the Philippians' fellowship in the gospel
      2. Ultimate: that God is completing the good work which He began (v6)
    - ii. This God-centered worldview dominates all that Paul goes through
      1. He sees first the glory and purposes of God behind and above all things and gives the honor to the Lord
      2. Do we pray with this type of gratitude for eternal things, for the glory of God and His renown throughout all?
    - iii. Paul's prayers are full of thanksgiving for spiritual things
      1. "fellowship in the gospel"
      2. "faith is proclaimed throughout the world" (Rom 1:8)
      3. "grace given to you in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:4)
      4. "we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all the saints" (Col 1:3ff)
      5. "you received the word of God...as what it really is, the word of God which is at work in you believers" (1 Th 2:13)
      6. "your love and the faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus...praying that the fellowship of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ." (Phm 1:4-6)
  - c. The memory of the Philippians gives Paul reason to praise the Lord, and He does!
    - i. Paul thanks the Lord because it is the Lord who is working to complete the good work of faith in the gospel, fellowship in the gospel, and the proclamation of the gospel
    - ii. The spiritual works of God are the greater things, not the only things, but the greater things of which Paul is grateful to the Lord.
      1. Praying for physical things is not wrong, nor is it to be rejected or neglected.
      2. However, God often uses the removal of physical blessings in order to bring about spiritual renewal, growth, and even the birthing of faith in Jesus (see Joseph, Daniel, Jeremiah, David, Hosea, Job, the apostles, Ananias and Sapphira, Epaphroditus, etc.)
2. This Gratitude Leads to Joyful Prayer
  - a. Paul prays for the Philippians
    - i. Gratitude leads to prayer to the Lord
      1. The word "prayer" in this passage is not the usual word for "prayer"
        - a. Particularly emphatic on petition, or need
        - b. Paul is particular that his prayers are concerning the things that the Philippians need, just as their prayer were for his needs (care in prison, to get out)

2. The greatest love that you can show your brother or sisters is the love of bringing their needs before the Lord in prayer
  3. Because the greatest need that each of us have is to know and treasure Christ. Everything else proceeds and derives out of this worship.
    - a. The greatest things that we need is not comfort of body, provision of economics, participation in Sunday services, or to feel loved and appreciated by men (things that are not bad in themselves, but they are not the ultimate things)
    - b. The greatest things that we need is to worship God in spirit and in truth, to know and understand Christ and His gospel, to treasure and to love the Lord with all that we are. Everything else falls into place beneath this.
    - c. Jesus began His example of prayer with: “Our Father in heaven, **may your name be hallowed in all the earth.** May your **Kingdom come and your will be done** on earth as it is in heaven...”
  4. Are we praying for these things?
    - ii. He prays with joy
      1. Fellowship in the gospel brings Christ-centered believers great joy!
      2. Paul wants them to know that they are bringing him great joy.
  - b. Paul is emphasizing the depth of his love and appreciation for their faith and fellowship in the gospel
    - i. Note the “all” or “every” repetition
      1. “**each** memory of you”
      2. “in **every** prayer”
      3. “praying for you **all**”
      4. Connection with “complete” or “finish” in v6?
    - ii. His prayers are “for you all”
      1. He is bringing their needs to the Lord
    - iii. vv. 7-8
      1. “how I long for you all with the affection of Christ”
      2. “I hold you in my heart”
      3. Paul is not deterministic or “monastic” in the sense that he is only concerned about God, but rather in his concern and praise of God he is actively loving and affectionate towards believers
        - a. “fellows”
    - iv. Do we make our appreciation known for those who are fellows in the gospel?
      1. Why or why not?
3. Fellowship in the Gospel is the Reason for Gratitude
- a. “fellowship” from the word “koinonia”
    - i. Fellowship is more than a mere commonality of life or circumstance
      1. What did the Philippian believers have in common?
        - a. Lydia – exporter of purple fabric
        - b. Jailer – soldier/policeman
        - c. Slave girl – freed from demons, former slave
        - d. Roman citizenship?
    - ii. It is a shared participation in something larger than oneself or of any of the individual parts
      1. ILLUSTRATION: British “fellows” at university in Britain

2. Fellowship in the **gospel**
    - a. not merely in “faith”, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ
    - b. not religion or spirituality or truth in general, but in the gospel!!
  3. Our fellowship is not based upon common interests, hobbies, music, intellect, social status, money, power, etc.
  4. Christian fellowship is based upon the shared belief in and commitment to the truths of **the gospel of Jesus Christ**
    - a. This is bigger than all of us and we are sharing IN it
    - b. You see, the bigger work is not “what God is doing in my life”. It is how God has brought me into His life!!
    - c. It is also not merely sharing our lives together, but it is that we, together, participate in the life of Christ. We are brought up into Him!
      - i. This is not to eliminate the sharing of our lives together, but we are to recognize and live according to the truth that the larger and greater controlling reality is that we are brought up into His life, together.
      - ii. Many groups share their lives together, religiously or irreligious. Christian fellowship is a participation in the gospel of Jesus Christ.
        1. I am crucified, live by faith in the Son of God, He lives in me
        2. I have died, my life is hidden with Christ in God
      - iii. Fellowship is mentioned three times in Philippians
        1. Fellowship in the Gospel (1:5)
        2. Fellowship in the Holy Spirit (2:1)
        3. Fellowship in the sufferings of Christ (3:10)
  - b. The Philippians have been consistent fellows in the gospel.
4. Our Redemption is the Work of God from Beginning to End
    - a. God began this good work
      - i. Every good work comes from God
      - ii. Note that Paul thanks God for the Philippians’ fellowship in the gospel
        1. God gets the glory for their work
        2. Now, Paul also exemplifies his love for them in 7-8 and that it is “right” (ethically) for him to feel this way about them
    - b. God will perfect (complete) this good work
      - i. God is at work here! Take hope for yourself and for each other!
        1. Note the connection that Paul makes with human perseverance (your fellowship in the gospel) with divine preservation (He who began it, will complete it)
        2. Any belief or teaching that denies either of these is unscriptural
        3. Paul is confident that God will not allow the spiritual growth of His people to remain unfinished.
          - a. In fact, this truth is how Paul can celebrate the Philippians here in this passage, because they were not perfect by any means
          - b. The rest of the letter explains the divisions that existed between them, the pride that governed their relationships, the rivalry, grumbling and complaining, those being deceived by false teachers, and the anxieties which apparently sometimes ruled them
      - ii. “Men conduct experiments, but God carries out a plan” -William Hendricksen

1. The work of divine preservation, of God's gracious transformation of our hearts and our actions, that results in human perseverance in growth into Christlikeness is true throughout the entire Bible:
  - a. We are a gift to Christ that can never be lost (John 6:37,39)
  - b. God's gift of His Spirit never ceases to spring forth from one who has drunk of it (John 4:14)
  - c. We can never be snatched out of Christ's hand (John 10:28)
  - d. The chain of our glorification (Christlikeness) will never be broken (Rom 8:28-29)
  - e. We will never be separated from His love (Rom 8:39)
  - f. God's calling is never revoked (Rom 11:29)
  - g. Our foundation is never destroyed (2 Tim 2:19)
  - h. Our inheritance never fades away (1 Pet 1:4-5)
- iii. This is the basis for our hope!
  1. This is the power as to how we are transformed into the image of Christ
  2. Never let the enemy persuade you that you can never change, nor that your brother or sister can never change. God is changing us into the image of Christ.
- c. Until the day of Christ Jesus
  - i. It is a process here and now of growth toward the ultimate goal of being like Jesus from the affections of our hearts to the attitudes of our souls to the outworking of our deeds of God-glorifying service and love.
    1. This reality of process is important as we relate to each other:
      - a. We are still struggling against sin, so we will fail the Lord and each other.
        - i. This leads us to be patient with each other, pray for one another, confront one another and spur each other on to God-exalting and Christ-centered living through repentance and faith.
        - ii. We never give up, always believing and praying for transformation and growth
        - iii. We live in humility of our own failings and the absolute necessity of God's grace and His preservative work for me
      - b. We will be completed in Christ
        - i. One day, everyone who believes in Jesus will be made perfect
        - ii. Learning to see every brother and sister in the light of this glorious promise is our key to patience, love, and hope
    2. We grow now, and on the day of Christ Jesus' return we will be completed.

Conclusion:

God is at work to bring all those whom have fellowship in the gospel home to Himself. It is His nature and His power to effectively save and transform all who believe. There is hope for you, brother, that you ARE being transformed into the image of Christ. There is hope for you, sister, that all that God desires in you and for you is growing within you now. Is there an inkling of discomfort around those believers with whom you are different in culture, race, or economics? Let it not be so, for we are one in the fellowship of the gospel, all equally participants in the covenant of grace from the greatest apostle to the least of the slaves. God does not fail!!! God does not fall down or sleep or become casual in His work. He is able and He is willing, so willing that He left the comforts and honor of heaven to become one of us, to unite Himself to our death so that we would be united to Him in His life. Behold the glory of the gospel of Jesus Christ! He is worthy for His willingness! He is worthy for His power! I trust in His grace for you. He will complete the good work of conforming you into the image of Christ. May His great power effectively transform us today