

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES!

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

In seminary classes & seminars, I've often asked:

"If you could pastor any NT church, which?"

Which would YOU pick? => Philippi!

Doctrinally sound –no corrections

Suffering caused them to understand the Gospel.

Generous

To Paul & to brothers & sisters in need

–gave sacrificially–beyond their ability

Suffering–stood firm in midst of affliction.

Paul celebrates these positive characteristics!

But, are they *really* ideal church?

2 PROBLEMS – affect *everything* at Philippi:

They're discouraged

Times are hard. They're suffering.

Leader's in jail.

Messenger to Paul is sick.

Everything seems to be going wrong!

Phil. is "***book about JOY!***"

Why does he emphasize JOY? <= NOT joyful!

2nd problem: They're divided

Conflict between 2 women (others take sides!)

Larger problem: **Judaizers vs. Gentiles**

DISCOURAGEMENT LEADS TO DIVISION!

PURPOSE & THEME

–2 problems => 2 purposes:

1. To encourage them => emphasizes JOY.

2. To resolve conflicts => emphasizes UNITY

Content follows form of personal letter:

Paul's Greeting 1:1-2

*"Paul & Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers & deacons
²Grace & peace to you from God our Father & the Lord Jesus Christ."*

3 Part: significance of 3-parts

Author–Paul & Tim are **servants**–slaves serving Jesus

Recipients– **ALL** saints–**set apart** from world by their relationship to Christ–that's WHY they suffer–

Greeting–normal Christian greeting

Yet expresses Paul's desire that in affliction, they experience grace & peace only God can give

Paul's Prayer for them 1:3-11

Begins by praying for them!

–model to follow in our prayer for one another

His Thanksgiving 1:3-8

Cause for an attitude of gratitude.

When he remembers them, he thanks God for memories & fellowship they've enjoyed together.

=> ENCOURAGEMENT

Praises God for what He's done in them [X 4]

1. Thanks for the memories 1:3-4 [Bob Hope]

"I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy"

As Paul remembers their past, he's filled with joy.

When we hear positive tone of memories, we're left with impression this is great group of people!

Is this the perfect church? Or is he being polite?

He's grateful for their partnership, though they struggle with discouragement—like us!

He celebrates God's work among them!

He wants them to know *that*, because they're flooded with pessimistic thoughts.

They are ANYTHING but JOYFUL!

In midst of their suffering, while he's in chains in jail, he's filled with joy, when he thinks of them.

Doesn't focus on cold jail cell & mourn the hard times

Doesn't focus on their problems.

He remembers what God has done in their lives!

It makes it all worthwhile!

2. Thanks for their partnership 1:5 *"because of your partnership in the gospel from the 1st day until now."*

They're "gospel partners"—sharing with him in proclamation of the gospel.

3. Thanks for God's continuing work in them 1:6 *"Being confident of this: that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."*

He's sure God's going to complete the work in them He's begun.

He looks at what God's *already* done & he's grateful & grateful to know God isn't finished with them yet

Wherever we may be in our Christian experience,

it's encouraging to be reminded: God isn't finished with us yet—He's still working in our lives!

4. Thanks for his love for them 1:7-8 *"It's right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I'm in chains or defending & confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."*

His love for them isn't conditional.

Not because they've "arrived." *They haven't!*

He loves them because of what God's *already* done in them.

God is at work in them. True for us also

We haven't "arrived!" But **God IS at work in us!**

His Petition: That our love might grow 1:9-11

"This is my prayer: that your love may abound more & more in knowledge & depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to discern what's best, & may be pure & blameless, until the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory & praise of God."

His prayer: that the love we already have —though it's not yet all we desire it to be—

might grow greater.

Rather than complain about what we lack,

He celebrates what we already have.

He prays that God will cause that love to grow.

Do WE spend as much time praying for others,
as we do complaining about their shortcomings?

As our love grows, we gain knowledge and discernment to know *how* to show love to each other => UNITY 9

That love will be evident by its combination with knowledge & mature understanding

As our love grows, we learn to discern what's best
Guess what's best? ALWAYS a response of love!

With experience, we learn to discern best way to show love in each situation we face.

As our love grows, we live pure & blameless lives
 Sincere, blameless lives flow from appropriate relationships which develop as our love for one another grows.

As our love grows, it becomes apparent that God's at work in us 1:11

Such love is result of Christ's work to produce *His* character in us.

It's GOD's work! **HE gets the glory!**

So how should we pray for one another?

What should we be thankful for?

For memories we have to look back on as we consider our relationships with one another.

For our partnership in serving God together.

For God's continuing work in lives of those we love.

NOT for perfection!

None of us have arrived yet

But we have confidence God will finish what He started!

For love relationships God's given us with each other.

What should we ask God to do?

That God give us growing love for each other
Even for people less than perfect! ...who let us down!
That we show love in our relationships with each other
That we discern what's best in our relationships
That we live sincere, blameless lives
=> So it's evident to people watching: **God's at work**

OUR PRAYER:

We ought to pray this, *first*, for ourselves.

Then, pray this for others.

Pick someone who's let you down. Pray this for *them!*

Pray this for our community. That this will be true of us

That OUR love for one another will grow!

=> so it'll be obvious **GOD** has done it => **He gets glory!**