

### Paul Gives Thanks for the Philippian Believers

#### Philippians 1:3-8

Philippians 1:3-8: *"I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 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. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."*

#### Background Notes

In this "section of thanksgiving," it is significant that Paul used the phrase "*you all*" several times. Verse 4: "*Always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,*" and verse 7: "*Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.*" And verse 8: "*For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.*"

Statistically, Paul used the words "*you all*" more often in Philippians than in any of his other letters. Why? I believe it was because of the rift or division that was growing in the church at Philippi. But Paul did not "take sides" in the disagreement. He thanked the Lord for **all** of them, and he included **all** of them in his prayers.

Remember, it seems that the rift in the Philippian church was not caused by a major doctrinal problem. I believe the Holy Spirit **deliberately** did not tell us what the precise problem or disagreement was about, so that we would be able to apply this Scripture more easily to the many and varied little problems that come up in our churches today.

Verse 6: "*Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" When is that "day of Jesus Christ"? The day of Jesus Christ refers to the coming of Christ for His Church and the associated events, such as the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers. We sometimes use the term "rapture" (which means "caught up") to describe the day when Jesus Christ will catch up His people to be with Him. This day includes the events associated with the return of the Lord for His Church. The day of Jesus Christ may occur anytime – even this year!

Remember - the "day of Jesus Christ" is not the same as the "Day of the Lord." The Day of the Lord is the future time when Jesus Christ will return to this earth in judgment, and afterwards set up His millennial kingdom. The "day of Jesus Christ" is different.

Verse 8 mentions the affection of Jesus Christ: *“For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.”* In the King James Version, the word “affection” is translated “bowels”: *“I long for you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.”* That’s an accurate translation, because the Greek word that’s used here is actually the word for *intestines!* You may have wondered, “Why would Paul say something like ‘the bowels of Jesus Christ’?” The answer: in that day the intestines were considered the “location of the affections.”

Today we talk of our *hearts* as being the locus of our affections. When we say, “I love you with all my heart,” or “Her heart is broken,” we don’t mean our literal hearts. Our hearts are muscles that pump blood. Just like the intestines, our hearts don’t long for anyone or anything, but both are/were used to refer to the location of our emotions.

Incidentally, “heart” was also used in a figurative way in the 1st century. Paul said, *“I have you in my heart” (v7)*. The phrase “in my heart” included more than just the emotions. It referred to a person’s innermost being, including the mind and will as well.

## Doctrinal Points

### 1. Salvation and sanctification are guarantees for every Christian.

Verse 6: *“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* What’s the “good work” here? Some Christians have suggested that it means that the Philippian believers participated in sharing the gospel, because in verse 5 Paul speaks of *“your fellowship in the gospel.”*

However, I think the “good work” is their salvation and sanctification. Their fellowship in the gospel (v5) and their sharing in the defense and confirmation of the gospel (v7) was *evidence* of the “good work” of their salvation and sanctification.

What is “sanctification”? The root word for sanctification is the Latin word *sanctus*, meaning consecrated, or holy, or set apart for holy use. It’s the root word for “saint.” Sanctification is the process that God is doing in our lives right now, to make us more holy and more saint-like. When we become Christians, we become “saints” by position. We’re consecrated and set apart for God’s holy use. But let’s face it – we may be saints by position, but often we’re not so saintly in practice.

The truth is that **no one** can say they have attained practical holiness in this lifetime. But because of sanctification, we should become more and more holy as we grow in the Christian faith. Sanctification begins at salvation, and it goes on until the return of the Lord for His people. At that point, we will receive our resurrected bodies that will need no sanctification. *“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (v6)*.

There's a bumper sticker that says: "Be patient; God isn't finished with me yet." That bumper sticker captures the truth of verse 6: "*He who began a good work in you will complete it.*" Verse 6 is a great verse for assurance! Notice it doesn't say "God will complete the good work in you if you do this or accomplish that." No, it is "*[God] will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" If you don't believe in the eternal security of the believer, how do you handle this verse? Verse 6 assures us that salvation and sanctification are **guaranteed for every Christian!**

Don't start doubting your salvation if you don't "feel" sanctified. Because of the sanctification process, as we mature in Christ we may actually feel *less* sanctified! Why? Because we become more sensitive to sin in our lives as the process of sanctification goes on. If certain things in your life are bothering you now that did not bother you before, that's a *good sign!* That's an indication that the work of sanctification is going on - even when we're not aware of it. Salvation and sanctification are guaranteed for every Christian. What a great truth!

## **2. Defense and confirmation are privileges of every Christian.**

Verse 7: "*Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.*" By supporting the apostle Paul in his ministry even when he was in prison, the Philippians were participating in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, and thus were partakers of the grace of God in reference to that ministry.

Some have suggested that "*the defense and confirmation of the gospel*" refers to Paul's courageous witness in the legal courts in Rome. It may certainly include that, but I believe it's more than that. Paul's entire ministry was characterized by the defense and confirmation of the gospel. We need to be involved in this same ministry, too - it's our privilege. *Defense of the gospel* means defending the faith and answering the questions of the critics and skeptics. *Confirmation of the gospel* means establishing the faith more firmly in the heart of the believer. We should be involved in both aspects of spreading and sharing the gospel.

We all should be personally involved in both aspects of the ministry. But, as in the case of Paul and the Philippians, when you support ministries that are involved in defending and confirming the gospel, you also partake of the grace of God (v7) in reference to that ministry. You are credited with your share of that ministry - that is your privilege.

At Emmaus Bible College, we have courses that train Christians to do both. Besides our Bible courses that we study for confirming the gospel, we have courses in Apologetics and Christian Evidences for defending the gospel. I know many of you support the Emmaus Bible College ministry of defending the gospel and confirming the gospel. And I'm thankful that some of you have supported Growing Christians Ministries, the ministry the Lord has given me. It includes written ministry, radio programs, and an internet website ministry. You're participating in that ministry of defending the gospel and confirming the gospel.

So whether you are directly involved, or supporting ministries that are defending and/or confirming the gospel, you are partakers of the grace of God in reference to that ministry. That is your privilege. Defense and confirmation are privileges of every Christian.

## Practical Application

### Are we distorting the gospel by not showing love to ***all*** our fellow believers?

Verse 8: *“For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.”* Paul loved ***all*** the believers at Philippi - he didn't have favorites. Remember, it was not natural for Paul, who came from a strict Jewish religious background, to love former pagan Gentiles! But they were fellow believers in Jesus Christ, and in God's family, so Paul loved them all as brothers and sisters in Christ.

Do we distort the gospel when we don't show love to ***all*** our fellow believers? Verse 8 says that Paul longed for them ***all***, with the affection of Jesus Christ. In verse 7 he said he had ***all*** of them in his heart. In verse 4, he said he prayed for ***all*** of them. When was the last time you finished your cycle of prayer for ***every*** member of your church fellowship?

1 Peter 1:22 commands that *“in sincere love of the brethren, we should love one another fervently with a pure heart.”* Showing love to ***all*** our fellow believers is not easy. There are always a few brothers and sisters who are hard to love. Did you ever hear the quotation, “Gathered with the saints in heaven – oh, that will be glory! But living with the saints on earth - that's another story!” It sounds humorous, but unfortunately it's all too true.

If we don't show love to all our fellow believers, we're not only disobedient, but we're also distorting the gospel. What does the world think of the gospel when it sees church fellowships angrily splitting apart, or Christians taking one another to court? What does the world think of the gospel when it sees Christians who will not speak to one another? I know of two Christian women who attend the same church, but they won't speak to each other because of a “personality problem.” What a distortion of the gospel!

Are we distorting the gospel by not showing love to ***all*** our fellow believers?