

Parishioner Appreciation

Philippians 1:3-8

East Berlin Community Church

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Introduction

- A short history of Pastor Appreciation month and Sunday
- Turning the tables to speak on parishioner appreciation.

- Paul, as a church planter...
 - Never stayed in one city or place for a long time.
 - Acts 18:11-- , *"he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them. "*
 - Acts 19:10 -- *"And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."*
 - Romans 15:20-- *"I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation"*
 - But he kept up with the connections he made through writing letters.
 - Some letters to churches he started--Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, 1st and 2nd Thessalonians
 - Other letters to church he had yet to visit-- Romans, Colossians
 - Some letters to individuals: Timothy, Titus, and Philemon

- Paul always began with words of appreciation and affirmation, except Galatians.
 - Romans 1:8-12 -- *"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of His Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers, making request if, by some means, now at last I may find a way in the will of God to come to you. For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established— that is, that I may be encouraged together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."*
 - 1 Corinthians 1:4-8 -- *"I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."*
 - Ephesians 1:15-16 -- *"Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."*
 - Colossians 1:3-8 -- *"We give thanks to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints; because of the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel which has come to you, as it has also in all the world, and is bringing forth fruit, as it is also among you since the day you heard and knew the grace of God in truth; as you also learned from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf, who also declared to us your love in the Spirit."*
 - 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3-- *"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father."*
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:3-- *"We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly, and the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other"*

Parishioner Appreciation

- Philippians 1:3-8-- *"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 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; 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. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."*

A. RECOLLECTION-- "I thank God upon every remembrance of you!"

1. Paul's recollections of the saints at Philippi

a. Of how God directed him to go to Philippi

- Acts 16:6-8-- *"they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas."*
- Acts 16:9-10-- *"a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them."*
- Acts 16:12-- *"and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days."*

b. Of the people who formed the nucleus of this church

1) Lydia, a Gentile businesswoman

- Acts 16:14b-16-- *"The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us."*

2) A demon-possessed slave girl, whom Paul delivered

- Acts 16:17-- *"These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."*
- Acts 16:18 -- *"turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour."*

3) A Roman jailer

- Acts 16:28-34-- *"But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here." Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household."*

2. My recollections of the saints at EBCC

a. Of how God directed me to come to EBCC

b. Memories of 25 years plus of ministry here at EBCC

B. PARTNERSHIP-- *“For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now”*

1. Partnership with Paul....

a. By getting personally involved, working side-by-side in ministry.

- Philippians 4:2-3-- *“I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”*
- Philippians 2:25-- *“Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need”*
- Philippians 2:29-30-- *“Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.”*

1) Paul never worked alone!

2) The endings of his letters are filled with names of people he considered to be *“fellow laborers”*

b. By financially supporting God’s work

1) Their support of Paul

- Philippians 4:10-13-- *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*
- Philippians 4:14-19-- *“Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”*

2) Their support of mission projects

- 2 Corinthians 8:1-5-- *“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.”*

2. Partnership with Me...

a. By getting personally involved, working side-by-side with me in ministry

b. By financially supporting God’s work-- both me as your pastor and responding to the needs of others.

C. FAMILY BOND-- *"You are all partakers with me of grace"*

- Philippians 1:7-8-- *"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. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."*
1. **It is by God's grace that we've been saved and made members of God's forever family**
 - Ephesians 2:8-9-- *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*
 2. **A special bond forms as we minister together, serve in the trenches together in spiritual warfare.**
 3. **Results in a close spiritual bond.** *"I have you in my heart"* and as a result, *"I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."*
 4. **Application: YOU are my spiritual family.** A special, deep, abiding bond has formed. I love you with a love that comes from Jesus Christ Himself.

CONCLUSION:

1. **I know that I cannot pastor forever.** The day will come when God lifts His calling and it will be the time for me to move on, to retire or to take me to heaven.
2. **My confidence** when God chooses to remove me as your pastor is that He will continue the "good work He has started in you"
 - Philippians 1:6-- *"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."*
3. **My hope and prayer for us as we continue to serve together**
 - Philippians 1:9-11-- *"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 2:12-16-- *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (That you will) Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."*