



PHILIPPIANS

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I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Philippians 1:3

Rather than “every remembrance,” a more proper reading would be “all my remembrance.” It is that of a continuous action. The Philippians were on Paul’s mind at all times, and he was in constant thanks to God as he remembered them. His relationship to God in the Greek reads to Theo mou – “the God of me,” and hence “my God.” The Pulpit Commentary says, “The pronoun expresses the inner consciousness of personal relations with God.”

Paul carried his relationship with God in his mind at all times, personally interacting with Him through thought, and expressing it in his words, actions, and interactions. In the case of those at Philippi, it was in thanks to God for them. As often as they entered into the stream of his thoughts, which was a constant thing, he was grateful to God for them.

Life application: Our relationship with God should be more than just in times of great distress – “Oh God I need You now,” or Sunday morning at church as we sit and listen to a sermon. Rather, He should be our constant companion and confidant. As thoughts enter our minds, we should have reactions to those thoughts streaming to Him. “Lord, thank you for my beautiful wife;” “I am sorry about that thought Lord, it was inappropriate;” “O God, it is such a beautiful day.” Let us have our thoughts tuned into God at each moment so that we share our lives in an intimate way with Him at all times.

...always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, Philippians 1:4

This verse continues from the previous one. Taken together, they read –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy...”

Paul is writing to the congregation as a whole, but his words are directed to each person individually. As he contemplated the congregation that he had come to love, each individual would come to mind and he would thank God for them as noted in verse 3. However, there was more that would come from these thoughts. He was including them “always in every prayer” which he made. In those prayers, he says to them that he is “making request for you all with joy.”

The word translated as both “prayer” and “request” in this verse is the same word, *deésis*. It means a “heart-felt petition, arising out of deep personal need (sense of lack, want)” (HELPS Word Studies).

And so the thought would read – “...always in every supplication of mine making supplication for you all with joy.” In other words, these weren’t general prayers that were going up. Instead, he contemplated the needs of each one of his fellow believers, and he would include that need in his plea. “Lord, look after Kristinius as she takes care of her family;” “Oh God, Sergious Paulos needs Your hand with him at the brick factory;” and etc.

This would have been the constant practice of Paul, remembering those he loved, praying for them, and doing so “with joy.” This is the first of five times that *chara*, or joy, is used by Paul. It indicates “... properly, the awareness (of God’s) grace, favor; joy (“grace recognized”) (HELPS Word Studies). From its frequent use, “joy” is considered the main theme of the epistle. The scholar Bengel notes then that, “This epistle on joy aptly follows that to the Ephesians, where love reigns... The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy. Joy particularly gives animation to prayers.”

As Paul is writing from a Roman prison, it is a remarkable thing that he speaks so much of joy. His circumstances would be otherwise bleak and miserable. But with the thought of his beloved family in Philippi always on his mind, he remained filled with joy. He was able to redirect his thoughts to the needs of others, petitioning God for them, wisely using his time while incarcerated.

Life application: Joy is something which is not difficult to obtain when one knows the Lord Jesus. No matter how bad the circumstances which surround us may be, when we have the full confidence of the many great and enduring promises of Scripture, we can be filled with joy even when in completely miserable surroundings or circumstances. Let us keep our hearts, eyes, and thoughts on the Lord, and so transcend the difficulties which come our way.

...for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, Philippians 1:5

This clause is to be mentally connected to the words “I thank my God” from verse 3. First, it reads as follows –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now...”

Mentally we can make the connection as such – “I thank my God ... for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now...”

Paul is grateful for their “fellowship in the gospel.” There are many opinions on what this means. Some claim it is pointing to their reception of the blessings of the gospel. Others say that it is speaking of their continuance in the gospel, being steadfast in adhering to it. What Paul is certainly referring to, however, is their contributing to the furtherance of the gospel. This is what he will allude to both in this epistle and elsewhere. For example, in 2 Corinthians 8 he says the following concerning those in Macedonia, which includes the Philippians –

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 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 Corinthians 8:1-5

It is this then which Paul is referring to as “fellowship in the gospel” which they had participated in “from the first day.” They helped Paul, supporting him even when he was preaching in other areas. Their willingness to give was so great that it appears he simply could not refuse their generosity. Because of this, he used an exceptional term, “robbed,” to show that he was relying on their generosity in a way that he felt almost uncomfortable with –

“I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you. 9 And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself. 10 As the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall stop me from this boasting in the regions of Achaia. 11 Why? Because I do not love you? God knows!” 2 Corinthians 11:8-11

This is what Paul was so grateful for. The poorest of the churches he ministered to were the greatest givers of all!

Life application: The poor tend to give above their ability, even out of their poverty. At the same time, those who are well off tend to give less in proportion to their wealth. Let our hearts be willing to give at all times and in all ways if the cause is right. This is especially so with the furtherance of the gospel. In such cases, it is always right to so give.

...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; Philippians 1:6

Paul continues with his long thought which began in verse 3. Taken together, the verses read –

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 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...”

The words of verse 6 begin with “being confident.” This is connected to “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” That sentiment was speaking of the endurance of the Philippians – “from the first day until now.” He now builds upon that with words of marvelous reassurance. They are words which he is fully confident to proclaim, and they are words which should give us the greatest sense of calm, especially when we blow it and do something really stupid.

They should also be taken to heart by unsound teachers who state that we can, in fact, lose our salvation. Such a notion flies in the face of Paul’s words now; call into question the integrity of God which Paul will relay in his words ahead; and is not supported by any other sentiment in Scripture which is taken in proper context.

He says that he is “confident of this very thing...” In other words, what he is about to proclaim is something that he is completely assured of. There are no doubts as to the truth of the statement, and as they are now recorded as a part of Scripture, God is also fully confident in what Paul wrote. He accepted the words as written because He inspired the words to be written. The word he uses means to be completely and firmly convinced. It is a perfect participle active – I am fully persuaded, I am perfectly persuaded, and I will remain so persuaded.

And the object of this persuasion is “the He who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” It is God who began a good work in each of us. He offered grace

and we received it (Ephesians 2:8, 9). In the reception of His grace, we were saved (Romans 10:9, 10). In the salvation which came upon belief in the work of Christ, we were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise which is our guarantee of our inheritance (Ephesians 1:13, 14).

It is this process, this “good work,” which began by God’s gracious offer that He “will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The Greek verb for “will complete it” is in the future indicative active. It is coming; it is a simple statement of fact, not conjecture; and it is a continuous hope that we possess.

As Charles Ellicott notes of these words, “He would complete what He had begun. In his view, God’s grace is the beginning and the end; man’s co-operation lies in the intermediate process linking both together.” We cooperate only so far as the interim process is concerned, but from the beginning it was God’s grace, and this grace is spoken of into the future, even unto “the day of Jesus Christ.” This means the final day when we shall stand before Him fully healed, fully known, and fully perfected. Nothing can change this, and it is completely sure.

God began the process, He has a purpose and a final intent for the process, He will not abandon the process, He has promised the completion of the process, and He has sealed this promise in us by the giving of His Spirit. If we are not eternally saved, then we might as well toss out the Bible and go live it up. If it is up to us, we will fall and we will be condemned. But it is not up to us. Thank God that it is not up to us.

Life application: Have you received Jesus as your Savior? You are saved.