

# I Thank My God – Phil 1:3-8

**Introduction** – Thanksgiving is a time for giving thanks, something that we as Christians are to master (1 Thess 5:18). Biblical thanksgiving always has something to be grateful for and Someone to render thanks to. Paul was a master of giving thanks and he was not shy to share his craft (e.g. Eph 1:15-16, Col 1:3, 1 Thess 1:2, 2 Thess 2:13). Paul was a thankful pastor; something pastors are to imitate. Paul was a thankful follower of Jesus; something all disciples are to imitate.

**I Thank My God** (vv3-5) – Every remembrance of the churches at Philippi (and the other churches) was a cause for Paul to give thanks to God. In Eph 1:15-16 we see that Paul is thankful to God for the church because they are the living proof of the promises of God to bring salvation to the world through Jesus. In Phil 1:3-8 we see that Paul is thankful to God for the *koinonia* (fellowship) he shares with the Philippians even though he sits in a prison far from them. Paul thanks God because he knows that God is the One Who has given these things – even though the experience of partaking of the gospel and the fellowship in the labor of the church happens among the people. Paul is thankful to God for the churches, but he is also quick to tell them that he thanks God for them.

**Thanking God for the Church** – While we long to see our churches full (as the hymn says), we must never forget how amazing it is that there is anyone worshipping God at all. Do not forget the miracle it is that any have faith in Christ or that any love one another in the power of the Holy Spirit. These are gifts from God. They are gifts to the individuals and they are gifts from God to the body at large. In fact, remembering these as miraculous gifts and regularly giving thanks for these gifts creates momentum in these gifts (faith/love for God, love for one another) to be expressed and applied more and more (Phil 1:9-11).

**Thankfulness with Realism and Real Hope** (v6) – Being thankful to God also motivates greater dependence on God to complete what He has begun. Paul knows the problems of church-life (i.e. 4:2). He knows that there is still much sanctification to take place in all of us (2:12-13), but this does not dull his thankfulness now, before it is all complete. Paul is confident in what God has done and what He will do – and he thanks God for both. This confidence causes Paul (and us) to be like our heavenly Father: easy to please, hard to satisfy. His mercy is everlasting and new every morning – and He calls us to be perfect like He is perfect. Out of thankfulness to God for what He will do (rather than disappointment in the present imperfections), Paul strives to bring forth that perfection (Col 1:28-29)

**The Affections of Thankfulness** (vv7-8) – Not only is it morally right (*dikaiois*) to have this thankfulness for the church, it is right for that thankfulness to be full of “*the affection of Jesus Christ*” (lit. “*the bowels*”). It is to share the deep love that Jesus has for His bride with Him. It is to then act out of that love with thankfulness. It comes because we know that we are all partakers with one another of grace. We do receive grace individually, but we receive it as a community as well – the only community that will last forever. It is grace shared even in the midst of chains, separations, trials and persecutions. This thankfulness and love for the church is only trumped by one greater love – and that is to be with Christ Himself (1:21-24). A Christ-like and Christ-empowered affectionate love for His body is what makes it worthwhile to endure whatever is necessary to serve His body and be “a confirmation of the gospel” (v7).

**I Thank My God for You** – This congregation is a great cause of thankfulness to me for many reasons.

**Koinonia in the Gospel** – You are a people who love to learn the truth about God and His Word. You want doctrine, you seek depth. But you seek these things so that you can then work those things out in your lives as sincere followers of Jesus. You want the gospel to change your home-life, your workplace, how you educate your children, the way you treat your neighbors and friends, both those who know the Lord and those who don't. I am thankful to strive together with you. You are a people who love and care and pray for your pastor. You are a people who never tire of doing good to one another in very practical ways. I thank my God for you.

**Full Family Worship** – It ain't easy to have all the little ones in with us all the time. We are grateful to you for your hard work to train and equip the children of all ages to engage with us in our worship of God. Do not be discouraged in this hard work. It wasn't long ago I was training my son who is now training his son in this worship. The harvest is coming.

**A Musical Reformation Together** – We have come from a number of musical and liturgical backgrounds. We are so grateful for the music, the psalms particularly, and the recovery of biblical worship and thoughtful liturgical forms. We are grateful for you in learning and stretching with us. We are grateful for the progress and long for more (easy to please, hard to satisfy).

**Standing against the World for the World** – I am grateful for the saints here who refuse to follow the world in its cultural lusts (sexual immoralities, abortion, gay-mirage, etc), but who do so because they love the world and want to see the world saved from itself. There may be hard prices to pay for these stands and I am grateful to share in that expense with you.

**Believing the Promises with Us** – These are culturally dark days in a nation that appears to be imploding, losing the battle to unbelief and thanklessness. I am grateful that you join with us in not building your hopes on where things are now, but on where God has promised to take you and your children's children and that the earth will be as full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Therefore, I am thankful for how God has prepared us, matured us – and for what He has in store for us – together and for the sake of the gospel.

Dave Hatcher – November 29, 2015