

# Philippians V – “I Thank My God...” (Phil 1:3-8)

**Introduction** – There is a cool distance that many maintain in their churches. Anonymity and individualism, lack of accountability and vulnerability we think will keep us safe and untouchable, in control of our own destinies. Pastors, elders and congregants, all of us, can be guilty of such an attitude. Theologians love to debate over Paul’s doctrines – and this is good for we must properly understand these teachings. Christians must also imitate his mindset and passion for the people of God.

**Gospel Partners** (vv3-5) – Paul remembers the Philippians before God, and apparently often. I cannot approach ‘my’ God without remembering that He is ‘our’ Father. And as he remembers these brothers and sisters, he gives thanks for them and makes requests for them *all* with joy. He is emphatic on how indiscriminate he is to remember them all before God. This is because of their “*fellowship in the gospel...*” *Koinonia* is much more than our bagels and coffee time next door after the service. It refers to our joint participation, our communion, our partnership, and our bond together in the gospel. Therefore, it is a fellowship of grace. It is not a natural association that one can decide to join or not to join. It is sovereignly effected by Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:9), and is an unmerited gift of the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14, Phil 2:1).

**The Grace of Fellowship** – This fellowship provokes an affection for the brethren (v3), a concern for one another, and a seeking of more grace for one another (v4), and mutual ministry with one another (vv5, 7-8). Paul’s singular passion in life is Christ, and this passion unites him in prayer, in sacrifice, in love and concern, and in partnering with the saints for the work of bringing the gospel to the world and in ministering to the saints.

**Gospel Confidence** (v6) – Paul’s thankful joy before God is based upon his understanding of God and His salvation plan. He reminds them of their sure footing in the gospel and their sure future because of the gospel.

**The Good Work Begun** – Salvation is all by grace. But it is not that God has simply arbitrarily decided to forgive some people. He is just and He is holy. How can God overlook our sins and bring us into His holy presence? God not only hates iniquity, but the workers of iniquity (Ps 5:5-6), and He does so unceasingly (Ps 7:11). To be just, God must give sinners their due wages (Rom 6:23). To allow us into His presence, God must make us holy. He has done just that in the work of our covenant Head, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21).

**Grace From First to Last** – There are three false views on the work of salvation, all of which are denied by this verse. First, some would teach that salvation is man’s work. But we have nothing to offer God (Rom 3:10ff) and even if we had good works, that is not the wages for sin (Rom 6:23). Second, some teach that we must start the work and that God will then finish it. We are told, “God is a gentleman and will not force Himself upon anyone.” But what does this verse teach, along with others like Heb 12:2? In order to be saved, a man must be born again, something even Nicodemus understood we could never do for ourselves. Third, some teach that while God begins the work of salvation, drawing everyone, man must finish the work, persevering on his own to the end. But this verse rebuts this argument. We are told that all whom God foreknew (loved beforehand) He will glorify (Rom 8:28f). Jesus promises He will not lose a single one (John 6:39).

**Completed in the Day of Jesus Christ** – God promises that His good work will be completed, but not at our death. The ‘day of the Lord’ in the NT often refers to the judgment that was to come upon Jerusalem and the old covenant temple in 70AD. But even that day was a foreshadowing of another day of judgment, the final and great day of judgment. This fulfillment of the new covenant promises will be the day when the trumpet will sound and our bodies will be resurrected into final glory with our souls (1 Cor 15, esp. vv 50-57).

**Gospel Affections** (vv7-8) – It is morally right, *dikaiois*, for Paul to have this mindset, including attitudes and dispositions, towards the Philippians. It is a sin to not love the brethren or to not manifest that love towards them. Paul’s affection is deep and it is because of his connection to Jesus Christ. It comes because he knows they are partakers with him in grace. We receive grace individually, but we receive it as a community as well. And it comes as they share together in chains and in the defense/confirmation of the gospel.

Because of Paul’s position of authority as an apostle, it is no small charge for pastors, elders, husbands, parents, and all in authority to imitate this affection and mindset with those you serve as leaders “...for it tends in no small degree to secure faith in the doctrine when the people are persuaded that they are loved by the teacher.”-Calvin.

**“I Thank My God...”** – for you all. I remember you all before the throne of grace. I believe God’s promises regarding you all. I regularly make request for you all. I am confident for you all. I have you all in my heart. I have the deep and tender affection of Jesus Christ for you all. I am in partnership with you all. I share a common passion and commitment with you all. Why? Not because there are no problems, no sins, no difficulties, no strains, no misunderstandings, no unreconciled brothers and sisters. But because God will complete the good work which He has begun in you – in us, and the day of Jesus Christ will finally and fully reveal this glory.

This is what Paul writes. Can you think of any application for this here?