

BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“Thanksgiving”

Philippians 1:3-8

Introduction

1. The opening verses of this epistle from Paul’s Roman prison cell affirm his servanthood to the Lord Jesus (a bond slave), the sainthood of the Philippian believers (saints in Christ Jesus) and the salvation provided by God through Christ (our Father).

2. That Paul adds “with the bishops and deacons” expands his official greetings to the church. These persons were leaders of the church at Philippi.

3. Following his greeting (Salut d’ amour), the Apostle moves right on to the contents of his letter. It appears that the next few verses are similar to what is found in Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon. The words addressed to the two Macedonian Churches, Philippi and Thessalonica, are peculiarly warm and full.

4. The key to these verses seems to be thanksgiving. The present tense indicates the continuation of the action of the verb. This was no yo yo expression. It was a pattern in his life. The text provides aspects of thanksgiving. Study them:

1. PRAYER vv. 3, 4

a. Personal

Paul refers to “my” God. For the Apostle, God was more than someone away off in the skies. God’s transcendence and His imminence must always be remembered.

b. Total

The preposition “upon” is just that. The articular noun “remembrance” suggests the “whole” remembrance. It was not segmented.

c. Special

The emphatic “you” notes that the Philippians were the specific ones involved. What an incredible expression of warmth for these saints!

d. Petitional

Three words -- “always, every, and you all” are all related terms in the Greek Text. “Prayer” and “request” are cognates i.e. based on the same root. The glory of it all is that Paul made requests “with joy.” Fancy that in a prison experience!

2. FELLOWSHIP v. 5

Four incredible prepositions delineate the essence of this verse:

a. “For” (epi) fellowship

This is may be a basis for thanksgiving. It may have reference to the Philippians’ giving (4:10-19). But it may mean their fellowship in spirit (1:7).

b. “In” (eis) the Gospel

“In” is a poor rendering; rather “for” or “unto.” The thought is the furtherance of the Gospel, particularly evangelization.

c. “From” (apo) first day

Here is a statement of the steady and original sympathy of the Philippians. They started and never stopped.

d. “Until” (achri) the now

The Philippians has helped at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15f), Corinth (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 11:7-10) and now in Rome (here).

3. CONFIDENCE v. 6

Here is an expression that confirms the idea of fellowship (v. 5). “Being confident” is a perfect tense participle expressing reliance on sure grounds, namely, the Philippians’ persevering constancy and the mighty power of God (here stated).

a. God’s beginning

There is no question but that God did inaugurate His work in the Philippians! Salvation and all its concomitants are entirely of God (Jonah 2:9). Salvation is here noted to be a “good work” of God. It is the work of all works -- the salvation of the soul!

b. God’s perfecting

Salvation is a process issuing in completion (epiteleseis). Hence, He will perfect i.e. bring to a perfect end all that He intends (cf. Ro. 8:28-30).

c. God’s Day

The day of Christ is appropriately referred to as the Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13-18). The whole being of the believer will be fully redeemed at this time (Rom. 8:23).

4. THINKING v. 7

Paul states it is “right (dikaios)”, not just “meet” to feel or think the way he has in the previous verses.

a. Mutually

While it is difficult to determine the meaning of the two phrases “think this of you all” and “because I have you in my heart,” it seems best to consider Paul’s affection for the Philippians reciprocated by the Philippians.

b. Associatively

The Philippians were part with Paul in his sufferings (bonds) in his missionary work (defense i.e. explanation and vindication of the Gospel) and (two words linked by one article) confirmation of the Gospel (the reason for the hope in the minds of convinced believers).

c. Sympathetically

“Partakers of my grace” means the participation of the Philippians with Paul in everything -- like working through him.

Conclusion

To conclude this section about thanksgiving, Paul calls on God as his witness. This is an affirmation of the immediate context, but also the entire passage. The Apostle “longs” after them all, as a homesick yearning. He does this in the very viscera of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ’s heart was his for them! God help us to be united to Him and others like this!