

## Thanksgiving & Prayer

*Philippians, Part III*

Philippians 1:3-11 & 4:8-20

Stuart W. Bryan

### I. All of Grace

We begin our walk with Christ by grace, we continue it by grace, and we shall end it in grace. We are totally dependent on the grace of God. Hence, if we are to excel, it must be by seeking God's face, God's empowerment.

### II. A Chiastic Outline

Paul's letter to the Philippians is organized like a chiasm with sections of the letter balancing one another as they point to a central observation. That central observation is Paul's command to *work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who is at work in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*.

### III. Overview

#### A. Organization

1. Thanksgiving & Prayer (1:3-11)
2. Exhortation & Thanksgiving (4:8-20)

#### B. Thanksgiving (cf. Acts 17:1-9)

Paul is thankful that the Philippians, far from being ashamed of Paul or distancing themselves from him because of the opposition he faced, have shared with him. They have remained loyal.

#### C. Prayer/Exhortation

Paul wants them to grow, to continue in the grace that has already been manifest. And he knows that this will only occur as God Himself works among them – so he prays for it. This prayer is complemented by the description of the “excellent things” upon which the Philippians are to meditate in chapter 4.

- A. Opening Greetings (1:1-2)
- B. Thanksgiving & Prayer (1:3-11)
- C. Proclaiming Christ Amidst Opposition (1:12-18)
- D. Magnifying Christ (1:19-26)
- E. Striving & Suffering for Christ (1:27-30)
- F. Godly Ambition in Christ (2:1-11)
- G. Work out Your Salvation (2:12-16)
- F'. Godly Ambition in Christ (2:17-30)
- E'. All things for Christ (3:1-11)
- D'. Pressing toward the Goal in Christ (3:12-16)
- C'. Standing Firm Amidst Opposition (3:17-4:7)
- B'. Exhortation & Thanksgiving (4:8-20)
- A'. Closing Greetings (4:21-23)

#### IV. Application

##### A. Thanksgiving & Petition (cf. 1 Thes 5:16-18)

Foundationally, the text reminds us again that the *desire, energy, and power* to excel still more come wholly and completely from \_\_\_\_\_. Therefore, the melodic line that must run throughout the course of our lives is thanksgiving and petition. As we look back at our lives, we should be overflowing with thanks. Likewise, as we look forward to what is yet to be done, we are to kneel before our Father and petition Him.

*Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.*

##### B. The Nature of Love (cf. Ps 45:6-7; 11:5; 97:10; 139:21-22; Pr 13:24)

\_\_\_\_\_ is not in itself a virtue. The question is, *what or whom do you love?* Love is not lawless; love delights to keep the moral law of God from the heart. To love another is to treat him lawfully from the heart. The truly loving person is the one who learns to love *as God loves*; he is the one who loves what God loves and hates what God hates. His love reflects the moral law.

- **Psalm 45:6-7** — *Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.*
- **Psalm 11:5** — *The LORD tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates.*
- **Psalm 97:10a** — *You who love the LORD, hate evil!*
- **Psalm 139:21-22** — *Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies.*

##### C. A Mature Love (2:3-4; 3:7-11 cf. Mt 13:45-46)

\_\_\_\_\_ is not some abstract quality; it is always directed toward someone or something. So it is our *love for God in Christ* that Paul wants to ripen, mature, and grow; it is *our love for others because of Christ* that Paul wants to ripen, mature, and grow.

- Paul wants our *love for God* to mature (3:7-11). The goal of Paul's life was that his love for God grow in knowledge and discernment; that he increasingly behold the loveliness of Christ.
- Paul wants our *love for others* to mature (2:3-4). Paul was other-centered, thinking of the Philippians more than himself.

#### V. Conclusion (Phil 2:5-7)