

PHILIPPIANS Part 1: Praying for Someone Else - 06.06.10

Play: "Philippians Intro" Video Clip [2:00]

Intro: I can't begin to tell you how excited I am about this summer's study in Philippians. When I completed my Greek language training I translated Philippians into English - I fell in love with both the language, with Paul, and with this very special letter.

Background - Paul wrote the letter while in prison. We don't know exactly where. Rome, Ephesus, Caesarea, or Corinth - someplace with praetorium (1:13), and someplace where he was surrounded by those in Caesar's household (4:22). We know that his situation was dire, that he faced a trial, which could (and maybe did) result in a death sentence.

The Philippians - Paul is writing to a the church at Philippi, the first church he established in Europe (Macedonia). We read about his adventures in Acts 16. Spirit gave call in a vision. Conversion of Lydia, purple dye, God worshipper, house church. Fortune-teller girl. Paul & Silas beaten. Jailed. Singing. Earthquake. Jailer & family converted. Paul caused fear in magistrates because he was Roman citizen.

Summed up... Letter from prison that talks about life and death, friends and foes, advancing and setbacks, finishing well, working out our salvation, a reference to what may be the church's very first Christ-hymn, how not to be anxious, how to content no matter what the circumstance. Maybe my life verse (4:6) - pure poetry! "Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." From prison!

Transition to Tonight's Topic. This evening we're going to start where Paul starts - with his prayer. This may be one of the greatest prayers in the Bible, a great example of how to pray for someone else. Do you struggle with this? Are your prayers limited to praying for someone when they're sick? Or praying at the beginning of meals? Do you know how to teach your children to pray? Paul gives us some great lessons on how to pray for someone else. So much here, we'll take 2 weeks...

READ: Philippians 1:3-11

The Seven Foundation Blocks of Praying for Someone Else

#1 Praying with **THANKSGIVING**

"I thank my God..." Philippians 1:3a

Most of us understand this in theory. We give "thanks" before meals. We have a holiday dedicated to "thanksgiving." But when Paul begins his prayer from prison, he begins with thanks! His whole heart, it seems, was filled with thanksgiving. From the psalmist...

"I give thanks to you, O Lord my God, with my whole heart,
and I will glorify your name forever." Psalm 86:12

7 Things Keep Us From Being Thankful With Our Whole Heart:

- We're too busy and stressed out
- We're waiting for things to work out perfectly (never happens)

- We don't want to brag (especially now, people in tough times)
- We focus on what needs improvement
- We focus on the many things we still have to get done
- We focus on all the bad stuff in our lives, in others, and in the world
- We pay a lot of attention to what we don't have, what we want and what we think we should get

To pray with thanksgiving, from a whole heart of thanksgiving, means we have to be purposeful. **Exercise: Write out 100 things thankful!**

#2 **REMEMBERING** to Pray

“... in all my remembrance of you.” Philippians 1:3b

It's pretty clear that Paul had a deep affection for the people in the church at Philippi. But could we be honest? Paul had a lot of churches, and I'm sure he had a deep affection for all of them. In a sense they were all his children. Do you think he just happened to remember them sometimes or do you think he was purposeful in remembering to pray for them? We get a clue later in the letter...

“In humility count others more significant than yourselves.” Philippians 2:3b

ἡγέομαι consider, think, have an opinion; regard, esteem. ESV we count or “account” place the debits and credits. IOW - to exhibit humility is “to think” of others. To do this we need *to make lists!*

Try this: make a list for each day of the week. Sunday - family members, Monday - church friends, Tuesday - work friends, Wednesday - government leaders / issues, Thursday - people who don't know Lord, Friday - who you love most, Saturday - enemies.

#3 **DEPENDENCE** of Prayer - pray like our lives depend on it!

“... always in every prayer of mine for you all.” Philippians 1:4a

There are two words used for prayer in the original language. The one we most often think of as prayer, προσευχή **proseuchē**, means to pray to Deity. But there is another word, the one used here, and that is **δέησις** – original meaning “lack, need” so means plea, entreaty, request. Paul uses both sometimes as in 4:6, “When anxious, by prayer (προσευχή) and supplication [ESV], petition [NIV], tell God what you need [NLT] (**δέησις**). Paul comes back to this word again in 4:19...

“And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

We're going to deal with this *extensively* on Aug. 29th and Sept. 5th in a two-part sermon on anxiety and peace... but here's our bottom line tonight: *Prayer is our first response, not our last resort!*

#4 Prayer out of **JOY**

“... making my prayer with joy...” Philippians 1:4b

Let's be reminded of where Paul is writing from. Prison! He is facing a death sentence. This is not where Paul wants to be - He's a church planter! Yet his letter to the Philippians is *filled with joy!*

References to joy and rejoicing in Philippians:

- “Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice.” (1:18)
- “Yes, and I will rejoice.” (1:18)
- “... for your progress and joy in the faith.” (1:25)
- “Complete my joy...” (2:2)
- “Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.” (2:18)
- “... that you may rejoice in seeing him.” (2:28)
- “Finally my brothers, rejoice in the Lord.” (3:1)
- “Therefore my brothers,... my joy and crown...” (4:1)
- “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.” (4:4)
- “I rejoiced in the Lord greatly.” (4:10)

ABC's of Joy and Prayer:

- A. My joy is not dependent upon my CIRCUMSTANCES.
- B. My joy is my CHOICE to rejoice.
- C. My joy in prayers flows over from my joy in LIFE.

#5 PARTNERSHIP in Prayer - *We don't go through Christ life alone.*

“Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now... for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.” Phil. 1:5&7b

Paul prayed for Philippians out of his sense of partnership. They had provided for his needs. They sent their pastor, Epaphroditus, to visit Paul in prison (2:25), he almost died, Paul was sending him back with Timothy so he wouldn't have “sorrow upon sorrow” (2:27). When Paul originally left Philippian church, they were the only ones who partnered with him and provided for his needs (4:14-15).

Look at how Paul describes this partnership “from the first day until now: (v.7) (a) partakers with me of grace - [NIV - you all share in] syn together with + koinonois fellowship = a together with companion! (b) in my imprisonment. Paul wasn't alone in prison. The Philippians made sure of that. (c) in the defense of good news - they backed Paul up! (d) confirmation of gospel - when in doubt, a reminder! What a blessing they must have been to each other!

What a blessing you are to me (and I hope the other way as well).
Board meeting Thursday. Email Marci. Prayers from Karyl.

#6 CONFIDENCE from Prayer

“And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” Philippians 1:6

This is really helpful if we think about it. This single verse is very often quoted to prove the point of “preservation of the saints.” This is an important doctrine of salvation, that if our salvation is wholly dependent upon God - and not ourselves - then there is nothing we can do to lose our salvation. Some people remember it in this oversimplified way: “once saved, always saved.” Or this ditty: “If we have it, we never lose it. If we lose it, we never had it.”

I believe this important doctrine of reformed theology. Yet, when we look at this particular verse *in its proper context*, what we find that this incredible confidence in God's working begins and ends with prayer - the needful, dependency kind in verse 4 to the official prayer to Diety in verse 9. **Through prayer we are continuously reminded...**

“For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.” Romans 11:36

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...” Ephesians 2:10

Here's the takeaway for you in terms of your confidence of God's finishing work in your salvation. Your confidence in God's workmanship in your life increases exponentially through prayer. Prayer increases your confidence in God's working... (NOT your self-confidence!) And because of this ongoing reminder, your very confidence in God DRIVES YOU BACK to prayer. Do you see the cycle? Confidence in God ==> Prayer ==> Confidence in God.

#7 Prayer caused by **AFFECTION**

“For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.” Philippians 1:8

These words that Paul writes with is like reading a love letter. He says he “yearns” for the Philippians -ἐπιποθέω *epithéō*. *Potheo* already means to have an earnest desire for, to long for. *Epi* is an intensifier... I REALLY, EARNESTLY long after you. I crave your companionship.

Jillian and Tim - We're experiencing a little bit of that right now in the Pierce household. Jillian and Tim are engaged to be married in August. They've purchased a house. They're going through pre-marital counseling. But always Jillian returns here to the house. And within minutes, it seems, she is back on the phone with him. She *epitheos* Tim when he's not around!

And beyond that, Paul says he longs for the Philippians with the affection of Christ Jesus. Again loses something in translation, because when the Greeks wanted to really demonstrate their affection, they'd say “I yearn for you *with my deepest intestines!*” My guts, my innermost self. Though in this case, Paul intensifies this even more by saying, “I long for you with the very guts of Christ Jesus!”

Application: When you pray for someone else, is this the attitude of longing and desire and affection you have for someone else? If it is, then you should have no problem knowing how to pray!

Conclusion: Next week we'll talk more about prayer... what we should actually pray for - the purposes of our prayer for one another. But this week think about these seven foundation, building blocks of prayer. If you struggle with this, then start here. Ask God for these foundational underpinnings to your prayer life: (1) thankfulness; (2) remembrance; (3) dependence; (4) joy; (5) partnership; (6) confidence; and (7) affection.

Pray.