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Rejoicing In God's Work

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-6

Introduction

1. Many of the sermons that we as preachers preach to the congregations before us are usually for the purpose of exhortation or correction.
 - a. We attempt as the writer of Hebrews said “to stir up (provoke, KJV) one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24, ESV).
 - b. We use God's inspired Word to “reprove” those before us for sin in their lives and show them the “correct” way that God calls them to live (2 Timothy 3:16).
2. But there are also times when it is appropriate to rejoice in what God is doing among us and thank Him for His work.
3. Such is the lesson I seek to share with you today.

As Paul writes this letter to the Christians in Philippi, he does so while imprisoned in Rome some 800 miles away.
4. It has been about 10 years since he first shared the gospel with them.
5. However, we do not have to read far in this letter to realize that neither the passing of time nor his imprisonment have caused his love for them and his interest in them to diminish.
6. His relationship with the believers in Philippi was more than apostle to Christian.
14. Twice here in the first chapter of this letter he uses the Greek word *koinonia* to describe this relationship.
 - a. “your participation in the gospel” (v. 5).
 - b. “you are all partakers of grace with me” (v. 7).

15. We often translate this word as "fellowship," but in so doing, I am afraid that we rob it of its richness.
16. We have almost made the word synonymous with good food and a few laughs.
17. This would make it no different than what a number of Americans did yesterday in various stadiums and in front of television screens as their favorite football teams played.
18. Christian fellowship is a marvelous thing.
 - a. "People who by nature have nothing in common find a common life in Christ."¹
 - b. When you consider Paul's first converts in Philippi,
 - 1) A businesswoman named Lydia, and her household.
 - 2) A jailer and his household.. . . what did they have in common?
19. It was the gospel of Christ and the fact that they became partakers of the same life and partners in the same cause.
20. Like those first believers in Philippi, those of us here today who are Christians are also partakers of the same life and partners in the same cause.

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I. Prayers Filled With Joyful Thanksgiving

A. EVERY TIME I REMEMBER YOU, I THANK GOD

"I thank my God in all my remembrance of you . . ." (Philippians 1:3)

1. Paul rarely thanked God for things, but he was always thanking God for his brothers and sisters in the faith.
2. They were a constant source of joy for him.
3. On an earlier occasion as Paul was writing his letter to the church in Rome,

¹ Ellsworth, Roger. *Opening up Philippians*. Opening Up Commentary. Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004, p. 16.

a congregation which he had yet to visit, he sent greetings to at least 28, calling them by name (Romans 16).

4. Most of them were people Paul had met in his travels through Asia Minor who had subsequently taken up residence in Rome.
5. Paul was a people person first and foremost.
6. He was always inquiring and making note of his people's whereabouts and condition and was thanking God in all his remembrance of them.
7. You are a congregation that does this:
 - a. You are constantly checking on one another — your brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - b. You are making phone calls, personal visits and sending cards to let them know you care.
 - c. I know this for a fact because in recent days my wife has been the recipient of those things.
8. We personally are thankful to God for each of you.

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B. MY PRAYERS FOR ALL OF YOU ARE FILLED WITH JOY

“always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all,” (Philippians 1:4, NASB95)

1. The outcome of Paul's remembrance of the brethren at Philippi was not only thankfulness to God, but a joyous petition on their behalf.
2. When he thought of their names, he automatically prayed for them — all of them, not just a few.
3. Fifteen more times in this letter, Paul speaks of joy, both his and theirs, and calls upon them to rejoice.
4. It is significant for at least two reasons:
 - a. According to Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, though the brethren at Philippi, along with those in Thessalonica and Berea were undergoing a severe test of affliction, their spiritual well-being continued to increase, they

had an “abundance of joy” (v. 2).

b. The second has to do with Paul’s own imprisonment:

1) Though he was awaiting possible death, he continually urged those in Philippi to . . .

a) “rejoice in the Lord” (Philippians 3:1).

b) “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4).

2) Paul reminds us that joy is not a result of pleasant circumstances or prosperity or success.

3) Joy for Paul was not an emotion or a mood or a feeling but an *attitude*.

5. Our prayers this morning and every day should be filled with joy. Why?

6. He tells us in verse 5.

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C. THE REASON: YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THE GOSPEL FROM THE FIRST DAY UNTIL NOW

“in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”

(Philippians 1:5, NASB95)

1. From the moment they obeyed the gospel, these new Christians rolled up their sleeves and went to work in the cause of the gospel.

a. They were working out their “salvation with fear and trembling” (1:12).

b. They persevered in their prayers on Paul’s behalf (1:19).

c. They continually sent money to support Paul in his ministry (4:15,16).

2. So many of you are doing the same thing:

a. Not only are you yourself striving to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), you working to help others do this as well.

- b. All of the things we have done over the last 13 ½ months . . .
 - a. The provision of food, shelter and clothing
 - b. Helping people to get back into their homes.
. . . is not just to meet their physical needs, but to let them see Christ living in us and hopefully draw them to Him.
3. You might be surprised at how many Bible discussions are started while we are seated around one of the tables in our Enrichment Center enjoying a meal with others from our community.
4. One lady (Bobbie) said not too long ago that she enjoys being here in the morning because she has learned so much from those discussions.
5. Gary James constantly tells Kyle and me that he is praying for us.
 - a. While he may not be able to communicate the gospel with someone he encounters.
 - b. He is nonetheless a partner with each of us in the same cause.

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II. Our Confidence In The Work God Is Doing

A. IT IS A WORK WHICH GOD HAS STARTED IN US

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a . . . work in you”
(Philippians 1:6, NASB95)

1. The work of the gospel was not something which the Phillipians themselves began, only to have God come along and add a little to it.
2. No. It was entirely God's work.
3. He began it, and He didn't begin it the day Paul set foot in Philippi.
4. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul said that it was something which God chose to do “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).
5. He is the one who provided the way of salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ.

6. He is the one who sent Paul to Philippi (Acts 16:9-10) so that the Philippians might hear the good news.
7. In the same way, it is God who started the work in which we are engaged.
8. He is the One who initiated the plan by our elders to focus for almost a year on being the hands and feet of Jesus.
9. He is the One who provided all the resources we have needed to carry out the various ministries in which we have been engaged over the last 13 ½ months.
10. Even today we can look around us and see the results of the work He began in us.

Slide 6**B. IT IS A GOOD WORK**

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you”
(Philippians 1:6, NASB95)

1. Not only is this God's work, it is a “good work.”
2. It is a “good work” because God is in it.
3. He not only strengthens us in our faith, but He is constantly drawing others to His Son in obedient faith.
4. Since December 6th of last year, we have seen God add eleven people to His church!
5. Through His grace and by His provision we will see even more added before December 5th of this year.
6. If you look around this morning you will see a number of new faces:
 - a. Friends who have chosen to worship with us.
 - b. Brothers and sisters who have placed membership with us.

Slide 7**C. HE WILL BRING IT TO COMPLETION AT THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST**

“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you

will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6, NASB95)

1. When you put all of this verse together, we see the ultimate confidence which Paul had — it is that the same God who began the good work there in Philippi would . . .
 - a. “Perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus” (NASB95).
 - b. “Bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (ESV).
2. God does not begin a good work and then abandon it somewhere along the way.
3. No. He sees it through to completion.

Conclusion

1. This morning, I pray that our prayers may be filled with joy as we think about the fact that we are each working together in the cause of the gospel.
2. May we look forward to our Lord's coming with confidence knowing that God will complete what He started in us.

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3. There is a hymn, written almost 130 years ago which speaks of our confidence on that day:

**When the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise,
And the splendors immortal shall envelop the skies:
When the angel of death shall no longer destroy,
And the dead shall awaken in the morning of joy**

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**O the bliss of that morn, wen our loved ones we meet!
With the songs of the ransomed we each other shall greet,
Singing praise to the Lamb, through eternity's years,
With the past all forgotten with its sorrows and fears.**

Chorus

In the morning of joy, in the morning of joy,

**We'll be gathered to glory, in the morning of joy;
In the morning of joy, in the morning of joy,
We'll be gathered to glory, in the morning of joy.**

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4. The second stanza asks a question of us. What is our answer?

**When the King shall appear in His beauty on high,
And shall summon His children to the courts of the sky;
Shall the cause of the Lord have been all your employ,
That your soul may be spotless in the morning of joy?**

5. Will you be able to share in the joy of that day?
6. Is your soul stained with sin? If so, will you come to Jesus today so that He may cleanse you?