

March

3

I HAVE YOU IN MY HEART

*Our partnership with other believers in ministry
is vital to the life of the church.*

THE WORD

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-8 I thank my God every time I remember you. **4In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy** ⁵because of your partnership in the

KEY VERSE

gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

PHILIPPIANS 4:14-19

¹⁴Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

ENGAGE THE WORD

Do you remember any of your “partners in mischief” from high school or college? What grand adventures did you go on? What experiences did you share? What sort of experiences did Paul have with the Philippians that he would write, “I thank my God every time I remember you”(Philippians 1:3) and “In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with you...”(v. 4)? At times, the book of Philippians almost sounds like a love letter. Some of the language is typical of friendship letters for Paul’s day, but Paul does express strong feelings of gratitude, joy, longing, and love. Paul and the Philippians had a relationship built on many experiences together.

Some of the first adventures in ministry that Paul had with the church in Philippi may be read in Acts, chapter 16. Beyond these stories and clues in the letter, we are left with nothing but our imaginations to consider what memories Paul made with the Philippians.

The friendship between Paul and the Philippians is not just built off memories of the past. The friendship is not like a reunion, where folks retell the same stories year after year after year. However, in this relationship new stories are being written. Their friendship is continuing to grow, because it is built around a mission. Paul describes their relationship as one of being “partners in the gospel.” The reason Paul and the Philippians remain in each other’s hearts is not just a sentimentality for their past triumphs and trials, but because their journey together continues even while miles apart.

Part of what keeps the ministry relationship ongoing is the fact that Paul continues to pray for the Philippians. Sometimes our colleagues and the folks we work with are ironically the ones we can forget to pray for. For Paul, remembering his partners leads to thanksgiving, and thanksgiving reminds him to pray for them.

Did You Know?

Paul takes the traditional way of writing “hello” in the ancient world, “*charein*,” and alters it to read “*charis*,” which is Greek for grace or loving-kindness!

SOURCE OF JOY

PARTNERS IN PRAYER

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

Philippians 1:3-6

Joy is a common theme throughout Philippians. The joy that Paul speaks of does not rely on positive circumstances; Paul experienced joy even in the midst of being in prison. Paul points out that joy during desperate times is possible because of our relationship with God.

The source for Paul’s joy is two-fold. First, he prays with joy because the Philippians give him joy. There is something about working as a team toward the same goals that brings a deep satisfaction in relationships. Second, God is the source of Paul’s joy, and more specifically Paul’s belief that God is part of the teamwork as well. Paul derives joy in knowing that God will take the project to completion no matter what happens. Paul and the Philippians do not have to worry because God is doing the work. This good work is being done in both Paul and the Philippians. Dear to Wesleyan-holiness theology is the thought that God is continuing to make us into a holy people. We become more Christlike as we allow God to continue to work on us as we surrender our lives to Him. Paul reminds us that from the moment of salvation until we pass into glory (or Christ returns), He never stops working on us.

Partners in prayer. We have all heard this phrase. Often it is used like this: Well if you can’t give, you can always pray. Prayer, however, is not an activity to be taken up only when we cannot give money. It is clear the Philippians had learned how to be persistent, praying Christians. Paul knew they had kept praying for him and for the success of the gospel. In our Christian walk and warfare, we really do need to pray persistently for each other and all who fight the Lord’s battles. Always remember that prayer is a powerful force!

Philippians 1:7-8

Being “partners in the gospel” binds people not only together to one another, but also to Christ. Consider

Think About It

Philippians is known as the epistle of joy. Can you count how many times Paul uses the word joy? Consider the different ways Paul uses the word in Philippians 1:4, 1:18, 1:25, 2:2, 2:17, 2:28, 2:29, 3:1, 4:1, and 4:10.

Paul and the Philippian's partnership. Christ had been their matchmaker, pulling them together in the first place. Christ had been their goal. Christ had enabled their triumphs. Their relationship with Christ had also been the cause of their sufferings. And all their present business of letters, gifts, reports, and challenges laid out in the letter to the Philippians was for the gospel of Christ. It is with such a focus and interrelationship with Christ that Paul can write that he longs for the Philippians with "all the affections of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:8). It is possible to love others like Jesus loves others. This too is a joyful possibility in Christ!

As believers, the body of Christ, we are also "partners in grace." Whether in suffering for the sake of Christ or defending and confirming the gospel, we have a common bond held together by our relationship with Jesus Christ.

PARTNERSHIP**Philippians 4:14-19**

Fast forwarding to the last part of chapter four, before the letter's final closing, again reveals what a gospel partnership looks like. First, partners in the gospel share their troubles with one another. They share emotionally and physically. They are a listening ear as well as a helping hand in the work of ministry. Second, partners in the gospel give financially to the work of ministry. They give support when and where it is needed. Finally, there is the idea of an ongoing relationship with all those that are working in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ. The relationship continues even as seasons change and people move!

REFLECT **T**hink about your partners in the gospel. Take time this week to thank God for those people.

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