

## PRAYERS, PARTNERSHIPS, AND PERFORMANCE

### Philippians 1:1-11

INTRO: I think I am supposed to be sharing a State of the Church or something close to that anyway. It is hard for me to do the topic deal. I had this outline all figured out to really surprise you by covering a main them in all FOUR chapters. Can you imagine? Me either... so we'll make no promises and let God speak to us as He wills. I really didn't have the above text in mind but it seems that a style of living which Christ lived, and a style that He laid out for His disciples, might be a good style of thinking and living for all us.

#### MY PRAYERS OF THANKS FOR YOU

**Philip. 1: 1-5, 7-8.** I am thankful for many things. Your **fellowship in the gospel** is an increasing blessing in my life. Fellowship/participation is the word **koinonia** which is fellowship, partnership and contribution. Did you know it also meant intimacy with one another? That's a little more than I think of as partnership. It even includes at points a monetary gift, which Paul is thanking the church for in this letter. **Verse 7** gives me another reason to be thankful. You are not only in fellowship with me, you are **partakers (my companion)** of my grace from God. Paul seems to be saying they are sharing in the grace given him, as much as any grace from God to them. **Verse 8** Paul tells us that he longs after them "in the bowels of Christ Jesus". Some translations say **affection**. Thayer says: "The bowels were regarded as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love; but by the Hebrews as the seat of the tenderer affections, especially kindness, benevolence, compassion; hence our heart (tender mercies, affections, etc.)" Whatever else I might want to say to you, I am grateful to God for your fellowship, companionship, and I feel in part at least, from the heart of Christ for your lives.

#### MY PRAYERS FOR HIS PRESENCE IN US

**Verses 9.** I pray with Paul that your love would be God's love and would abound more and more in knowledge and discernment. This verse is a whole sermon and more. My love is imperfect but God's love is perfect. Real love must carry with it knowledge and discernment. This abound is overflowing, excelling, beyond measure, unlimited, BUT it is also with EPIGNOSIS, (full understanding) and discernment. This word *discernment* is strong and is used here of moral perception of things "sweet and pungent or rotten." Love that isn't knowledge and discernment based becomes ineffective and downright unhelpful if not destructive to the one I am loving. AND what is this love for? **V.10-11**

*"10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

**ILLUS:** Love as we often talk about it is a far cry from this love that Paul is speaking of. I remember the phrase, "It's easier to get forgiveness than permission." This love is *lavish*, but it is not *enabling*. Imagine the parent that would say, "Do whatever you want today daughter or son, you know I'll forgive you". There is no lesson in that except how to ruin a child. Yet this discerning love can recognize a broken, repentant heart a mile off (prodigal son) and lavish love on them. This love changes the desires, (make me a servant) and the result is the thirst for things that are excellent, sincere and blameless, and the filling of a life with the "fruit" (not works) of righteousness which comes from Christ. THIS love will be unable to ignore my dilemma. It's the love of the cross. God could not leave me striving, and He sure didn't just want me to miss hell. He wanted to change me from the inside out not the outside in. This is not about me living for Christ, it's about His life in me and that will make a whole lot of difference. His presence will always become His performance in me. My performance will not become His presence.

#### MY PRAYERS FOR HIS PERFECTING IN YOU

**Vs. 6.** This is one of the most difficult tensions for me. I love you so much. I want so badly to fix your hurts, to raise your spirits, to make you joyful, to see that all of who God is, is becoming your very life and

existence. In short, I am desperate to fix the problems and have a great plan and strategy for moving the “church” from point A to point B. I bleed over that, I grieve over that, I strive over that. I want to rip you out of every furnace, take you around every mountain, shield you from all attack. Problem is.... I can’t. You know why I get discouraged at times? I CARE BUT I CAN’T!! It is hard for me to rest in Him and know that **HE CARES AND HE CAN!!!** Doesn’t mean that I am to stop responding to your lives. Certainly doesn’t mean that I am to quit being involved in you. The “body of Christ” is all about involvement, caring etc. It’s just that I need the awareness that my response is in no way the producer of the results. I can be a vessel, a person God uses for His good pleasure, but I am NOT the perfecter, HE IS!! You see how hard it is to get away from not only being the performer, but also the producer, and the director. This word in **v. 6** is *epiteleo* complete, perform, accomplish, or perfect. You see He has already begun it but it is ongoing until completion. He IS going to perform this in you. Isn’t it amazing that Paul was not writing this from the comfort of an office like I sit in. He was actually awaiting a possible death sentence in prison. What is it about this man that seems to have the same attitude in every situation. I think it would be really, really important to know. I am far more used to circumstances dictating our moods. The reasons given to me are getting pretty lame. “I’m only human”, “I’m not Paul” “no one understand”. How much of our mood is because the “me” is a lot larger than “HIM?”

### HIS HEART IS OUR VISION

*The vision* of the boards of CWCC is to demonstrate the poured out life of the cross as shown through the life of Christ by a continued commitment of world and local missions. This is the style of the cross.

*The vision* of the boards of CWCC is to reach the hearts and lives of our children and youth through the ministry of God-called people in our body. This is a style of the cross.

*A further vision* of the boards of CWCC that God would raise up people with the heart to minister to those in need. This ministry includes but is not limited to those who are bruised by affliction, hunger, loneliness, addictions; the widows, the orphans, the prisoners and all who are suffering grief and loss. This is the style of the cross.

### HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

I have observed as many have grown deeper in relationship with Christ. I have seen young people thirst for Him and determine to minister in the true style of “waiting at the table.” I have watched a dance ministry evolve and grow into an expression of the very heart of God. I have seen the countless hours of practice, preparing and pouring out of heart in our music. I have watched a children’s ministry on Wednesday develop into a real body within a body, and felt their blessings on us. I have observed God developing a growing desire and development of a men’s ministry. I have felt the tug of the Holy Spirit in teachings on forgiveness. I have been amazed at the pouring out of finances in a truly sacrificial way, out of the lack of people, not their abundance. I have watched as a building being cared for is a ministry, not a job. I have witnessed the donation of a kidney, so someone might have a little more time. I have seen missions become all about people, not programs. I have watched people share in banquets, fellowship meals and other events and see the joy instead of the work. I have witnessed the Holy Spirit begin healing of multiple family and personal hurts, as He prepares us for His kingdom work. I have been moved to the cross as I have heard what God is doing in Home Groups, the volunteers at COH, and in our visitation ministry.

I have felt the heart throb of the Holy Spirit and had a young lady sum up what ministry, “waiting at the table” is. Allow me to read some of a letter from Janice Degamo:

*Dearest Pastor Sam: Good Morning!!! We miss saying these words. How are you Pastor? I hope that your as hot as when you came her in the Bible School in the Philippines because we here was being contaminated by your passion of sharing the Cross Style. Through your preaching we are being encouraged*

*and started to move out to preach Jesus Christ. After you leave Pastor, we went out into the field. We are assigned to different areas in Cebu for a mission. We will start our own ministry for Christ Jesus. My partner is Laarni.*

*January 31, me and Laarni were walking bringing the Holy Spirit as our weapon and Christ within us. We just let God bring us wherever He wants. By the grace of God, four families accepted us for a Bible study. I praise God for that. Then it was added by two families again and we have two areas of feeding programs. You know what Pastor, as we walk and move out for Jesus, I felt as much happiness and contentment. I became more matured and my desire to share Christ became more intense in my life. Jesus became stronger and stronger in my life. In fact, we also planned to give gifts to widows and less fortunate children. We also re-organized our youth ministry and children's ministry. As youth president, I want to apply the Cross Style as the life style for our youth, because I myself was being revived with your preaching pastor. Until then pastor, thanks, and God Bless!! Love and Prayers, Janice Degamo.*

Now in that letter above you will find every point you need to sum up Philippians. Maybe it should be called The Epistle from the Philippines.

A Lutheran pastor friend said it to me this week like this: "It is time that we stop just trying to bring people to Jesus, and start bringing Jesus to them." IT IS TIME, and 2005 not only is God's time for us, it has already displayed the perfecting of the Father in our lives.

ILLUS: I shared with a woman from our church yesterday the following story. My mother used to clean my face periodically at times I wasn't too happy about. She would rub hard to remove dirt marks, and it didn't feel very good. She even spit on a handkerchief once to wipe a spot off. (Jesus spit and made mud you know). When I was really young she couldn't stand to see "gunk" on my nose and she was always wiping it. It was embarrassing, at times not very gentle, and irritating at best. I've watched children turn away and frown and cry as parents tried to clean their faces, like it is a horrible thing, but in the end, the child is cleaner. Clean me Jesus. I may not like it, I may not always cooperate, but help me to understand, you are "accomplishing" something in me.

1. What are you confident of that God is performing in your life at this time? What needs to happen for it to be accomplished?
2. Describe an event in your life that you were or are really uncertain about? How were/are you praying?
3. What is God's voice saying to you? How is He speaking?
4. What can you pray for with joy? When is it hard to have joy in praying? Can you have joy all the time in prayer?
5. Are you aware of a vision of God for your life?