TALKING POINTS

Uniting Heaven and Earth:
Christ in Philippians & Colossians
Q1L2: "Reasons for Thanksgiving and Prayer"

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MEMORY VERSE: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" Philippians 1:6, NKJV

LESSON STUDY INTRO

"This week we'll consider Paul's opening words of thanksgiving and prayer in Philippians and Colossians…" Qtly, Sab, last par

1. We should be thankful for Christian fellowship (Sun, Mon)

- Paul's prayers were "others-focused, on behalf of the whole church and for its well-being." Qtly, Mon, par 2
    - Paul understood the power of intercessory prayer (praying for others – Phil. 1:3, 4; Col. 1:3; compare Phil. 1:8 w/Lk. 22:32).
        - This is not to imply that Paul prayed non-stop for the believers ("upon every remembrance of you" – Phil. 1:3), but that they were always on his heart, as his interests were bound up with theirs.
    - This doesn't mean praying for ourselves is inherently wrong or selfish (compare Heb. 5:7 w/Lk. 22:41-43).
- Paul expressed thankfulness for Christian fellowship (Phil. 1:3-5).
    - The Greek word translated "fellowship" is the word *koinonia*, which means that which we hold in common with others, or in which we commonly participate. Our common cause as Christians forms a bond of sympathy with one another, and a sharing in the joys as well as the challenges of the cause (see 1 Jn. 1:7).
        - "[Phil. 1:3] underscores the close mutuality they share… As Paul had fellowship in Christ's sufferings (Phil. 3:10), the Philippians 'shared' (Gr. *sunkoinōneō*) in Paul's sufferings and shared financially to support Paul's ministry (Phil. 4:14, 15)." Qtly, Sun, par 3
    - This cause was not a pastime or hobby, but an identity.

2. We should be thankful for God's providences (Tue)

- As discussed in last week's lesson, Paul viewed his imprisonment as an opportunity.
    - The net effect of his imprisonment was an impetus to the church's missionary activity (Phil. 1:12-14).
        - "[S]ome faithful workers also became more zealous to spread the gospel…. It energized them to go where before they were

afraid to go; it led them to speak in situations during which before they kept silent; it led to even more people accepting Christ and spreading the gospel of salvation." Qtly, Tue, last par

- "The blood of Christians is seed." Tertullian, Apologeticus

- God was even able to turn the ambitious designs of Paul's enemies toward the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:15-18; see also 2 Cor. 13:8).

3. We should be thankful for God's promises (Wed, Thu)

- Finally, the apostle expressed thankfulness for the fruit that "the word of the truth of the gospel" was bringing forth among the believers (Col. 1:3-6).
    - He specifically points out their "love for all the saints" (v. 4), and their "love in the Spirit" (v. 8).
- Paul prayed, therefore, that the believers would not rest satisfied for what God had accomplished in their lives so far.
    - He prayed that their love would continue to grow "in knowledge and all discernment" (Phil. 1:9), so they could "walk worthy of the Lord" (Col. 1:10), and be "filled with the fruits of righteousness" (Phil. 1:11).

> As in nature, so in grace; there can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the development of the Christian life. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime. COL 65.2

    - Furthermore, he assured them of success
        - with his prayers.
        - with promises of God's power (Phil. 1:6; Col. 1:11).
        - with the "prophetic perfect" work of God (Col. 1:13, 14).
- Paul understood that his present reality would be the church's future, and he longed for them to be ready for it.
    - This world is not our home, but we are sojourners and pilgrims here (see 1 Pet. 2:11).

CONCLUSION

> Let us remember that the life of God's children in this world is a pilgrim life. We have not wisdom to plan our own lives…. Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God's plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans. So should we depend upon God, that our lives may be the simple outworking of His will. As we commit our ways to Him, He will direct our steps. MH 478, 479 (Qtly, Fri, par 1, 2)