

An Apostle's Big Wish

Thomas Robinson, *Lives Shaped by Jesus 1*, September 30, 2012

Philippians 1:1-11

1:¹ Paul and Timothy, slaves of Messiah Jesus,

To all the saints in Messiah Jesus who are at Philippi, including overseers and servers:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and Lord Jesus Messiah.

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you
will bring it to completion at the day of Messiah Jesus.

⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart,
for you are all my co-partners in grace,

both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Messiah Jesus!

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more,
with knowledge and all discernment,

¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent,

and so be without pretense and blameless for Messiah's day,

¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Messiah,
to the glory and praise of God.

ACTS 16:8-15 Paul, Silas, Timothy and Others Teach in Philippi

⁸ So, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

¹⁰ And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. ¹¹ So, setting sail from Troas, we made a direct voyage to Samothrace, and the following day to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.

We remained in this city some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer, and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together. ¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. ¹⁵ And ... she was baptized, and her household as well....

2 Corinthians 1:8-10 Paul's Time of Danger in Asia/Ephesus

⁸ For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly crushed beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself. ⁹ Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. But that was to make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. ¹⁰ He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.

Philippians 2:5

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus

Jesus Shapes People in New Places

Jesus began with the “lost sheep of the house of Israel”

(Mt 10:6) but sent his disciples to make disciples of “all nations (Gentiles)” (Mt 28:19). The Kingdom life Jesus taught had to take shape in people of very different cultures and still be true to its present Lord.

Just 20 years later (a.d. 50) Paul taught Jesus’ message in Philippi, Macedonia, a Roman colony (Acts 16). Four years later he was imprisoned in Ephesus (a.d. 54) and wrote to the believers in Philippi. So much had happened. The call to discipleship that challenged villagers in Galilee now transformed the lives of Greek and Roman city folk (pagans, Jews, God-fearers) and created communities that mattered intensely to the believers but that they could not have imagined earlier.

Paul experienced the power of the multi-sided Jesus message to change people’s self-definition and aims in life as they realized what it meant for their identity and values.



Partnership in Something that Really Matters

Paul greatly enjoys the strong fellowship/partnership (koinonia) he shares with them (as in Acts 2). It is not primarily a personal attachment but a shared experience with the transforming power of the Gospel and God’s Grace (v 5, 7). But their shared focus in the love at the heart of the Gospel becomes a deep love and caring between them: “I hold you/You hold me in the heart.” “I long for you with affection shaped by Jesus.”

The partnership was not just words/feelings. They supported Paul both when things went well and when he was stopped by prison. They sent Epaphroditus. Their actions showed they knew what was at stake in Paul’s work really mattered. They commit, participate.

Confidence in God’s Work

Paul also knows that their transformation and discipleship is not his work but God’s work. Paul doesn’t denigrate his work and responsibility out of false humility. But he can have joy even when his own situation seems hopeless because of his confidence in God’s work. Paul has experienced that work of God in himself as Jesus has transformed his life. He knows it can be a long journey. God works both in the present and for the long term.

Love, Knowledge, and Testing

So what does the Jesus message do? How does it work? Jesus’ life, teaching, miracles, service, suffering, crucifixion, resurrection show the face, heart, and power of God.

It puts love at the center. God’s love, Our response of love. Love for others: God’s power.

Paul first prays that their love abounds. That establishes the basis for all else.

Seeing God’s love in Jesus brings knowledge/grasping reality and discernment/perception.

The mind is renewed. We learn to think differently, without distortion of false gods.

Then we test / approve the things that make a difference/ that make life excellent.

What fits with the mind/nature of Jesus? What shows his rule, vision, identity in us?

A Journey with New Outcome

Through his love God is leading us to Messiah’s Day, when every tongue will confess Jesus. The Philippians (and we) join a journey never before known. Life with a goal. Life empowered by Jesus’ to bear fruit that embodies justice/righteousness and praise.