

Paul, Silas and Timothy had established the church in Philippi ten years prior to writing this letter to the Philippians. Throughout that time the church had faithfully supported Paul and his ministry. Even while he was in prison, the church continued to send support. They were not a perfect church, but Paul was thankful to God particularly for their faithful participation in the gospel ministry. His thanks can help us understand being properly thankful as well.

1. ***Paul directed his thanks to God.***

- Thanks must be directed to someone to be other than happiness.
- Giving thanks to God properly honors Him as the source of all blessing.

Remember to give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

2. ***Paul thanked God consistently.***

- Whenever Paul thought on the Philippians, even with their problems, he thanked God.
- Whenever Paul thought on the Philippians, he prayed for them, thus doing what he would teach in chapter 4 verse 6: “in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.”

Pray for one another and give thanks to God.

3. ***Paul accompanied his thanks with joyful prayer.***

- Paul had specific reasons to pray with joy (vv 5–6), but could do so generally because joy belongs to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23).
- The Spirit produces His fruit in the believer’s life when the believer submits to the Spirit. Giving thanks is the will of God and therefore doing so leads to joy.

Walk by the Spirit and not according to the sinful nature, and you will experience joy and peace (4:6–7) even as you pray for those who have needs.

4. ***The believers’ partnership in ministry made Paul thankful.***

- Paul consciously thanked God for the way the Philippians had helped to assure that the gospel was proclaimed.
- Their help included hosting the missionaries and providing for their physical needs while there (Acts 16:14–15, 19–24, 40).
- Their help continued by sending material support even though they were poor (Philippians 4:16; 2 Corinthians 11:9).
- Paul’s first response in thanks was for the help in the gospel, not his personal benefit.

Look beyond the immediate situation for spiritual good for which you can give thanks.

5. ***Paul’s confidence in God assured his continued thankfulness.***

- Paul knew that the Philippians’ response to the gospel was the work of the Lord (Acts 16:14).
- What God had begun, He would also continue and complete.
- That work will be complete when the believer meets Jesus at His appearing (1 John 3:2).
- Paul could continue to give thanks as the Philippians became more and more like Christ.

Place your confidence in what God can and does do, rather than in human efforts.

6. ***Paul’s affection and their shared ministry made his thankfulness logical.***

- Paul cared for the Philippians from his heart. That made his thankfulness only logical.
- They enjoyed the same grace from God and Paul did, which enabled them to remain faithful and to serve. This made thanks to God logical.
- If any should doubt, Paul had God as his witness.

As you become more like Jesus, you will not only do what is best for others, you will grow in your affection for others.

Paul thanked the one true and living God for His work in the yet imperfect Philippian believers. Follow this pattern and thank God consistently with joyful prayer for what He is doing in and through others. Even if you first see the failures, look for what God is doing and thank Him. You will personally benefit as you fulfil God’s will for you by thanking Him.