

**Title:** Memories and Dreams – What Type of Church Will We Be?

**Text:** Philippians 1:1-11

**Date:** January 20, 2019

It's nostalgic, really. I've already lived long enough to process many of the things I dreamed of as a child. I'm talking about things that have already happened, and now they are in my past.

- Dreamed of sports – I played sports, now it's gone.
- Dreamed of pastoring a church – I'm now in the thick of it.

Life happens SO FAST! (James 4:13; Proverbs 27:1)

- We are already 20 days into 2019.

Question: What are we going to do today, this season, this year, that at the end of 2019, we will be so glad we did?

What are we willing to beg God to help us do now/today – that one day when we stand before God and give a full accounting of our lives – we will be so glad we made that decision?

**INTRO.** Carrie and I have been dating for 18 years, and married for nearly 15 years. By spending basically 50% of our years on Earth together, we have many, many memories.

In fact, most of the best memories of my life include Carrie.

- Our first date – Steak N Shake on a Wednesday night after church. How romantic!
- Proposing to her on a Sunday morning in front of the entire church – and she said yes!
- All the hours of talking on the phone between Lynchburg... Vidalia... and New Orleans.
- And of course – she's the mother of my three children.

My point is I'm invested with Carrie. We have spent years together. We have made unforgettable memories together that are permanently engrained on my soul.

However, though I cherish the memories, I dream of a bright future with Carrie. We intend to remain happily married. We are committed to being life partners in church and in ministry together. We plan for many more laughs, experiences, and achievements together in our future.

- We dream of raising our children.
- We dream of holding grandkids together (Psalm 128:6, *May you see your children's children*).
- We think of places we will visit and sites we will see together.

Pastor Jeremy, what are you saying?

I'm saying that I have many wonderful memories of my past with Carrie and I cherish them all – but I'm also saying that I dream of a bright future with Carrie. There's more for us to do!

- I love what we have shared together...but we are not finished...there is more for us to enjoy!

**Transition.** What is Paul saying to the Philippians as he opens his letter to them in Phil 1:1-11?

Paul is basically saying, “*Philippian church, I cherish our memories...I forever hold you in my heart...but we are not finished...there is more to do...and I’m praying for a bright future for you and I in Gospel partnership together.*”

**Background.** When you read this letter – it feels like Paul had a personal connection and deep love for the Philippians more than any other church he ever encountered. Irony of Philippi?

- Paul was falsely accused, beaten, flogged, and imprisoned there.
- Paul is writing this letter to the Philippians from his imprisonment in Rome.
- Yet he speaks of how much joy, encouragement, and love fills his heart through his memories of the Philippians.
- And he thanks them for their faith/generosity...because Paul knows that they know that he is in jail for being a preacher of the Gospel...and yet at great cost the Philippians continue to support him with their prayers and finances.

In other words, Paul is saying: when you follow Christ → 1) some days are a pleasure and 2) some days are painful but 3) every day is worth it!

- Any gospel that tells you about following Christ: it’s all good/easy, or all bad/stressful is a false gospel!
- The fact of the gospel is that: until Jesus comes there will be both mountains and valleys in our lives...there will be good days and bad days...but when Jesus comes again it will all be worth it!

**Context.** The church at Philippi was very significant for Paul. It was the first church he ever founded in Europe (Acts 16).

- It was the church where Lydia and her family got saved.
  - They then hosted Paul in their home and ministered to him.
- It was in the city where he was beaten and imprisoned for the Gospel.
  - Yet he was also supernaturally released while singing in an earthquake at midnight.
- It was the church that felt led to take up an offering and financially support Paul...and they continued to support him even as he traveled and ministered throughout the Roman Empire.
  - Paul even held up the Philippians as the gold standard of generosity when he challenged the other churches to, “Be like them...they give generously, even out of their affliction and poverty...” (2 Cor. 8).

**First, Paul begins the letter by stating, “This is who we are.” (1:1-2).** Paul identifies himself as a servant, the Philippians as saints, and then he expresses the typical salutation that was common in ancient Christian letters.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus! First word out of his mouth about himself → servant! The first title he self-professes, “servant” – what a beautiful and glorious example.

- The best leaders are truly servants.
- You'll never be a true leader if you're not willing to serve first.

Jesus Christ himself was the epitome of a servant.

- Matt 20:28 & Mark 10:45, *I didn't come to be served, but to serve...*
- John 13, *Last physical act with his community of disciples...foot-washing, serving.*

### Three important questions:

What is a servant? One who does whatever his Master assigns him to do.

What is a Christian servant? One who does whatever God asks, with a good attitude.

How do you know if you're a good servant? By how you respond when treated like a servant.

FACT: many people never do big things for God because they are unable to be humble and faithful in the little things for God. You aren't big unless you're willing to be small!

- Matt 25:23 principle → must be faithful with a little, to become master over more.

### Paul wrote to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

The word saint = holy ones, blameless ones.

- It doesn't mean perfect.
- It means they have a deep-seated conviction about trying to honor God and to do the right thing in all circumstances.

FACT: you get your holiness by being in Christ Jesus and filled with His Spirit.

- We are filthy rags (Rom 3:10; Rom 3:23).
- But God's Spirit makes us alive and produces fruit in us (John 15:4).

And note, it always happens at a place. "In Philippi..."

- Be holy right here...be holy right now...be holy where your feet are.
- Be holy with that phone in your hand...be holy at work...at school...etc.

### Paul gave this salutation: grace and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ the Lord.

- Paul was a man touched by God's grace and peace.
- Paul passed on to others what God had given to him: grace and peace.

Lesson: one of the reasons I want to be gracious to others is because God has been so gracious to me.

- God's supply of grace for me has not run out.
- My supply of grace for others should not run out.

**Second, Paul tells the Philippians, "This is how I remember you." (1:3-8).** Paul's personal remarks about his fondness for the Philippians truly touch your heart! This is an authentic picture of friendship.

- Grateful for you (v 3).
- Prayerful and joyful at every remembrance of you (v 4).

- You are loyal partners in Christ's work (v 5) (v 7).
- You are a work in progress: God isn't finished! God is taking you somewhere (v 6).
- I miss you and I love you with affection only Christ can give (v 8).

In other words, here's what Paul is saying about the Philippians: your willingness...your receptivity...your cooperation...your support/generosity...your love/unity has opened doors for me.

Oh to be a Christian or a group of Christians (a church) that is thought of this way! And to think, this is only Paul's introduction! He talks this way about the Philippians all the way through the letter.

**Paul** – notice his tone/heart throughout the letter.

- I want to come and minister with you again (1:24).
- You faced hardship along with me, you were at my side; you didn't let me suffer alone (1:27-30; 4:14).
- You are eager to obey God's word (2:12).
- You continue to choose to be joyous (3:1).
- You are my brothers and sister, my joy and crown in the Lord (4:1).
- When you found out about my needs – you renewed your commitment. You didn't just give once, you continued to give generously (4:10; 4:14).
- You were willing to be the only church that supported me (4:10).

**Lesson:** this is a great reputation! This type of church is irresistible! This is the type of church...wow...you really miss it when you're not there!

**Q:** What do people say negatively about church these days? What are the reasons they don't participate?

- They just want my money...that big old church.
- It's too loud...it's too big.
- It's too liberal...or too conservative.
- I don't trust the leaders...
- I don't know the songs...I hate standing up all the time.
- Sermons are too long-winded...sermons are too boring...didn't learn anything.
- My kids didn't like it.
- Nobody spoke to me. Nobody cared about me. I was sick and they didn't call.
- I got offended...I disagreed with them...I found it irrelevant...I didn't connect.
- Church is full of hypocrites...I didn't feel God there.
- They wouldn't answer my questions.
- There's no opportunity to serve.
- I don't need church...it's not convenient...I'm too busy...traffic getting out is too bad.
- I hate crowds...it's too loud...I can't hear...too contemporary...too traditional.

Now compare this to the Philippian's reputation:

- I'm thankful every time I think of you (v 3).

- You've given joy to my prayer life (v 4).
- You've inspired me since the first day I met you (v 5).

By God's grace, here's what I pray is the reputation of FBCW:

- God is in this church! I can't afford to miss!
- I found hope there! I found love there! I found unity/compassion there!
- They love people! They help people!
- I found friendship and purpose there! I felt new after going there!

Oh God, give our church a good reputation!

Prov 22:1, *A good name is to be chosen over great wealth; favor is better than silver and gold.*

**Thirdly, Paul tells the Philippians, "This is what I pray for you." (1:9-11).** I love how this paragraph of thought ends with hope for the future. Hope for a brighter tomorrow. This is a beautiful and distinctly Christian prayer that Paul prays for the Philippians.

I pray that you will grow in **love** (v 9). Love is the most important thing!

- Love is the most important command (Mark 12; Love God with heart, soul, mind, strength).
- Love is the most important testimony (John 13).
- Love is the greatest gift (1 Cor. 13).
  - Without love, we have nothing!

I pray that you grow in **knowledge** and **discernment** (v 9).

- Knowledge = what has God said? Are you growing in knowledge of God's word?
- Discernment = how should I live in light of what God has said?

Note, this is saintly sanctification: I'm more loving...I am learning about God...God is teaching me how to live well.

- (God's Love and God's Truth has impacted how I'm living!)

I pray that you'll approve of the **superior things** (excellent things) (v 10).

- No, not arrogance (see Phil 2:3-4).
- It means a blamelessness that flows from holiness.
  - "Just because I can do something doesn't mean I should do something..."

Remember this: purity and blamelessness means –

- We are unstained by the world.
- We are citizens of a different world (Phil 1:27) (Col 3:2).
- We are in this world, but not of this world (John 17).
- We've been transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2).

**FACT:** We live here...but we are marked as different people...we are all sojourners passing through!

*All I know is I'm not home yet...this is not where I belong...take this world and give me Jesus...this is not where I belong!*

I pray that you'll be **filled with fruit of righteousness** that comes through Christ! (v 11).

Q: how can I live with Christian fruitfulness and praise to God?

A: I have been imputed with Christ's righteousness. I have been given a new nature (2 Cor 5:17).

The new nature of Christ in me will manifest itself in 1) fruit and 2) praise to God.

- Every Christian's testimony ought to be: Look at me, "*I'm new.*"
- Every Christian's testimony ought to be: Look at me, "*God did this!*"

**In summary:** Paul expressed his personal gratitude to the Philippians for their gospel partnership, and prayed for their continual Christian growth.

Irresistible Christians are helpful! They join you in your situation – love/partnership.

Irresistible Christians are humble! They know they've personally not arrived – they press into Christ and keep going and growing until heaven.

**BIG IDEA.** Every Christian has both a reputation and an opportunity! Turn to Christ! Only Christ can bring meaning and value to all of my yesterdays, today, and tomorrows.

**This is a text about Memories!** Paul remembers the reputation of the Philippian church.

Lesson: every church, and every Christian, has a reputation.

- Good or bad, we all have a past.

Q: What is our reputation?

**This is also a text about Vision!** Paul challenges the Philippians to keep growing in love and truth.

Lesson: every church, and every Christian, has an opportunity to keep growing because of what God wants to do today in our lives! God wants to do something today.

- None of us are finished until God is!

Q: What are we going to do in the next 5, 10, 20 years?

**Note, Paul draws a link between what the Philippians were willing to do for others (graciousness, v 5), and what God was willing to do for them (faithfulness, v 6).**

FACT: As a church, we do not minister out of the context of our limited resources...but rather from the mindset of God's unlimited resources.

**Note, you know who you never forget? People who helped you when you were desperate (v 7).**

- ILLUS: Carrie and I, infertility, and Lee Peacock's personal counsel to me.
- Q: How'd you get where you are in life? Who helped you get here? Have you thanked them with all your heart?

Since this passage is about vision, here are some questions to ask as we prepare for a bright future of growth in grace together.

**First**, am I more loving today than I was last year? Or a decade ago?

- What would my family or coworkers say about me?

Do I have a love for 1) God and 2) people that is obvious, clear, and growing?

- Willing to pray today and ask God to help you?

**Second**, do I know God more intimately and personally today than last year? A decade ago?

- What are my Bible intake habits?
- How's my prayer life?
- What's my church and Sunday school attendance like?
- How am I facilitating an environment of spiritual development in my home, car, work?

Have I truly sought the Lord? Do I love with stronger purpose today?

- ILLUS: Slay your dragons before breakfast.
- ILLUS: D.A.W.G. – day alone with God.
- I'll have monthly prayer requests for immediate things I am sensing only God can do.

**Third**, am I doing the things today, that come Judgment Day, I'll be glad I did them?

- Pastor Johnny says, *"I want to do today what I'll be glad I did then."*

Interestingly enough, habits are quite simple.

You can change and be different.

Or you can grow and mature (do more, better).

Or you can get stale and apathetic.

Or you can resist this message and think it's silly.

But you cannot stay the same!

**CONCL:** If you are lost, you need to turn to Christ. Come to Christ this morning! Only Christ can bring meaning and purpose to all of your past, present, and future.

If you are a Christian, your past is under the blood of Christ.

If you are a Christian, your future is secure in Christ.

Today – love him and serve him with all your heart! One day, you'll be so glad you did!