

Joy through Gratitude

Joy for the Journey

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Bible Text: Philippians 1:3-8
Preached on: Sunday, April 22, 2018

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Take your Bible and let's go to Philippians this morning. Last week, we did an overview, a bird's eye view of this book and established the theme of joy in all the different instances where it's referred to in the book of Philippians. We pointed you to 18 of the references to either joy or gladness or rejoicing; 18 different times those terms are used somewhat interchangeably in this book of Philippians. And our challenge to you is a challenge from a preacher of old, not that old but a generation ago, A. W. Tozer put it this way when he said that, "The Christian owes it to the world to be supernaturally joyful." In this gloom and doom age, we ought to, of all people, testify of the goodness of God through joyful living and joyful lives.

So biblical joy is something that is significantly different than a happiness that's connected to our circumstances and situations, biblical joy is not dictated by good circumstances which means we can be joyful no matter what's happening, no matter how difficult life is. So by way of review, we defined joy in this manner and we'll remind you of this probably fairly regularly through the series but joy is this: it's a positive emotion that is rooted in our confidence that our good God is in sovereign control of the circumstances of our lives for our good and for his glory, and then that enables us to have this spirit of joy, this praise that we would then, as a result, praise him. Or I put it in a little different terms last week: joy is the Spirit of God placing a smile in your heart even though you may have a tear on your face. The Spirit of God putting that smile in your heart even though you may have a tear on your face.

So this morning, we're going to jump into Philippians 1. We'll start reading in verse 3. We looked a little bit at verses 1 and 2 last week but our primary focus this morning will be verses 3 through 8 where the word of God says this in verse 3, it says,

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

"I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." That is the spirit of gratitude and gratitude's essential to joy. Think about it this way: gratitude waters the seeds of joy in the Christian's heart. You know, it's that time of the year, or at least it's supposed to be by the calendar, right, where we're supposed to be enjoying spring, and one of the things that I enjoy the most about spring is plants and flowers and gardens, and I know I'm weird,

and mowing my yard. You've heard me tell you that before that I like to mow my yard. The Carol's, our neighbors, were giving me a hard time about that this morning about mowing the yard, and we don't compete with each other, do we, Roger and Shirley? We're not in competition but we do notice when the other guy mows it and I didn't and he did, he did, you know, that type of routine, you know what that's like. But one of the things that's going to happen here in the next few weeks is that you are going to start planting those beautiful flowers and over the course of time as weather warms up, those flowers that are just green leaves to start with right now are beginning to blossom and they're going to begin to bloom, but then all of a sudden the heat of July is going to come along and it's going to get hot and it's going to get dry and you're going to need to do something very important with those flowers, are you not? You're going to need to, what? You're going to need to water them or those blossoms that were so vibrant and beautiful just two days earlier, if not properly cared for and properly watered, are going to wilt and look nasty.

Gratitude is what waters the seeds of joy in the Christian's life. As you cultivate a spirit and an attitude of gratitude, God enables that to enable you to have this genuine joy that comes from God himself, and yet joy shrivels when not watered with gratitude. Notice with me this morning that the Lord wants us to respond to life's challenges with gratitude. That's the spirit we see here in these first eight verses of Philippians 1 as Paul communicates them to the church there in Philippi. So he wants us to have this contagious joy for the Christian journey that gratitude is essential to. Notice with me five different things, then, in connection with this spirit of gratitude. The joy of, number 1, the joy of grateful reminiscing, and that's what Paul does here in Philippians 1:3 when he says this about that church. Remember we talked about them last week, the church at Philippi, the second missionary journey, Acts 16 we get some of the details of his interaction there fulfilling the Macedonian call, taking the gospel to Europe. And Lydia trusts Christ there, some of the believers gathered at the riverside, that they are following Jehovah even though they may have not have converted fully to Judaism, but she places her faith in Jesus as the Messiah and others follow her. Then you have the account of the Philippian jailer and, of course, what resulted in that occurring, that account of him being jailed, was the deliverance of the demon-possessed girl who had been telling the future and making all kinds of money for her handlers.

So it's that church that he looks back on and he says this in Philippians 1:3, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." He thinks back to the time that he had spent there in Philippi with these young believers and according to those who have kind of worked on the timeline, he was probably in Philippi in AD 30 and he's probably writing this about AD 62, so think of it in terms of 12 years later that he's reminiscing about Lydia and the demon-possessed girl and the Philippian jailer and the Philippian jailer's family trusting Christ, and all that had happened there in that city but especially in that church. And he looked back on his time with them with fondness and that's essential to understand. He looked back on his time with them with fondness rather than bitterness because remember what also happened, as we pointed out to you last week, what also happened in Philippi was he ended up in jail unjustly for preaching the gospel and him being beaten and thrown into prison and placed in stocks even though he was a Roman

citizen. It was unjust for them to do that because he should have been given a fair trial before they did any of that kind of stuff, and yet that wasn't what he focused on, not the challenging difficulties that he went through there, instead he focused on the good things. He could have focused on the beating and the jailing and the imprisonment, instead he chose gratitude for the good things rather than ingratitude for the bad things.

As I was thinking about this text, one of the things that popped into my mind is just the churches that God has allowed me to pastor and realize that it was 10 years ago in April, this month, that the Lord led me from Holmes Baptist Church, Senior Pastor at Holmes Baptist Church in Clarion, Iowa. And I was thinking about that and just thinking in terms of how I could then also say like the Apostle Paul 10 years removed, and in their case 12 years removed, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you." Does that mean that everything was perfect at Holmes Baptist the 9 ½ years I served as the pastor there? Well, if you find a church where everything's perfect, I want to pastor it but they'd kick me out because I'd be the imperfect guy as their pastor, all right? No, of course not. There were the ups and downs of church ministry, there were the challenges, there were the good times, there were the bad times. I mean, I think about the souls that were saved but at the same time the people who walked away from God. And the times where the church was really thriving and growing numerically and spiritually but then there were also times where the opposite was happening. I think about the young people that went off to Bible college and followed the Lord's call to ministry, some are pastors now and serving the Lord as missionaries and other capacities, and so I rejoice in that but I also think about some of the young people that we had to discipline because they walked away from the Lord and chose a lifestyle of sin instead of service.

So I think about the wonderful fellowship and our times together but I could also focus on some times that weren't quite as good. The key, though, is this: to not focus on the difficult times and perhaps even the difficult people, but instead to focus on the positives and to cultivate a spirit of gratitude for what God did that was good and positive and wonderful. And I think that's essential for all of us, that we would have a spirit of gratitude because you need to focus, we need to focus on the good and trust God's sovereign purpose for the bad because negativity and joy cannot coexist. Negativity and joy cannot coexist in the heart of the Christian.

I think of it like this. It's kind of like going back to the photo albums. I know, we live in a day and age where digital cameras have come along and kind of, you know, the photo albums you find on your hard drive of your computer, right? But at least our older two kids and until a little bit lesser degree for Julia, when it came time to graduate from high school, we went back to the boxes. Do you have boxes, boxes of pictures that never made it to the photo album? Almost all of Carson's life has been recorded digitally so I hope the hard drives don't crash or Carson's graduation pictures are going to be nil, okay, nonexistent. But I remember fine times we sat around and the whole floor gets covered with all these pictures of, "Oh, Julia did this and Ellen did that, and Tory did this," and getting all these pictures together in preparation for their graduation and reminiscing.

Do you know what we didn't do? We didn't go looking for pictures of the negative stuff because, guess what? For the most part we didn't take pictures of that. Why? Because we focused on the positive and the joyful things. The problem with a lot of people is they take pictures in their minds, they take pictures that they then store in their hearts of all the negative stuff, all the bad things that happened in life. They make that the focus of their life and negativity overwhelms them and there is no joy, there is no gratitude because of that kind of focus. You can't have any joy in your heart if negativity and ingratitude rule supreme.

So gratitude is so essential, grateful reminiscing. As you look back at the past and the things that you have experienced, let's face it, all of us have negative experiences in our past where people have done things or situations didn't work out, and horrible things maybe even happened that we could all think about, but as you think about the past, are those the snapshots that you're bringing to your heart and your mind today, or is it the snapshots of the faithfulness of God and the goodness of God, and the people that he's put into your life that have enriched you spiritually and helped you to grow in Christ? So vital that we not dwell on the snapshots of negativity but instead that we would dwell on the snapshots of the positive things that our good God has allowed into our lives. Grateful reminiscing.

Secondly, then notice not just grateful reminiscing but grateful interceding. He goes on to put it this way in verse 4, he says,

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

Interceding in the sense of praying for someone else, that's the concept of intercession in Scripture is praying for the needs of other people. Paul here uses a more general term than a word that oftentimes gets translated "intercession." It's this general term for prayer, it's a request for a need to be met, and in the New Testament it's always addressed to God this Greek word that he employs. And it's interesting, later one in the same verse he uses the same word but it gets translated in a different way. In verse 4 it says, "always in every prayer of mine making request," the word "request" is the exact same word as "prayer" in the Greek and yet it's kind of awkward to translate it that way and so this is why we have it this way. The Greek word, it could be "request" both times or it could be "making prayer," it could be "prayer" both times but you get the idea. Literally it could say, "always in every prayer request of mine making prayer requests for you all." It's that idea. By the way, did you notice the "you all"? Proof that Paul was Southern, right, you West Virginians out there, right? I mean, I know the translators in the English, you know, the New King James had to make it sound a little more sophisticated than y'all but it's there, right? And all of God's West Virginians said, "Amen." Good. I knew a few of you would.

"For you all," but there is a significance to that because what's he saying? He says, "I'm thanking God and I'm praying, I'm praying not just for you good folks, not just for the folks that are really nice to me. I'm praying for you all, for all of you." That's the right spirit of intercessory prayer that ought to be cultivated in our hearts and our lives, this grateful intercession. Paul's focus was on their needs. He prayed for them and there's

something to be said about his focus in that he prayed for them, not so much himself. Does that mean Paul didn't pray for himself? Yes, Paul absolutely prayed for himself. We all do, right? But I think there's an essential lesson to be learned here in connection with joy and gratitude and intercession in that prayer has the power to take our eyes off of me, off of our needs, and place them on the Lord and on the needs of others.

It's a powerful thing when you pray for other people. It puts things in perspective and so Paul understood that but then notice how he says, "and I do this with joy," the end of verse 4. "I do this with joy." This is the first of those 18 references to joy, rejoicing and gladness in the book of Philippians. Praying for someone else ought to be a vital source of joy in your life. The Christian who doesn't spend a significant part of his day praying for others is missing out on one of the Christian life's greatest joys. There is just something about the selfless pouring out of the soul to God for someone else that brings joy to your own soul. If that's not a part of your daily Christian walk, you're missing out on something very vital to joy. Grateful interceding.

Grateful reminiscing, grateful interceding, but then, thirdly, notice verse 5 goes on to describe grateful partnering. Grateful partnering. Look at the text. Verse 5 puts it this way, it says,

5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

From that very first day when we were standing there on that riverbank and I proclaimed Jesus to you and Lydia and others trusted Jesus as the Messiah, came to understand fully that he was the Son of God, the Savior of the world, that he died on the cross for your sins, and they came to understand that he was buried and that he rose again and they embraced those truths of the gospel. They placed their faith, they repented of their sins and they placed their faith in Jesus as the Messiah, the only solution for mankind's greatest problem, his need for forgiveness because of his sin, his need for the right standing that he can't have in and of himself before God. By the way, that's the greatest need of every person here today too. The greatest need of every person here today is the need of Christ. The greatest need is for us to repent of our sins and believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and have the assurance of eternal life that was testified of this morning by these three that follow the Lord in believer's baptism. Do you have that assurance today of eternal life because there's been a time in your life where you have repented and believed in the crucified, buried and resurrected Savior Jesus Christ?

So he reflects on that day, from that very first day, but then he uses a very powerful word. He says in verse 5, he says, "for your fellowship in the gospel." It's the Greek word "koinonia" which maybe you've heard before. There are a few Greek words that we snag along the way of our Christian life and we hear a lot about, and this may be one of those words, koinonia, and it's a very rich word. It's translated most commonly as "fellowship," but it's also translated "communion" or "sharing" is another way. It means that, it means sharing something in common. It's also used to describe partnership in the gospel, doing

something together, joint participation. It's a very relational word and it's an active word of doing together, doing something together.

And he says here your partnership, your fellowship in the gospel. In other words, the fellowship he's describing is not just sitting around drinking coffee and talking about the weather and sports, not that that's a bad thing, okay? But it's so much more than that that he's describing, their partnership is in the gospel. What does that look like? Well, number 1, it looks like this. Do I need together partnering and sharing the gospel, telling somebody else about Christ and sharing the good news that I've described to you already this morning? He goes on to expand on that later in the text in verse 7 when he says this, "inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace." And he uses just another form of that word "fellowship" when he uses the term "partakers."

So from the very first day they'd been partakers, they fellowshipped with him in the gospel in the sharing of the gospel, the defense of the gospel, verse 7 even says. That's the word that we get our concept of apologetics from. It's that Greek word that means to defend something. So from the very beginning they were defending the gospel, their lives were a confirmation of the gospel and they were sharing that gospel, and it was a tremendous source of joy. Something very important for us to understand: they started sharing the gospel and evangelizing from the very first day. That ought to be true of every one of us as Christians. Evangelism is not something for some super-spiritual class of Christians. Evangelism is the job of every Christian. If you have embraced the gospel, then you ought to share the gospel. And if you never share the gospel, have you truly embrace it? Have you truly embraced it?

They weren't evangelism spectators, they were active in sharing the gospel of Christ and that brought them special joy. I mean, great gratitude. There's just something about sharing the gospel alongside of somebody else. Our Evangelism Explosion teams would know what that feels like to go out there together and give the gospel to somebody and be there and sometimes one person does all the talking, sometimes you give the glance and you look at another person and that person takes over and starts sharing the gospel if you maybe kind of aren't sure what to say next, and yet when you get done at the end of the presentation of the gospel and sharing the word of God, there's just something about that opportunity and being on the same team doing that together. That's what I think he's describing here, that partnership.

I remember when I was first a pastor at Holmes Baptist Church and one of my older deacons loved to go out witnessing, and so we would go out regularly together and probably one of the very first times we went out together, we had the opportunity, I had the opportunity of sharing the gospel with somebody and he just listened and he did so on purpose. He wanted to hear how I presented the gospel. And I remember him afterwards driving back, I don't know if we were driving back or actually if we had gotten back to the church, and he got this Jerry Hinton style of little smirk on his face, loved Jerry, great guy, and he got that look and he said this to me, he said, "Sure enough, you share the gospel just like the last preacher." And that was a good thing, by the way. He was an old

farmer, loved Jerry, but he loved to go out with his pastors and just tell people about Jesus and share the gospel. That's what this is talking about, our sharing the gospel together, partnering in doing so.

So it's sharing the gospel together but it's also this, it's not just sharing the gospel together but it's also giving so that others can do the same. Chapter 4, he actually alludes to that in the latter portion of the text in chapter 4, verses 15 and 16. He says this, "Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me," and guess what word he uses? Koinonia. No church partnered with me, no church fellowshiped with me, "concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities." And he goes on to describe that gift, and what he's saying there is that this partnership is not just a partnership of us sharing the gospel together but giving so that others can share the gospel as well. We have this wonderful fellowship in terms of our church and the sharing of the gospel but also in terms of all the missionaries across the world that are supported in and through First Baptist Church, that you have a part in their gospel ministry by faithfully giving to the Lord's work. It's that idea, giving so that others can share the gospel. Every time you give, you are partnering, you are fellowshiping in the gospel. Your giving provides the resources so that we can, yes, proclaim the gospel from this pulpit and in our area, but also it provides it so that the gospel can be spread around the world.

If you missed our annual business meeting or haven't picked up the annual report, one of the things we tried to do is, in a sense, capture the impact of what we want to have, the kind of impact we want to have locally and globally at First Baptist Church, and not statistics to brag on the statistics but to just give us an idea of the importance of sharing the gospel, and perhaps the ways that the gospel is being shared that we're not aware of because it's behind the scenes. 84,985 people visited the website in this past year and got pieces, bits and pieces of the gospel. 3,755 downloaded sermons via video. 7,000 audio sermon downloads. And this is the one that struck me the most, there's a gospel presentation video, short but powerful, on our website and 21,775 people watched the gospel video. How is that possible? Because God's people are faithful in giving to gospel ministry, partnering. The annual report puts it this way too in terms of describing and quantifying, again not for the sake of boasting or anything like that but for the sake of us just getting a little bigger vision, okay, because our vision oftentimes is limited. But \$242,000 was given to local and global outreach supporting 53 missionaries on 6 continents. That's a reason for rejoicing, amen? And gratitude as we partner together with different folks who will hear the gospel and trust Christ as their Savior, like the three that testified of it through the waters of baptism this morning. Praise the Lord for that and the part that you have by being faithful in partnering for the spread of the gospel both here and all over the world. A lot of reason to be grateful, the joy of grateful partnering.

Then fourthly, the joy of grateful completing. I grappled with the word to use for this portion of the outline but I think this captures it, this idea of completing as it's described there in verse 6. It's probably the most familiar verse in the text to us when it says this in Philippians 1:6,

6 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;

What's he talking about? Salvation, that work that God does in the sinner's heart. And he says, "I'm confident," he says, "I'm absolutely persuaded that He who started it is going to finish it," referring to Jesus Christ our Lord. It reminds us that salvation is all of the Lord. It's all of God. He's the one who starts it. He's the one that chose you in eternity past. He's the one that accomplished it in the person of his Son Jesus Christ, his death, burial and resurrection. He's the one that convicted you. He's the one that drew you. He's the one that gave you the ability to believe. He's the one who's done it all and he's the one then keeps you. He's going to finish the job. He'll complete it. Again, another rich word. It means to finish but also to accomplish its purpose, to carry it out to the fullest.

So this whole idea of salvation is not just a point in time but there's more to it than that in the sense that salvation is positional. The second you trust Christ as your Savior, you are saved positionally, you are set apart, you are made holy in the sight of God. Salvation is positional but salvation is progressive in that you are changing and growing and thriving and you're becoming less like your old self and more like Jesus Christ; we oftentimes refer to that as progressive sanctification. So salvation is positional, it's progressive, but then finally it's perfected. The second you step into the presence of the Lord, you'll be absolutely perfect. All of your sin will be gone and so there's perfected salvation as well. A little different take on it, I like the way Warren Wiersbe describes salvation when he says this: it's what God did for us, that's salvation, it's what he does in us, that's sanctification, and what he's doing through us, that's service. That's service. That's our salvation.

So there are a couple of ramifications doctrinally that are so significant from this verse of Scripture. 1. The significance of eternal security because what does he say? The one who started it is going to allow somebody else to short circuit it, is that what it says? No, the one who started it is going to finish it. He's going to complete it. Your salvation was not based on you to start with and the completion of your salvation isn't based on you to end with. Is that clear? So our very eternal security is wrapped up in the character of God and the power of God and the faithfulness of God. As a matter of fact, the song adds that little phrase. Did you notice that? It's not in the verse but the song we sing, it talks about he'll be faithful to complete it. He'll be faithful to complete it. Aren't you thankful that he'll be faithful to complete it?

Our eternal security is wrapped up in this concept of this verse but also it's not just a matter of our security, it's a matter of our sanctification in that he's growing us and he's doing this work, and we talked about this last week, he's doing this work of changing us and transforming us called sanctification. And oftentimes those are tough times because oftentimes that which sanctifies us the most and grows us the most are the trials, tough times, the things that if it were for us to choose, we wouldn't choose, right? But God chooses because he is our good and sovereign God. He knows what's best for us for our good and his glory, enabling us to praise him. And remember, anything that makes us

more like Jesus, anything that makes us depend more on Jesus is a good thing and a source of joy.

So God's not done. God's not done working on you. I love that old song we used to sing when we were young, "He's still working on me to make me what I ought to be. It took Him just the week to make the moon and stars, the sun and the earth and Jupiter and Mars. How loving and patient He must be because He's still working on me." Aren't you glad he's still working on us and he'll be faithful to complete it. Grateful completing. So God putting circumstances in your life that you may not choose but you can be grateful for and joyful for because it's all a part of this completing work of sanctification in salvation.

Grateful completing and then finally grateful bonding. He goes on to describe the relationship that he enjoyed with the church and continued to enjoy in his heart with the church in verses 7 and 8 and he says this, "just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart." This of all the books of the Apostle Paul is the most tender and the most personal, the most relational. It really doesn't have a rebuke in it that's at least a serious one compared to some of the other letters of the Apostle Paul. There's just this amazing relationship and he says, "I've got you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel." We referred to that earlier, "you all are partakers with me of grace." We're in this together. We're partakers of the grace of salvation, the grace of God, and then in verse 8, "For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."

What a tenderness and what a bond that he describes here. "I have you in my heart. I long for you." The word that he uses there is found nine times in the New Testament in places like Romans 1:11 where he says to the Roman church, "I long to see you." 2 Corinthians 9:14 where he says, "I long in prayer." 2 Timothy 1:4, "greatly longing or desiring to see you." Then it's the same word in 1 Peter 2:2 when he describes newborn babies as "newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word," as they long for this, that idea. It's a wonderful and beautiful relational term that he uses for the Philippians.

Then he says this in verse 8, "with the affection of Jesus Christ." If you have the King James Version, I think it says something like "bowels of affection," which at first you may go, "Huh?" Right? Because that just doesn't seem like the right place, if you know what I mean. The word that's used there is probably the word that we get our word "spleen" from and it is a reference to the internal organs. Bowels of mercy. It would be like us saying, "I've got a gut feeling." Okay, if you didn't know that that was a term that wasn't to be taken literally, okay, you might not quite understand that. If you were a foreigner learning language and you heard "gut feeling" you might be like, "What? What's that all about?" That's this type of term and yet it's so important, it's such a powerful term for inner affection and tender mercies. And someone put it this way: Paul employed the most powerful word in the Greek language to communicate compassionate love when he used that type of terminology.

And it's really important for our Christian living because he wants us in the church to have that kind of affection and love for other people in the church. Think of it in these terms: nothing can fill our hearts and enrich our lives more than the sweet fellowship of other believers. That's what Paul's describing, this wonderful thing called being in the body of Christ, doing life and the Christian life together. Not as Lone Ranger's. Not going solo. Not just dropping in on Sunday morning for an hour to fill a spot in the pew. No, to do the Christian life, to live the Christian life in communion and fellowship and connection with and relationship with other Christians. That's what he's describing here and that's what he wants for every Christian and that's what God wants for you, every believer. Nothing can fill our hearts and enrich our lives more than the sweet fellowship of other believers.

My burden is this, that few believers have prioritized spiritual relationships in their local church to the extent that this kind of relationship is something they enjoy. You can't have this just dropping in now and then. God wants you to be connected to the people, to the body to enjoy what he's describing here. So maybe as you think about your relationships with other people of the church and maybe there's not a ton of joy there, it's because you haven't taken it to the next level of commitment and enjoyment and studying Scripture together, and praying with one another, and spending time with one another. And I understand, you're not going to have that in the entire church, okay? That's not possible to have that kind of relationship with all of us but do you know what? There ought to be a few folks with whom you pray, with whom you study the Bible, with whom you talk about the real heart issues of life so that you can say to them, "I long for you." I mean, if you had not seen them for 12 years, would you say, "Oh, I missed you so much! 12 years. I can't wait to get back together and talk about the things of God!" That's what he's saying here and that's what he wants for every believer and what a source of joy it is when you have that kind of relationship spiritually with other believers.

So all of us ought to stop, pause and ask ourselves the question: am I investing in my relationships within the church to the extent that what is described in these verses 7 and 8 is true of me? Or am I just dropping in for an hour and not really enjoying the relationship that God intended for believers within the local church? You're missing out. You're missing out if you don't have that and do you know what? You're missing a great source of gratitude and joy, and that's what I want for you and that's what God wants for you. Gratitude that produces joy. Grateful reminiscing, can you look back, are you looking back in a positive way or are you looking back at all the negative things in your past? Perhaps today you need to make the decision, "I am going to stop looking at the bad pictures that I've stored up in my heart and I'm going to focus on the positive, the good ones so that I can gratefully reminisce." Maybe it's the lack of prayer, maybe you're not praying for other people in the sense that God takes your eyes off your problems and puts them on him and the problems of other people. Grateful interceding. Grateful partnering, are you sharing the gospel with other people? Are you giving so that others can share the gospel around the world? Grateful partnering. Grateful completing, are you trusting God to use your circumstances in a manner that makes you more like Christ? And grateful bonding, is the church and the people of the church, are they such a priority that you've cultivated those kinds of relationships with one another?

Let's pray.