

## Fellowship in the Gospel Philippians 1:3-7

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, 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; 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

As we begin this letter we can see Paul's love for the Philippians. Of all the churches that Paul started we can see that this was the one He was most connected with. Not only because it was the first church in Europe to be started. But this church had, "even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities" unlike most of the other churches that Paul had founded. Or at least that is what the record would indicate.

### I. WHAT I thank my God

A. That is what this is all about.

1. Paul is thankful to God.
2. It is not that he thanks himself for the work he had started in Philippi.
3. It is not so much that he thanks the people of Philippi.
4. But it is that he thanks God.
5. Every Sunday we sing the doxology but how many of us listen to the words.
  - a. Praise God from whom all blessings flow.
  - b. Jas 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.

B. Every prayer that is worth anything will have a measure of thanksgiving.

1. Look at the prayers of the apostle Paul
2. They are filled with thanksgiving.

C. Every pastor ought to look at this prayer of Paul.

1. I am thankful for you all here at FBC.
2. I think that I am aware of most of your struggles and I do pray for you as Paul did here for these folks.
3. I have each of you in my heart.

- II. WHEN upon every remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine
  - A. Paul was thankful for them upon every remembrance of them.
    - 1. Does that mean they were perfect? No.
    - 2. Does that mean that Paul had forgotten that they were but common men and women? No
    - 3. It was just that those things could not break the bound of love he had for these people.
  - B. Always in every prayer.
    - 1. I imagine that when Paul went to prayer that it was refreshing when the Philippians came to mind.
    - 2. He had many churches he was concerned with for the things going on, but when he thought of the Philippians he could rejoice and give thanks.

III. HOW making request for you all with joy,

IV. THE REASON for your fellowship in the gospel

A.

B. DURATION from the first day until now,

V. WHAT 6 being confident of this very thing,

OF WHO that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

A PROPER ATTITUDE 7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all,

HIS REASON; ENDEARMENT FOR THEM because I have you in my heart,

THE REASON inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel,

REASON you all are partakers with me of grace.

Churches in the first century were very different than churches today. If you have been to enough churches you can tell what it is that brings believers together today. Churches market themselves. They try to appeal to a certain social group. Maybe it is young couples. Maybe it is older well established adults. It could be people who are well to do. Or it could be one that ministers to the poor and down and out. We have churches that market themselves to people who do not go to church. They try to do things that will fill the pews with unchurched people. The fellowship they share is the fellowship of a rousing worship service.

I have a number of church growth books on my shelves that tell their readers that they should pick the group they want and then market to that group.

But that is not the Biblical model. Remember who this church started with. There was a single mother and her family, a ex-demon possessed girl, and a prison guard and his family.

What did they have in common? What was it that kept them coming back Sunday after Sunday to worship and to study the Word of God?

It was their fellowship, their partnership.

Now he mentions how he prays for them, beginning with spiritual needs. In Paul's mind spiritual realities always came before physical ones. He was not insensitive to material needs. At times he mentioned them, but he knew that these were always less important than spiritual things—for himself first of all and also for all Christians.

Boice, J. M. (2000). *Philippians: An expositional commentary* (29). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

### Thanksgiving in Prayer

Isn't it interesting that the first words of Paul's prayer in his various epistles involve thanksgiving?

In his prayers Paul always thanked God for the evidence of spiritual blessing among Christians. Although Paul was sensitive to the problems in his churches, he was even more sensitive to the mercies of God. He knew people's hearts. He knew that there is no good in man that can satisfy God. He knew that Christians live a great deal of their lives in the flesh instead of in the Spirit. He knew that we all fall short of what God would like us to be. But Paul also was acquainted with God's grace and he gloried in it. He knew that God has provided wonderfully for his children—for their salvation and for their constant and continuing growth in the Christian life. Consequently, Paul was continually thankful for these things.

Boice, J. M. (2000). *Philippians: An expositional commentary* (30). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

### Fellowship in the Gospel

If you unite with other Christians on the basis of affluence, you will exclude the poor. If you unite along social lines, you will exclude those outside your own level of society, be it high or low. If you unite intellectually, you will exclude either the simple or the intelligent. However you do it, the witness of the church will suffer. How thankful we must be that God did not establish the fellowship of his children along these lines. Our fellowship is in the gospel of God.

Boice, J. M. (2000). *Philippians: An expositional commentary* (32). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.

Although the word joy appears nineteen times in this epistle, I have never felt that it should be called the "joy epistle." If we are going to pick out the word that occurs more than any other word, we must take the name of Jesus Christ. His name appears over forty times in this epistle. He is the center of the epistle. He is the One who is the very source of joy. Therefore, the emphasis should be put upon Him rather than upon the joy.

Actually, it is a personal relationship with Christ that brings joy to a believer's life.

When you and I get to the place where we find ourselves in the center of the will of God and know we are in His will regardless of our circumstances, then there will be joy in our lives.

McGee, J. V. (1997). Thru the Bible commentary (electronic ed.) (Php 1:4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

# In this passage the idea of Christian partnership is strongly stressed. There are certain things which Christians share.

# (I) Christians are **partners in grace**. They are people who owe a common debt to the grace of God.

# (ii) Christians are **partners in the work** of the gospel. Christians do not only share a gift; they also share a task; and that task is the furtherance of the gospel. Paul uses two words to express the work of Christians for the sake of the gospel; he speaks of the defence and the confirmation of the gospel. The defence (apologia, GSN0627) of the gospel means its defence against the attacks which come from outside. The Christian has to be ready to be a defender of the faith and to give a reason for the hope that is in him. The confirmation (bebaiosis, GSN0951) of the gospel is the building up of its strength from within, the edifying of Christians. The Christian must further the gospel by defending it against the attacks of its enemies and by building up the faith and devotion of its friends.

# (iii) Christians are **partners in suffering** for the gospel. Whenever the Christian is called upon to suffer for the sake of the gospel, he must find strength and comfort in the memory that he is one of a great fellowship in every age and every generation and every land who have suffered for Christ rather than deny their faith.

# (iv) Christians are **partners with Christ**. In Php.1:8 Paul has a very vivid saying. The literal translation is, "I yearn for you all with the bowels of Jesus Christ." The Greek word for bowels is splanchna (GSN4698). The splanchna were the upper intestines, the heart, the liver, and the lungs. These the Greeks believed to be the seat of the emotions and the affections. So Paul is saying: "I yearn for you with the very compassion of Jesus Christ himself. I love you as Jesus loves you." The love which Paul feels towards his Christian friends is nothing other than the love of Christ himself. J. B. Lightfoot, writing on this passage says, "The believer has no yearnings apart from his Lord; his pulse beats with the pulse of Christ; his heart throbs with the heart of Christ." When we are really one with Jesus, his love goes out through us to our fellow-men whom he loves and for whom he died. The Christian is a partner in the love of Christ. *Barclay*