

A Powerful Partnership

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[0 : 00] For what are you thankful? Maybe more specifically, for whom are you thankful? Because this relationship journey that we call life would be most miserable and most unbearable if it were not for the relationships that you and I have.

It's for this reason that many are hurting and many are considering ending their time on earth. And so we need one another.

And the Apostle Paul was keenly aware of this as he is writing his letters to these churches. As we see in the opening verses of this letter to the Philippian church, we see that relationships are important.

So let's jump right in. And we are going to be beginning our reading this morning in verse number 3 through verse 5. We're going to be in these three verses this morning in Philippians chapter number 1.

And after his salutation, after Paul begins with his typical Greek letter salutation, the typical formula that was used, he jumps right on in to verse 3.

[1 : 25] And he says, I thank you. I thank you. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine, making a request for you with all joy.

And this is the causal statement. For your fellowship. This is why I'm giving thanks to God for you every time I think about you, because of your fellowship in the gospel, your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

And what's interesting is, Paul couldn't think of these Philippian Christians without giving thanks to God for their fellowship in the gospel. So let's begin with verse number 1 as we take the important words and the important phrases.

As we are breaking down and unpacking these verses this morning, we start with verse number 1. And Paul says, I thank my God.

And this word thank that the Apostle Paul uses is the Greek word Eucharist, Eucharisto, from which we get the English word Eucharist.

[2 : 41] And it simply means to express gratitude for benefits or blessings. So when someone has done something for us, when someone has blessed us, when someone has benefited us, we could say that we express Eucharisto.

We express thanks to them. And that's the word that the Apostle Paul is using here. He's saying, I am thanking God for the blessings that you shared with me. I'm thanking God because of what you mean to me.

Also, as we continue this, he says, I thank God upon every remembrance of you. When we think of the word remember, what do you think about? Talk to me this morning.

When you remember something, what comes to your mind? What's typically, how do we typically use the term remember? You might have what? Forgotten something, right?

Well, that's not the word Paul uses. There are different words. But most of the time, we remember something. I have been in situations where I have not remembered something.

[3 : 55] I have forgotten something. And I have racked my brain for hours trying to remember something I forgot. I know you've been there, too. But the word that Paul uses here for remember is to bring to mind.

And it's not necessarily in the sense of forgetting something, but it's simply the act of recollection. Case in point, do you ever forget your spouse?

No. Do you ever forget your children? I hope not. Do you ever forget someone you love? And like, oh, man, I can't think about them. No. They're always on our mind, even though they've been gone for a period of time.

We don't have trouble thinking about a loved one and someone who is close to us and a close personal relationship. So we're not remembering them because we forgot them. It is simply we're going through our day and they come to mind. Something reminds us of someone or someone else. This is the word that Paul used.

[5 : 06] So he's saying, every time I bring you back to recollection, every time I think about you, I thank my God in every time I remember you.

And this thinking attitude, this recollecting of the Apostle Paul, is the causal factor for Paul's gratitude. He says, every time I think about you, I thank God.

So every time the remembrance of you comes back to my mind, every time I think about you, I become thankful.

And so gratitude is uppermost in the Apostle Paul's mind. We see that in his writings, throughout his letters, throughout his other writings.

We see that Paul is grateful and Paul shows gratitude for many things. This word, thanks, or eucharisteo, as it's used here, appears 46 times in Paul's writings.

[6 : 13] Think about it. In Paul's writings of the New Testament, 46 times. He says, I thank God. I'm thankful for this. And so he is expressing gratitude quite often in his writings.

Someone has said, to be thankful is to be thankful. To be thankful is to be thankful. Because in order to be thankful, you need to be thinking about that for which you're thankful.

So to be thankful is to be thankful. And that's why we have the song, Count Your Many Blessings.

Because it's when we enumerate them, when we think about them, that's when we can express the gratitude for what God has done for us.

But if we are consistently mindless of the things that are provided for us, given to us, then how can we express gratitude?

We are grateful for something when it comes to our mind and we think about it. So to be thankful is to be thankful.

[7 : 25] Now, as we move on to the word prayer, Paul is saying, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. How often? He says, always.

I haven't just done it and then stopped forever. He says, every time I think about you. It might be days. It might be hours.

And sometimes it might be weeks between the thinking of. But he says, every time I think of you. He says, every single time I think of you. I pray for you.

And I am making a request to God for you. This word translated prayer and request in this verse are the same words.

The exact same word. Actually, in the English translation, they're translated as different words. But they're the same word. So he says, always and every. And here comes the meaning of the word.

[8 : 24] It's not the usual word for prayer. The essential component in it is supplication. To ask for something. To supplicate God for.

So he says, always in every supplication of mine, making supplication for you with all joy. So Paul is asking things of God on their behalf.

And I believe this word seems to be related to Paul's consistent exhortation to unity. Because throughout this letter to the Philippian church, he's talking about be of the same mind, have the same attitude Jesus had, be unified together, be working together in the gospel.

And so this supplication, every time he thinks about them, I really believe in the context of this letter, it is related to Paul's consistent exhortation to do things, to unify, to be unified consistently.

So Paul's praying for these Christians on a regular basis, with joy every time he thinks about them.

Now let's think about this. It's been about 10 years since Paul's been to Philippi.

[9 : 41] So it's been over a decade since he's even seen these people. How many of you this morning think about people on a regular basis that you haven't seen in 10 years, if they're not necessarily family?

The first thing I did this morning as I was going over this and I was thinking about this, folks came to mind from 17 years ago when we were in Florida, the church in Florida, and my recollection went to those dear folks that were there that we worshipped with, and the new pastor that was there, Brother Dan Jeffers, and his wife Pam, and now John, his son, and his son's wife is on his staff as his youth pastor.

And I thought fondly about them, and what actually came to my mind was, I need to call him this week and let him know that I was thinking about him. And I prayed for them this morning as they were preparing to worship.

They're an hour ahead of us, so they're already probably done with fellowship, with church time this morning.

But you see, every time we think about someone, we can bring them before God. So it's been over 10 years, it's been over a decade, but Paul thinks fondly about them.

[11:02] And when it does, it moves them to thank God for them. And that's significant. It must have been really some kind of relationship for these people to have such a profound impact on the Apostle Paul.

And this moves me to think about our relationships and our source of joy and our source of gratitude as well.

Relationships are important. Dr. Bill Lawrence, a professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, would say this quite often. He says, Happiness is based on happenings, but joy comes from relationships. Happiness comes from happenings, but joy is based on relationships. The joy comes from that relationship that we have with our Heavenly Father.

True joy comes from the relationship that we have with Jesus Christ. And our relationships provide for us joy. And as we're going to see this morning, the Apostle Paul's joy and his fondness for these Philippian believers goes beyond simply a fond memory.

[12:21] As we look closer, it concerned their partnership in spreading the gospel alongside and along with the Apostle Paul. So let's take a look as we reread these verses.

Paul says, I thank my God every time I recall you upon every remembrance of you. He says, Always, every time I recall you in every prayer of mine, in every supplication of mine, supplicating for you with all joy.

Why? Why is Paul remembering them fondly? Why is Paul asking God for something on their behalf?

He says, It's because of your fellowship or your partnership in the gospel with me. So this was the reason Paul was thankful for them.

When he thought about them, he was thankful for them because, this is the causal relationship, because they partnered with him in the spreading of the gospel. They were excited about sharing their faith.

[13:32] Matter of fact, later here, Paul says, and in other areas, he said, Your excitement about sharing the gospel and your faith, the news about it has spread abroad.

He said that about the Thessalonians. He says, Your faith has been used about and been used abroad. So it was about their partnership in the gospel.

The question is, Would we want someone like the Apostle Paul to remember us like this? I would hope so. That every time somebody like the Apostle Paul, a well-known worldwide missionary, would think about you, every time he thought about you, he would think about, Wow, these guys are great partners in the gospel.

They share their own faith in their own community, and they support me in my sharing the gospel, and they've even sent me an offering to help me as I am sharing the gospel right here where I am. So Paul thought about them and because of their partnership in the gospel. So, let's share together in the mission.

[14:52] This was so important to the Apostle Paul. And Paul was thankful because of their partnership in the mission. So I think it's important for us unified together with one another and those missionaries that we serve to partner together, to share together in the mission of making disciples across planet Earth.

He says, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Now, this relationship between the Apostle Paul and the Philippian church went deeper than their human friendships. They had a tie that came from joining in the work of God in the world. They worked shoulder to shoulder. They were there together in the trenches.

And I was meeting with someone this week who was retired military, a first sergeant in the army and he had three tours in Iraq. And he was talking about the camaraderie that's there and there's nothing, there's no other relationship like having your life endangered on a day-to-day basis in gunfights and the guy that's with you shoulder to shoulder, your life depends on them and their life

depends on you.

He says there'll never be another relationship in the world. And he says sometimes it even goes beyond the relationship that you have with your spouse. He said it's different. It may be just as deep but he said it's different.

[16 : 27] And so this is kind of the way similar to the relationship Paul had with these people. They had worked with him in the trenches of the gospel side by side. And so he says you guys have a special place in my heart similar with your family.

You know, you go through things with your family that no one else may even be aware of. And so you share things that are so close and so deep that there's a special bond and a relationship that you don't have with other people that you would have with your spouse or with your family. And so Paul had a very, very close relationship, a tie that came from joining together in the work of the gospel. And such cooperation in the spread of the gospel was something that was appreciated by Paul quite a bit.

And that fellowship was not necessarily just in an intermediate sense. I believe it was because of the ultimate contribution they made to the sharing of the gospel.

It was something that went beyond human relationships. It was something that they did together that went to an eternal level.

[17 : 37] that everything they did together was going to last together for eternity, spreading the gospel itself. Now in verse number 5 we see for the fellowship, for your fellowship in the gospel.

And the basic meaning of this term is participation in something with someone. It could refer to their monetary gift that they sent him.

As we get deeper into the book of the letter to the Philippian church we're going to see that they had sent him an offering. Epaphroditus had brought the offering from this church to the apostle Paul who was in prison because he was sharing the gospel and he was making enemies.

And so they wrongly imprisoned him because of this but that's where he was. And he wrote this letter to them from a jail cell because he was sharing the gospel and because he wouldn't back down from talking about Jesus.

Just like there are many Christians in other parts of the world who have been beaten, who have been imprisoned, and who have been killed simply because it's against the law to talk about Jesus in their country.

[18 : 50] And we find Paul in a similar situation. So we could refer to their monetary gift to him but I believe the context would seem to indicate that Paul is using fellowship or the term for partnership in a wider sense and it refers to their cooperation with him in sharing the gospel.

Their unified task that they were accomplishing together, they were sharing with Paul in the gospel from the moment that he was there and all the way even until now.

Now this word fellowship refers to a sharing or a holding something in common and partnering with someone. Now we have a tendency to use this term fairly loosely nowadays.

We tend to use the term fellowship pretty loosely in any gathering of Christians where there's happiness and camaraderie and we've almost made the term synonymous with a good time and food.

So what we say is you know what we're going to have some Christian fellowship which means covered dish and just a good time together.

[20 : 11] But the term fellowship the way Paul used it now the term fellowship is not a Christian term in and of itself but when Paul took it and when Paul applied it to the fellowship the togetherness that you and I have as followers of Jesus Christ he brought it to a new level and he truly gave it a newer profound meaning.

So when we talk about fellowship sometimes we're just referring to a good meal and a good time but what that does is it makes Christian fellowship no different than what unbelievers enjoy. had a good golf game oh we had good fellowship you know we had a good game of Monopoly you know that was good fellowship but what Paul I believe is talking about here is the unique relationship that believers have that nobody else has nobody else who doesn't know Jesus Christ can understand what it means to have a God who loves us so much that he forgave all of our sin that we have a a savior that loves us so much that he gave his life for us and nobody else that has not shared their faith with someone else and had been rejected or made fun of knows what that's all about so true Christian fellowship is something that yes can include a good time and food but it

goes even deeper than that you know what it's something that we share together and that no one else experiences so these folks participated with the apostle Paul in spreading the gospel and by the way the term gospel shows up nine times in this letter to the Philippian church so the gospel the good news the good news of Jesus Christ the gospel was important to Paul every time we see the apostle

Paul writing we see that he very often referred to the spreading of the faith the sharing of the good news of Jesus Christ so this was very very important to Paul we see so how do we share together in the mission of spreading the gospel we see in Galatians chapter 2 and verse number 9 and when James Cephas and John who seemed to be pillars this was the the Jerusalem church perceived the grace that had been given to me this was Paul writing they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised or to the Jews so here's what happens we have the church of Jerusalem that had been going for some time Jesus they had they knew Jesus they they had trusted Christ as their Savior and so they were going along with sharing the gospel with spreading the good news of Christ and then here comes the apostle Paul here was a former enemy of Christianity and Barnabas someone that they had never met before and so Paul and Barnabas goes to Jerusalem and they have a sit down with the church leaders and said this is what happened to us and this is what God has called us to do well initially there was some questioning and the religious leaders in Jerusalem were a little bit dubious of well you know how do we know that Paul and Barnabas are like we are and love Jesus and are sharing the gospel maybe this is just a false pretext for them to join with us and then to go out and to hurt believers or to hurt the cause so they huddled together and they voted I'm sure together with one another and said oh well okay it appears that God has put his hand upon these as well and then what they do is they go and they shake hands with them and they say go out and you can go out with our blessings and another thing was

[24 : 38] Paul's ministry was given to him by God to the Gentiles now this was Paul a Jew of the Jews he was one who was very proud of his Jewishness he was very proud of having been a Pharisee he was very proud of his pedigree and his lineage but Paul called him to go to the dogs so to speak which is what the Jews called the Gentiles that was their derogatory term for someone who was non-Jewish and so Paul and Barnabas had the ministry to go to the Gentiles and so James Cephas and John said we give you our blessings to go and share the gospel with the Gentiles and we are going to stick with sharing the gospel to the Jews so these three Christian leaders were very wary of Paul and Barnabas they were dubious of their calling they were even dubious of their orthodoxy I mean do we even teach the same thing we're not we weren't they weren't sure but they realized that God works through all different kinds of people and God calls us to sometimes work with people that we don't like or we may not even totally agree with so that is where Paul

Barnabas John Cephas and James were they said you know what we're we understand that God has called you to a different kind of people you know what more power to you we don't want to go and deal with the Gentiles but God has called you to it and so go out and they agreed with them and they partnered with Paul and Barnabas in the spreading of the gospel so let's share together in the mission and secondly let's support the work of others just like the Philippian church was supporting the apostle Paul they couldn't be with Paul Paul was many many miles away and he wasn't they weren't able to be there with him I believe geographically it was about 800 miles from Philippi where Paul was and so they weren't able to be with him physically but they shared with him and they sent him a gift to be able to continue to spread the gospel so we support the work of others we see in

Philippians same letter chapter 4 verses 14 through 16 nevertheless Paul says you have done well that you shared in my distress now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia no church shared with me giving and receiving but you only so so far this Philippian church was the only one that had given a monetary offering to the apostle Paul Paul previously had been it was very important to the apostle Paul that he didn't burden these young churches who were being who were going through difficult times didn't have a lot of money and so Paul had a he was a tent maker he had another job so that way he could be able to support himself in the work of the ministry and Paul was very proud of that fact that he didn't have to take money from them but here we see

Paul was also humble enough to say I'm in a position where I need it and thank you for providing for me so that I can continue sharing the gospel Paul wasn't able to work he was in prison and so they were sharing with him we see in verse number 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities Paul said as I was going along in this missionary trip he says you not only once but again you sent me an offering so we have many that we can partner with as a local church the fact is we will only be able to reach a few and we will never be able to reach some that's where other ministries come in we have ministries like the missionaries we already support we heard about brother Ralph Rice this morning that's an opportunity that we have to bless a ministry where school children across the country are being reached he is doing men's groups and he is preaching in churches throughout not only this country but also the world so we can partner with missionaries such as that we have local ministries like the crisis pregnancy center where we can help and we can donate we can give we have camp pearl that is doing so many great things we're seeing so many young people come to know Jesus Christ as their savior every single summer more and more it seems every summer come to know Jesus as their savior in churches of like faith and like mine partnering together and then there are others who are spreading the gospel and who are doing great things reaching people that we could never reach so we can partner together with others in supporting the work of the gospel and then thirdly not every one of us has the luxury of being blessed blessed with health blessed with the ability to share our faith without retaliation so there are others around the world and other areas that are going through very very difficult times so I believe just as we see in this relationship with the Philippian believers and the apostle Paul I believe it's important that we stand with one another in adversity we see in Hebrews chapter 10 verses 32 through 34 where the writer of Hebrews says but recall the former days in which after you were illuminated he says after you your mind was opened and you understood the gospel you endure great struggle with sufferings partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated so they they were mistreated and maltreated because of their faith in Jesus Christ and sometimes it was guilt by association they befriended someone else who was a follower of Christ and so they in turn were persecuted for their faith he says he goes on in verse number 34 for you had compassion on me and my chains and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven isn't it an amazing turn of the phrase that was used here plundering of your own possessions to send the writer who I believe was the apostle Paul I may be wrong but the writer of Hebrews is saying you joyfully accepted having money plucked out of your pocket possessions plucked out of your grasp so to speak because you willingly gave them he says you joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods knowing that you have here is the here is the transaction that takes place when we give to missionaries when we give to others who have a need like when we give to the help fund or those who are in a financial bind what happens is we trade our temporal possessions in exchange for an eternal blessing and an eternal possession see how that works see the writer of Hebrews says you gave up some of your personal goods for an enduring possession in heaven you gave up something think about it you might have a ten in your wallet or a hundred in your in your purse and guess what it's going to go somewhere it might go to the doctor it might go to the insurance company it might go to who knows it might go to [33 : 12] Chuck E Cheese's but hopefully not a hundred bucks but at the price of things are now see what I'm saying it's going to go somewhere and you're not going to get it back again because then you have to work for more but when we trade it for giving it back to God God in turn takes it and turns it into an eternal possession that we can never lose that it will always be ours so what better than to share what God has gifted us with in order to share it with others we need one another we can't make it alone as we unpack this idea further when we get to verses 27 and 30 later in this chapter and in chapter number 4 we're going to see that so we have others that we can partner with so in conclusion let's always be ready to share our faith in

Christ with those God places across our path always be ready to share our faith secondly consider giving to missions consider giving over and above your regular time and give to missions and the way we do it here is when you give whether it's by check or whether it's on our website or whether you put it in an envelope if you just simply put missions on it that portion is going to be sent all of that is going to be provided to give to missionaries that we support both abroad and locally and across this country so consider giving to missions to partner with others who are spreading the gospel in places where we could never go and reaching people we may never be able to reach and

then thirdly be willing to stand with someone who's going through a difficult time it might be through a difficult time physically giving them a ride to the doctor sitting with them by their hospital bed being with them maybe when someone maybe when they've been mistreated to stand with someone who is going through a difficult time so this is what we've learned so far through these very very short verses of the apostle

Paul to the Philippians sharing together in the gospel supporting others in the work of missions and being able to stand with someone in their adversity so let us pray father this morning as we've gathered together to open up your word I pray that we may be able to to learn of you to be able to share our faith to partner with others who are also sharing the gospel and making disciples across this big planet of ours pray that you would be with us and also I pray that you would bless our offering this evening and our happy birthday Jesus offering I pray that those that have been setting aside all year long and preparing for this offering Lord I pray that you would bless what is given and that it would not just be simply giving of temporal goods but it would be something that we trade for an eternal possession in heaven that can never be taken away we thank you father for all that you have done we thank you for what you are going to do in us and through us we pray in Jesus name amen thank you yam we're going to take care of course and we're going to bring you