

Fellowship in the Gospel

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[0 : 0 0] Welcome to our services today and we pray that the Lord would show his favour upon us and bless his word to us.

Let us join together in prayer. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we give thanks unto thee that we have access into thy known presence, that we can come with boldness and confidence before thee through the merits of thy Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

And as we come before thee this morning, we come confessing our sins. Confessing, O Lord, that we have no rest in our own hearts because of the sins that we have done.

That they are a weighty burden upon us. That they are too heavy for us. And like the psalmist of old that we can say, my wounds do stink and are corrupt.

My folly makes it so. I trouble dam and much bow down. All day I moan and go. For a disease that loathsome is so fills my loins with pain.

[1 : 2 9] That in my weak and weary flesh no soundness doth remain. And as we are conscious of our sins and of all our shortcomings.

Yet, O Lord, we give thee thanks that we are also conscious of the provision that thou hast made for us through thy Son.

That he is a fountain that has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. And grant to us, O Lord, that we would draw to that fountain anew today.

And that we would draw out by faith. And receive that cleansing that we stand in need of. O Lord, we give thanks for the great promise that thou hast given to us.

That if we confess our sins. That thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins. And to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[2 : 3 3] And we give thanks unto thee, O Lord, that all thy promises have been sealed. By the blood of the everlasting covenant. By the blood of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would bless thy word to us. As we come to read it. And as we come to meditate upon it.

Thy word is always a living word. And we pray, O Lord, that through thy spirit. That thou would apply thy word to us today.

To our hearts. That it may bring forth evidence in our lives. To the glory of thy known name. We pray, Lord, for our homes and our families.

And all our loved ones, wherever they may be. Thou knowest them, O Lord. And we pray that thy known everlasting arms would be around them.

[3 : 3 5] Remember before thee, O Lord, today those who are indifferent and careless regarding the claims of thy word. O may thou draw them by the power of thy spirit.

May thou bring them, O Lord, to see their great need. And we pray, O Lord, that thou would grant to them that they may see the sufficiency of Christ.

To meet with their need. Remember those who are ill. Those who are in hospital. Those who are at home. Those who are under the hand of affliction.

And we pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst be near to them. And that thou would bring healing. As that is in accordance to thine own will. Remember, we pray thee, those who care for them.

We remember the doctors and the nurses and all the key workers at this time. We pray, O Lord, that thou wouldst uphold them and be near to them.

[4 : 39] We pray, Lord, that thou would remember those who are mourning. As the voice of death so often among us. Reminding us that here we have no continuing city.

That we pass from one realm into another realm. From that of time into eternity. O Lord, we pray that we would be prepared to take that transition from time to eternity.

That we would prepare our souls. O Lord, impress upon us, we pray, the urgency of this matter.

The urgency of being reconciled to our God. O enlighten our people. We pray, O Lord, we pray thee, that they may come to understand.

That there is only one way whereby man can be reconciled to God. And that is through the Lord Jesus Christ. Thine own Son, our Saviour.

[5 : 46] The one who came into this world and who took our nature unto himself. And in that nature he suffered and died. He was buried and he rose again and ascended to thy right hand.

And we give thanks for his continual ministry at thine own right hand. In the intercession that he makes for those who were given to him in the covenant of redemption.

And for whom he has purchased their redemption. By coming into this world and by going to the cross of Golgotha. And by rising again from the grave.

O we give thanks unto thee for the gospel. The good news of Jesus Christ. And we pray that as it is proclaimed today. That it may go forth in the power and demonstration of thine own spirit.

In convicting and converting. And in the building of thine own church here on earth. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the great promise that thou hast left for us.

[6 : 50] That he shall return. And that he shall gather his people to himself. We ask, O Lord, that thou would continue with us.

That thy spirit would prepare our hearts. As we come to read and meditate upon thine own word. That it may be a means of strength and encouragement to us today.

And all that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins. It's in Jesus name and for his sake. Amen. Let us now read from the epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians and chapter 1.

Philippians and chapter 1. Paul and Timotheus. The servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi.

With the bishops and deacons. Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

[8 : 02] Always in prayer of mine. For you all making requests with joy. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. Being confident of this very thing.

That he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all.

Because I have you in my heart. Inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. Yet all partakers of my grace.

For God is my record. How greatly I long after you. All in the bowels of Jesus Christ. And this I pray that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.

That ye may approve things that are excellent. That ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ.

[9 : 07] And to the glory and praise of God. But I would you should understand brethren. That the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather into the fatherance of the gospel.

So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace. And in all other places. And many of the brethren in the Lord. Walking confident by my bonds.

Are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife. And some also of good will.

The one preach Christ of contention. Not sincerely. Supposing to add affliction to my bonds. But the other of love. Knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

What then. Notwithstanding every way. Whether in pretense or in truth. Christ is preached. And I therein do rejoice. Yea.

[10 : 06] And will rejoice. Rejoice. And so on. May the Lord bless unto us the reading. Of that portion. Of his word. Let us then for a short time.

Look at the words that we find in this chapter. Philippians chapter 1. Reading at verse 3. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.

Always in every prayer of mine. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy. For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is made for me to think this. Even as it is made for me to think this of you all.

Because I have you in my heart. And as much as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. Ye are all partakers of my grace.

[11 : 07] For God is my record. How greatly I long after you all. In the bowels of Jesus Christ. Seeking the Lord's blessing then let us meditate for a few moments upon these words.

Paul has a particular sense of attachment and affection to the church at Philippi.

In the book of Acts and chapter 16 we learn of how he came and set up the church at Philippi. And although many years have now passed since Paul had first visited Philippi and established the church there.

The love of the church at Philippi for Paul was still strong. The church had not forgotten his service among them. Many times they had sent gifts to him.

Paul writes in chapter 4 at verse 10. But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care for me hath flourished again.

[12 : 16] And in verse 15. How ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia. No church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only.

But now Paul has been arrested and he was a prisoner at Rome. And the church at Philippi had selected one of its leaders by the name of Eaphroditus to go all the way from Philippi to Rome in order to bring to the imprisoned apostle things that were necessary for his physical well-being.

And having received these benefits from the church, he sends him back to the church at Philippi with this letter. Paul begins his letter in the customary way at that time by stating his name and the name of the one who is with him and identifies those to whom he is writing and offers a prayer for them.

And in this letter he says, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making requests with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

In this passage under our consideration today, I think that the key verse is actually verse 6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

[14 : 08] Paul is now in a Roman prison and he is not sure what the outcome of the Roman tribunal will be, whether he will be delivered, released and granted a reprieve or possible execution.

Whatever the outcome, he wants Christ to be glorified as he stands trial and beyond, even if it were to result in death.

In verse 20 we read, Since the time that Saul of Tarsus was apprehended by Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus, Christ has become the singular pursuit of his life, for whom he has gladly suffered the loss of all things in order to gain Christ and to know Christ both his resurrection power and participation in his sufferings, which we will develop upon later as we study this letter.

Writing to the church at Corinth, Paul says to them, For I determine not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.

Writing to the Galatians, he says, I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

[16 : 05] Christ sums up for Paul the whole range of his new relationship to God. He's got a terrific passion for Christ.

Paul is a great example for me and you. For us to examine ourselves and see how we got this great passion for Christ.

Is Christ at the centre of our life? In everything we do, do we have Christ at the centre? It is Roman prison.

Paul's concern for the Philippians was that the steadfastness and unity of the congregation at Philippi, which was being threatened from the outside by a hostile environment, they were, in Paul's own words, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, a nation given over to paganism and to emperor worship.

But Paul was also aware that this fellowship was being threatened from within. In chapter 4 we read, Obviously, some dispute had arisen.

[17 : 39] There were some internal tensions among them which had been reported to him by Ephaphroditus. So we see that the church at Philippi were being threatened by external pressure and internal tensions.

That it made the situation of the church at Philippi rather delicate. So Paul begins his letter with prayer and thanksgiving upon every remembrance of the body of Christians at Philippi for their fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you, all making requests with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

You see, as we look at this letter, throughout the letter, Paul uses language that shows his deep affection for the church at Philippi. In verse 7, I have you in my heart.

Verse 8, I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. He yearned for them all with the affections of Jesus Christ.

[19 : 00] Chapter 4, verse 1 begins by saying, My brethren, My brethren, dearly beloved and long for, my joy and crown. He had a great affection for the church at Philippi.

And yet, as we have noted, he was aware of that external pressure and those internal tensions that left the situation at the church so delicate.

All this friendship which began when he brought the gospel to them and they came together to participate in the benefits of the gospel did not end when he left Philippi, but has continued, as he says, from the first day until now.

Not only was Paul's affection towards the church at Philippi, but the church at Philippi's affection was also towards Paul.

Not only did he love them, but they loved him. And Paul declares his joy for this fellowship in the gospel with the body of believers at Philippi.

[20 : 22] There are another two occasions where he speaks of fellowship. In chapter 2, he speaks of the fellowship of the Spirit, and in chapter 3, of the fellowship of his suffering.

There is a sense in which they are all connected to one another. Where there is one, there is the three. Where you have fellowship in the gospel, there must also be fellowship of the Spirit and fellowship of his sufferings.

This will become clearer to us as we continue our study. Well then, what does Paul mean by fellowship in the gospel? Well, fellowship means sharing things in common.

It means a togetherness or oneness. As we see that Paul, within the first eight verses of this letter, he uses the word all five times.

And when we look at the make-up of the church at Philippi, we know that it included a businesswoman, a slave girl, and a Roman jailer, and others.

[21 : 38] What we can see immediately is that on a social level, they had nothing in common. But when Paul speaks of fellowship in the gospel, diverse as they were, and coming from all different backgrounds, backgrounds, nevertheless, they all had something that was common.

They all shared in their participation in the benefits of the gospel. They all shared in the benefits of the gospel.

They were all saints. They set apart once by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. There are those who would confine Paul's usage of the phrase fellowship in the gospel to mean merely their participating in the spread of the gospel, drawing reference to Paul's words in chapter 4 and verse 14 to 15, where it says, Now ye Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

For even in Thessalonica, ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Although that is included, I would like to give this phrase a wider significance.

I believe that Paul was very grateful for all their gifts to him, but I think that when he speaks of their fellowship in the gospel, he was not merely referring exclusively to their gifts.

[23 : 23] They were those things that now, by the grace that had come into their experience, they had things in common. They shared in the same experience of forgiveness and peace, all made possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as proclaimed in the gospel.

They were all recipients of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Paul saw them all as sinners saved by grace.

And the grace of God had this transforming power to create a community or fellowship of believers in Christ.

Those who share in the benefits of the gospel participate in a fellowship that is so deep that it may also be viewed as a family relationship.

Hence, Paul refers to believers in Philippi nine times in this letter as brethren. And as we have just noted, there is the fellowship of the Spirit.

[24 : 38] They not only had a shared participation in the benefits of the gospel and forgiveness and peace and so on, but they were all sharing together in the gift of the Spirit.

Paul, writing to the Romans, says, but ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

However, fellowship in the gospel not only meant that they had all participated in the benefits of salvation, that they had received forgiveness and peace and so on, and that they all had the gift of the Spirit indwelling in them, but it also meant their participation in the advancement of the gospel.

This is highlighted by Paul in verse 19. For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

They were praying for him, but they were also helping in the advancement of the gospel by practical means, by sending gifts to him. So that when Paul was filled with joy for their fellowship in the gospel, it was not simply a mutual participation in the benefits of the gospel and of the Spirit, but also their fellowship with him in the advancement of the gospel.

[26 : 18] But their fellowship in the gospel goes much deeper than that. It also includes the fellowship of his suffering. That is, their suffering for their faith in Christ in the face of opposition.

For unto you, he says, it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which ye saw in me and now hear to be in me.

When Paul wrote this letter, he was in a Roman prison, chained to one of the imperial guards. And it was known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that his imprisonment was for his faith in Christ.

Paul makes his request in prayer with joy for the church at Philippi because of their fellowship in the gospel, not only for their participation of the benefits of the gospel by faith in Christ and their possession of the Holy Spirit and their seal for the advancement of the gospel, but also for their suffering for their faith in Christ.

Christ. Another element I believe in the fellowship in the gospel was the witness of the church at Philippi.

[27 : 51] In chapter 2 and verse 15 and 16 we read that ye may be blameless and harmless the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom ye shine as lights in the world holding forth the word of life that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain neither laboured in vain.

You see Paul was able to witness to every God to whom he was chained over days and years and in this way he reached with the gospel to most of the imperial guard to the extent that the example of Paul had this effect upon other Christians that many of them was waxing confident by his bonds and was much bolder to speak the word without fear.

So it is important to appreciate the breadth and the depth of the Philippians' involvement in this fellowship in the gospel. This filled Paul with joyful thankfulness whenever he thought of them from the time of their reception of the gospel until now they had continued to believe the gospel and to support the spreading of the gospel and they have continued to meet with his needs and their suffering for their faith in Christ and their witness for their faith in Christ in difficult circumstances.

All this is included in this fellowship of the gospel. Now as we noted the witness of the gospel is always under threat not only from without but also from within.

This is why we must always guard our fellowship in the gospel. Paul was aware that this unity of fellowship in the gospel was under threat and could cause divisions.

[29 : 57] This oneness and togetherness in the gospel was under threat. Paul in writing to the church at Corinth begins by admonishing them for their divisions that had come to exist within the church at Corinth.

He says now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment for it hath been declared unto me of you my brethren that by them which are of the house of Chloe that there are contentions among you now this I say that every one of you saith I am of Paul and I of Apollos and I of Cephas and I of Christ is Christ divided was Paul crucified for you or were ye baptized in the name of Paul you see we sometimes divide ourselves from other Christians because of very trivial reasons it may be they come from a different ethnic background or a different culture or they speak a different language so often we believe that we are right and that they are wrong but the truth that we are all equally sinners and have all equally been the recipients of the grace of God that should come before anything else and that should overcome all divisions that we impose fellowship in the gospel we are all the recipients of the benefits of the death of

Christ all recipients of forgiveness and peace and so on of all the benefits of salvation in Christ having that in mind Paul now expresses his confidence being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ verse 6 continues really the thought of verse 5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ Paul here raises the survival of this fellowship in the gospel it goes above human endeavours and activities and he goes to the true founder of all fellowship in the gospel and

Paul is assured that God who began this fellowship will bring it to perfection in their glorification in the day of Jesus Christ Paul's confidence was based upon the one who had begun this work in them the one who began the work of bringing them into the fellowship of the gospel therefore Paul was confident that he would continue to perform that work in them until the day of Jesus Christ that this good work was begun and continued by God until the day of Jesus Christ what good work is this well there is no doubt that it speaks of the good work of salvation the work of grace in the soul of an individual and how we can have confidence that where

God has begun that work that he will continue and that he will bring that work to perfection God never begins a work and gives it up halfway he will complete what he has begun the good work that God began in the believers at Philippi was the beginning of a fellowship in the gospel it was the formation of a community of believers which had certain things in common which we have already mentioned and where salvation has begun it will be perfected in the day of Jesus Christ today my friend you may be very conscious of your own imperfection nevertheless where salvation has begun it will be brought to perfection in spite of all our imperfections and that sin that so easily beset us despite our thoughts even our very imagination that makes us slaves to sin and despite all the division that mashes our fellowship in the gospel it shall also be brought to perfection everything will be brought to perfection our fellowship in the gospel will be brought to perfection he will bring it to perfection in the day of

[35 : 50] Jesus Christ the day of Jesus Christ is a reference to the second coming of Christ that great promise that Christ has given to his church that he is going to return and the future of the fellowship in the gospel is secure as the good work of God is secure until the day of Jesus Christ and what is the apex of this work well in the book of Jude we read now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy this is the apex of of this work to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy

Paul's anticipation of the second coming of Christ gave him confidence and strengthened him in his present suffering certainly if the outcome of his Roman tribunal resulted in his execution and death he knew that it meant for him that to depart this body would mean that he would be present with Christ the one who filled his heart the one for whom he was so passionate Christ and that very thought of death as a means of bringing him into the immediate presence of Christ was a comforting and encouraging prospect nevertheless he looked forward to the day of his bodily resurrection which still awaits all the saints of God he knew that death would mean him to be consciously with

Christ nevertheless there was a day beyond death which he anticipates that day when at the name of Jesus Christ every knee shall bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father don't you look for that day yourself yes the day of your death will bring you into the immediate presence of Christ but don't you look forward to the day of your bodily resurrection when in body and soul you are transported into the presence of Christ you are forever with the Lord in body and soul well Paul anticipated that day are you looking forward to the day when at the name of Christ every knee shall bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth that every tongue shall confess that

Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father rose there God and all come die you can come down on their knees and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Aren't you looking forward to that day? That day for which we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.

[40 : 03] On that day the fellowship will be perfect and complete in all the aspects that we have considered today. When Paul prayed for the Christians at Philippi, he was confident for them, all because he knew that it was right for him to feel that way about them all and to hold them to his heart, because they were all partakers with him of grace, even as it is meek for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.

And as much as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace. Oh, you see, if we properly exercise the grace of God, it should unify us, not divide us.

It should bring us into the true fellowship in the gospel. Paul, as he thought of the group of believers that made up the church at Philippi, diverse as they were, coming from all a different background, but he was filled with joy, holding them all to his heart.

That is, he held them all with the highest affection. And although they were miles apart, they were at Philippi, and he was in a Roman prison, chained to a guard.

They were out of his sight. Nevertheless, they were not out of his mind. And isn't that true fellowship in the gospel?

[41 : 45] When we think of our Christian brethren and sisters, and although they may be out of our sight, yet, to be never out of our mind.

This heartfelt commitment and affection Paul expressed to the church at Corinth when he told them, I said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together.

Paul's affection for the church at Philippi also froze from his experience of their fellowship with him, especially in this time of imprisonment.

Inasmuch as both in my bonds and defence and confirmation of the gospel, they were with him. Oh, he says, you are all partakers of my grace.

They were all recipients of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. They were all sinners saved by grace. And God's grace is the origin.

[42 : 54] It is the basis. It is the purpose of this fellowship. They were sharing in God's grace. God's unmerited, undeserved favour was the source of all that they were.

It was the source of all that they did. It was the source of all that they had. It was all because of God's grace. And therefore, Paul was confident that in spite of all our imperfections, he was confident of this very thing, that he, that is the God of all grace, which had begun a good work in them, would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

And dear friend, as we go forth today, with our own consciousness of our own imperfections, and all the divisions that we find around us, it is good for us that we would hold on to these words of Paul to be a means of strength to our faith, of encouragement to our witness, to be an encouragement for us to be more united one with another as the body of believers in Christ.

been confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

May the Lord bless our thoughts to us. Let us pray. Eternal and ever-blessed Lord, we come before you today so conscious of the imperfections and the blemishes that belong to us, so conscious of the divisions that we find among ourselves.

[45 : 07] But, O Lord, we give thanks to Thee that where Thou has begun that good work, that that work will progress, and that that work will be brought to perfection on the day of Jesus Christ.

We give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, for that living word that is applied to our hearts by Thine own Holy Spirit, granting us to find encouragement and to take heart, to be filled with joy, to rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ today.

We ask, O Lord, that Thou would meet with the needs of us all today out of the riches of that grace that is in Jesus Christ.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all today and forevermore.

Amen.