

Gospel Partners Rejoice in One Another

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 12 April 2015

Preacher: Dave Nannery

- [0 : 0 0] I have preached over three dozen times at churches in BC, and I've literally never done that before. It's really bad form for a guest speaker when he comes to preach and he doesn't bring a Bible with him.
- That should normally scare you. It should terrify you. So this one's a little bit, a little beefier than I'm used to. So if it looks like I'm flagging a little bit, Jonathan, just be sure to grab a couple elders, get them to stand alongside me and hold up my arms while I preach so I can keep proclaiming God's Word.
- So before we get to our passage of Scripture this morning from the book of Philippians, I want to talk about robots. Naturally, it's a great transition. I want to talk about robots because I feel really bad for them.
- I feel really bad for robots because we give them all of our awful jobs that we don't want to do. Robots run our automobile assembly lines. Robots vacuum our rooms. Nobody wants to vacuum rooms.
- So we get a robot to do it, to automatically run around on the floor and provide rides for cats and things like that. We launch robots off to other planets to explore them.
- [1 : 0 7] Right now, NASA has a space probe called New Horizons that's on its way to Pluto. This July, we're going to finally, for the first time, get up close shots of Pluto, which was once a planet and now is not.
- And so, are there hard feelings about that here? I touch a sore hot-button issue here at the church. Sorry about that.
- Man, guest speakers, we have it rough. Pluto, this New Horizons probe that's going to Pluto, it is a robot. I was once asked by a friend if there are people on board it.
- I said, well, no, it's been going nine years through space and it's going to exit our solar system, never to return to Earth. We don't usually put people on board ships like that.
- That's not standard practice. We're never going to jam a human being in a tiny spacecraft, launch them in a nine-year mission to Pluto, never to return to Earth again. That is unthinkable, but we'll do it to robots.
- [2 : 0 9] We can do that to robots because they do the work we don't want to do. Now, when it comes to us as people, there are times when we're doing work that we don't want to do.
- Some of you here this morning are probably feeling a little bit robotic yourself lately. You're feeling like you're stuck doing work that you don't want to do, but other people require you to do it, or that it just has to get done.
- Some of you are college students, aren't you? You know all about what I'm talking about. You're stuck doing work you don't want to do. I know what it feels like to give all of your time for other people, to lose your sleep and your sanity for them, to spend all your energy on them until it feels like there just is not any left for yourself.
- If you're a parent of young children here, that's your entire life, isn't it? You sacrifice your sleep and sanity so that your child doesn't kill themselves. Now, before we get any farther in the sermon, we do have to say this.

There is a danger of over-committing yourself. There is a danger of over-committing yourself, and that's what happens. A lot of times, it happens when you fear other people rather than God.

[3 : 26] This is the most common reason I see for people over-committing themselves, is when you worry about others' opinions of you. You become controlled by them. You can't say no. You wear yourself out to help others.

And it's not wise to over-commit yourself because what happens is you don't get the rest that you need, and you burn yourself out. You don't get the rest that you need and that God commands you to get, so you burn yourself out.

And then you're no longer of any value in helping others. But what we're talking about this morning is an opposite error. And that error is a message that I often get from ads on TV, from songs on the radio.

This error is that I need to stop giving myself to other people and start focusing on me. On me. I need some me time.

All to myself. A couple years ago, I was working in the warehouse of a flooring store, just driving forklifts around and stuff like that. It was great. But one day there was a big sale on area rugs, these five foot by eight foot rugs you could put in your living room floor.

[4 : 30] And I didn't have any area rugs. So I thought, well, some of these are some really nice rugs, and they're on a really deep discount. Maybe I should buy one. So as I'm looking at this rug, a co-worker asks me what I'm doing.

And then when I say I'm considering buying it, here's what she says. She says, to go for it. Why? Because I need to spend some money on myself. I deserve something special for me. Well, I know you all agree.

I deserve something special. But that really can't be our focus. Maybe you're like me. Maybe you do feel tempted to pamper yourself, to protect yourself from danger and hardship.

Maybe your ideal life is one of security, one of comfort, one of ease. Maybe every once in a while you're like me and need someone to get in your face and to wake you up.

Or maybe you're a person who is on the other end of the spectrum. You're giving yourself faithfully for God. You're giving yourself faithfully for his church. And it's wearing you down, slowly grinding you down, bit by bit by bit, with each passing week and month and year.

[5 : 41] And maybe you're worn out. Maybe you're ready to throw in the towel. Maybe you need encouragement. Maybe you need hope. So what we have this morning is encouragement and hope and admonition from the Word of God.

And what we're going to do this morning is first we're going to read what the Spirit has to say through the pen of the Apostle. Paul, the pen of God's servant, the Apostle Paul. So if you have a copy of the Bible with you, if you're not like me and you actually brought one, then follow along as I'm reading from the New Testament.

I'm going to be reading from the English Standard Version. This is Paul's letter to the Philippians, to a little first century church in the Roman city, the Roman colony city of Philippi.

Philippians, which is near the end of the New Testament of the Bible, reads as follows, beginning in chapter 2, verse 12 through 18.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

[6 : 55] For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish, in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ, I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. This is the word of the Lord to us this morning. Now, there is a lot that we could cover in these verses, but what we're going to do is we're going to focus on the last two verses, on verses 17 and 18.

Paul writes in these verses, Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me. Now, let's think through what these verses are saying about sacrifice.

[8 : 23] So, let me start by saying this is Squamish. This is, my understanding is this is sort of the outdoorsy capital of BC. Am I right? Am I right? I obviously don't know anything. But this is sort of an outdoorsy place.

How many of you, show of hands, how many of you have gone hiking in the past year? Hey, there we go. Not bad, not bad. How about kayaking? Okay, there's like two people.

Maybe not as outdoorsy as I thought. Skiing? Skiing? I hear that's a thing that happens here. How about roasting a goat or a bowl as a sacrificial offering while dousing it in a bottle of Chardonnay?

One back there. One back there. Okay, we got a couple here. All right. I knew people here had exotic hobbies, but I wasn't aware that was one of them. Okay. That's very specific. Now, unlike the two of you, most of us don't really do that.

So, for most of us, that's a foreign custom. But to Paul's readers, this is something they would have understood. This was kind of a bit more everyday to them. If they were Jewish, they knew all about the Old Testament laws of sacrifice, especially in the book of Leviticus.

[9 : 30] There, the Lord details how under the Old Covenant, under the old relationship that he had with the people of Israel, different offerings were supposed to be carried out to the Lord.

So, what you would do is you would take an animal from your herd. You'd take this bull or this goat, something like that, and you'd kill it. You'd cut it into pieces, and then you would put it on this big stone altar, and you would roast it like a barbecue.

And that was the main sacrifice. That was an offering to the Lord, what Paul calls in verse 17, the sacrificial offering. Now, on top of that, what the worshiper would often do is, the worshiper would take some wine or some other drink, and they would pour it on top of this barbecued bowl as a drink offering.

Kind of an ancient Near Eastern version of a marinade, I guess. But even Philippians from a pagan background, even those who had never studied the Old Testament, they would know what this meant, because this sort of ritual occurred in other religious rites as well.

They would have understood this concept of a burnt offering and a drink offering. And what Paul wants to communicate is this. He wants the Philippian Christians to demonstrate their faith in God by offering themselves in obedience to Him.

[10 : 56] He wants the Philippian Christians to demonstrate their faith in God by offering themselves in obedience to Him. Verse 15, if you go up a couple verses. Paul commands them to be without blemish.

Without blemish. I think the NIV puts it without fault. The idea here is a good sacrificial offering was when you gave God the very best bull or the very best goat in your herd.

You gave Him your very best. You were supposed to offer an animal that had no blemishes, no defects, no faults. What the people of Israel did sometimes, and they were really chided by the Lord for this in the book of Malachi, is they would look at their herd and they would see a goat that had three legs or a bull that had two heads or something.

It happens. And they would think, this goat or this bull is not very useful for me. I know what I'll do. I'll offer it to the Lord. Oh, I'm so spiritual.

You know, offering this offering to the Lord. And the Lord called them out for that because what they're giving the Lord is their castaways, their leftovers. They're giving less than their best. You're not supposed to offer a bull with a shriveled leg.

[12 : 06] You're not supposed to offer a goat with two heads. Guys, Paul expects the Philippians to offer their best to the Lord, something without blemish. He wants to see them go all in.

All in. He wants to see full commitment. And when they commit themselves to the Lord, Paul says he's satisfied. He rejoices. Now we've seen that, if you've read the book of Philippians, you see that Paul is writing this letter while he's in prison in Rome.

He explicitly says it earlier in the book. He's in prison in Rome awaiting trial. He's going to be appearing before Caesar, before the most powerful man in the world. And he doesn't know for sure what's going to happen to him.

Is he going to be exonerated and released or is he going to be put to death? But here Paul demonstrates that even if he's executed, he's going to die with no regrets.

How many of us could say that? Paul is going to die with no regrets. He writes, He says, Even if I'm to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.

[13 : 21] He's going to be glad and rejoice. Because if Paul is going to be executed, even if it's his own blood that gets poured out as a drink offering, he sees it as a reason not for mourning, not for sadness, not for terror, but for joy.

Paul is more than happy to sacrifice himself for his family in Philippi. He's more than happy to sacrifice himself for his brothers and sisters in Christ.

Here, Paul is doing this. He is demonstrating what fellowship, what partnership in the gospel looks like in action. Gospel partners sacrifice themselves for one another.

Gospel partners sacrifice themselves for one another. Because this sort of sacrificial partnership, this is found all throughout Paul's letter to the Philippians.

This is the theme of the letter, their partnership in the gospel. The whole reason that Paul even wrote this letter was to thank the Philippians for partnering financially with him.

[14 : 31] In chapter 4, verse 15, Paul writes this, You Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only.

Even in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs once and again. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. I have received full payment and more.

I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

So, what Paul has experienced is the financial sacrifices of the Philippian church. And as for Paul, he's been sacrificing for them too.

The partnership goes both ways. He's been pouring himself out for these believers in the city of Philippi. Paul's been setting an example for them. He's been mentoring them.

[15 : 37] He's been bringing them up in the faith as though they were his own children. And that's why he writes in chapter 3, verse 17, brothers, join in imitating me.

That's what parents say to their children. Watch what I do. And copy me. Let me show you how to live your life. Join in imitating me. In chapter 4, verse 1, he calls the Philippians, my joy and crown.

Parents, don't you feel that way about your children? Are they not your joy and your crown? They are a source of joy for you. They are the crown on your head.

They mean everything. Paul loves to brag about these believers because they are the result of his own sacrifice. They are the result of his own energy.

He has poured himself out for them. And Paul has also been encouraging the Philippians to adopt a spirit of humility, a like-minded attitude toward one another. That's the attitude of gospel partners.

[16 : 43] Paul writes in chapter 1, verse 27, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

So what these believers are to do is they're marching together like an army. They're marching in lockstep with one another. Instead of being afraid, instead of turning their backs into running, they're standing firm together, staying strong, not giving way to opposition.

The only way you can do that is if you have the same mindset with the people that you're marching together with. Only a couple verses later, in chapter 2, verse 2, he writes, Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

So what Paul wants them to do is he wants them to zero in on, target these selfish ambitions or conceits in their hearts and eliminate them. Destroy them.

[18 : 11] These cannot exist in our relationships with other people in the church. What Paul wants is he wants these believers to sacrifice, to sacrifice their own agendas, their own plans, their own courses and trajectories in life that they've established for themselves because sometimes those trajectories mean that we leave other people by the wayside.

sometimes we're so focused on our own plans and ambitions that we lose sight of the people God's put into our lives. They're just obstacles.

Obstacles in our trajectory to success, whatever we define that to be. Paul wants them instead to adopt the concern and compassion of men like Timothy. Timothy is a close follower of Paul, one that Paul thinks of as his own son and later in this letter he praises him for his sacrifice.

He says, I've got no one like him. And he wants them to follow Timothy's example. Paul expects the Philippians to sacrifice themselves through suffering.

He writes in chapter 1, verse 29, for it has been granted to you, it has been granted to you, it is a gift to you, that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

[19 : 44] Paul has experienced a life full of conflict and suffering. He's had to endure opposition in the city of Philippi from pagan Gentiles who threw him in prison.

He's had to endure opposition throughout his ministry from Jewish authorities who don't like the gospel of Jesus Christ that he's been preaching. Paul has had to endure opposition from oppressive regimes outside of the church, false teachers inside of the church.

Paul knows what it's like to walk and to walk and to walk until you can't even feel your own feet. He knows what it's like to feel that ache of hunger inside of you to wonder where your next meal is going to come from.

He knows what it's like to feel rods beating bruises into your body, what it feels like to have whips tearing the flesh off your back, what it feels like to have stones hurled at your head and to be left for dead outside of a city.

And now Paul's in prison and he might be put to death. He knows what it's like to give and to sacrifice himself through suffering. This is not a letter from an academic just sitting there writing highfalutin things in his letter to the Philippians.

[20 : 55] He's not writing things that he hasn't experienced himself. Paul knows through and through what it means to suffer and he says it's a gift. He says God has granted this to you.

And it's not just Paul. There's another man mentioned in chapter 2, a man who endured suffering. Epaphroditus is a man who brought the Philippians financial gift to Paul.

He brought money to Paul to support him in his imprisonment and Epaphroditus almost died doing it. He got sick on his journey and he almost died of illness. This man and many other believers at that time and in our time and throughout the world they're merely following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ.

They're following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord. We have to remember what Christ has done for us. He made us his own through suffering.

Philippians chapter 2 verse 8 writes, being found in human form, he, that's Jesus Christ, humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.

[22 : 13] Even death on a cross. Even death on a cross. By definition, an excruciating death. Our Lord gave himself as a sacrifice.

He held back nothing from us. He gave himself. He had his body broken. He had his blood poured out so that we would be forgiven of our sins so that we could be reconciled with God and that we could join him.

Being united to him in his resurrection from the dead. So that we will live forever and ever in the kingdom that he is bringing to earth. God will exalt him.

God will give him the name that is above every name's. That the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth. Every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

That's the joy that comes from suffering. Suffering in and of itself is pointless, it's futile, it's meaningless. But suffering is never in and of itself.

[23 : 20] It always serves a greater purpose for the believer. And God calls us to it. This is the attitude of Christ.

This is the attitude of his servant Paul. This is the attitude of Epaphroditus. This is the attitude of gospel partners who sacrifice themselves for one another.

Let me ask you this, what's holding you back? What's holding you back? What's holding you back? What's holding you back from your brothers and sisters? Are you keeping some of them at arm's length right now?

Is it money that's what's holding you back? Is money something that you really have a tough time parting with? When you put a financial gift in the offering, the offering bag as it goes around there, do you just kind of have a sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach?

Do you grit your teeth when you hear about other believers expressing financial needs? Do you feel like you're being guilted to give? Is it time or commitment?

[24 : 31] Time or commitment is tough, especially when it comes to discipling other believers, to training them in the way of Jesus Christ. I was part of a church for eight and a half years back in my home state of Indiana in the United States.

And for most of those eight and a half years, it was really tough to convince people to mentor college students who were part of the church. It was really hard to get them to do that. It was such a blessing to see it begin to happen.

And I think the people who were blessed the most were not the college students but the mentors. It's not that they were perfect people, but they were a little bit farther down the road. And they got to spend time and to pour themselves into these students' lives.

And it changed the students and it changed them. There are a lot of younger believers who need mentoring. They need older brothers and sisters who will come alongside them and show them the way to live.

Not because they're perfect, but because they're a little bit farther down the road to Christ. The Philippians needed people like Paul, they needed people like Timothy and Epaphroditus, real people to pattern their lives after.

[25 : 44] There's a fear of conflict that's holding you back. Is it fear of suffering? Are you afraid of committing yourself to your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Are you afraid of committing yourself to the church? Are you afraid of speaking the truth to someone here? Because it might lead you to being rejected. It might lead you to being attacked.

I've had to preach in a few small churches where you could just feel in the air. There was something wrong. There was something wrong.

There were conflicts that were swept carefully under the rug that weren't being addressed. There was tension that they would try to pretend wasn't there.

And it eats away at you. It makes you bitter. You can't suppress it forever. Eventually it blows up. It always blows up eventually. Are you seeking reconciliation?

[26 : 43] Are you seeking to forgive? Are you seeking to repent? Are you afraid that if you speak up for the Lord in your workplace or in your classroom that you'll be ridiculed or punished?

Speak boldly. Speak with wisdom. Is it selfish ambition that's holding you back? Do you feel like there are people in the church who are just dragging you down?

They are dead weight. Because they just don't have a lot to offer you. They don't have a lot to offer you in terms of social status. They're not the cool crowd. They don't have a lot to offer you in terms of money or in terms of influence.

Do you avoid these people so that you can improve your image in the eyes of others? Gospel partners sacrifice themselves for one another.

Gospel partners sacrifice themselves for one another. gospel partners climb up the stairs onto that altar and they lie down on top of it. And they stay there.

[27 : 54] They reject the world's advice to live for yourself, to elevate yourself, to live a life of comfort and security. Like the hymn writer Isaac Watts, they ask, must I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease while others fought to win the prize and sailed through bloody seas?

gospel partners give and they sacrifice themselves for one another. But I don't want us to misunderstand this morning.

It's easy for you and me to think of this as some sort of grim, fatalistic sacrifice. That yes, I am dying for other people and it brings nothing but misery and that's what the Christian life is about misery and grim sorrow and gritting your teeth and sacrificing.

No! Because sometimes we, when we first begin to sacrifice ourselves for others, we think that that's what sacrifice is all about. Because at first it feels like you're dying.

At first it feels like you are dying because you are. You're dying to yourself. At first it feels like, sometimes like, you're just doing your duty.

[29 : 02] You're just turning into a robot. But if you give yourself faithfully to Jesus Christ, if you give yourself wholeheartedly to him and hold nothing back, this sort of sacrifice leads to joy.

It isn't a grim determinism. It isn't a grim fatalism. It is joy. Gospel partners sacrifice themselves for one another and so they are glad.

Gospel partners sacrifice themselves for one another and so they are glad. glad. They're glad to do it. Notice the tone with which Paul writes this.

This is not a tone of a somber, miserable, fatalistic person. Listen to this. Feel this in your soul. What is Paul feeling as he writes this? Verse 17.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise, you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

[30 : 09] How does a dying person tell the people around him, be happy? Be happy. Rejoice. Rejoice because I'm rejoicing.

I am happy to do it. I am happy to suffer for you. It's not something I'm gritting my teeth to do. I want to. And it brings me joy.

And you, please join in me. Join in in rejoicing with me. That's tough.

This is not a stoicism. This is not a stoic approach. These are not cynical words of a person who's had his youthful optimism burned away by a harsh and demanding world.

These are the words of a joyfully sacrificing gospel partner. These are the words of someone who knows what it means to suffer and who loves Jesus Christ so much that his joy at serving Christ and serving his church overflows and pours out like a drink offering.

[31 : 14] Why is he so glad? Why does he insist that not only he rejoiced but that they rejoice with him? Well, we're going to see hints all over this letter as to why the sacrifice of gospel partners brings such joy.

There are five reasons in this book why this sort of sacrifice brings joy. We'll run through them real quick. First, this sacrifice renews their partnership. This sacrifice brings joy because it renews their partnership.

Gospel partnership has to be continually renewed over and over and over again. It's like a garden. If you don't tend and water your garden, I don't care how hardy the plants you grow are.

They'll wither and die and get choked out by thorns. And isn't that true of all of our relationships? I've moved around a few times in my life and I know how, I know what happens.

I know when I leave that there are going to be a lot of people who were dear to me who I'm, we're just not going to keep up with each other anymore and gradually disappear from each other's lives. Some of you have experienced that.

[32 : 24] If you've moved here from somewhere else, you know what that means. eventually, some of those dearest friends become nothing more than a news article in your Facebook news feed. That's all they are anymore.

Paul knows that gospel partnership can disappear too if it's not renewed. So this sacrifice, when it renews its partnership, it brings joy to him. In chapter 4, verse 10, he is excited to receive this gift from the Philippians.

He says, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. So Paul's just glad that their partnership is renewed.

He doesn't care about the money. He cares about what the money means. It means they haven't forgotten him. It means that even though he's alone in prison, he is not alone.

They're with him. They might as well be sitting there in that same room with him. And that means the world to him. Your sacrifice renews your gospel partnership. It could mean the world to somebody else in this church who feels like they're forgotten.

[33 : 31] It could mean the world to another believer. The second reason this sacrifice brings joy is because it means that Jesus Christ will be proclaimed. Back in chapter 1, Paul observed that his imprisonment meant that both his friends, and not only his friends, but even his rivals, even people who didn't like him very much, they were spurred on to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ more than they ever were before.

Paul writes in chapter 1, verse 18, Christ is proclaimed, and in that, I rejoice. He doesn't care what tribe of Christianity is proclaiming Jesus Christ. He doesn't care if his opponents are theologically a little off.

As long as they're faithful to the gospel, as long as they're faithful to Jesus Christ, he's happy. He's happy. Paul's imprisonment is worth the cost.

Paul is overjoyed that the gospel is being proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire, and your sacrifice will bring you joy because it means that Christ is proclaimed. Third reason that this sacrifice brings joy.

This sacrifice ensures that gospel partners are vindicated before God. Gospel partners are vindicated before God because Paul continues in chapter 1, verse 18, yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance.

[34 : 59] As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

So as these Philippians are praying for him as he's in prison, the Holy Spirit is going to work through Paul to strengthen him, to prepare him for his day in court because when he gets to court and stands before Caesar, there is going to be a lot of pressure for him to renounce Jesus Christ.

He will have people standing at his side accusing him of being a rabble rouser and accusing him of being a heretic and accusing him of all sorts of false things and all he has to do to make it stop and to walk out as a free man is to say, I renounce Jesus Christ.

He is not King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He's just a man and a dead man and he walks out scot-free. Paul is exuberant because he knows that that's not going to happen.

He is not going to shrink back in fear, but he is going to faithfully bear witness to Jesus as God's Messiah, as his chosen and anointed king over all the world.

[36 : 16] Paul is going to pass the test. He is going to be vindicated before God, before the true judge of all the earth, someone who is judgment matter so much more than Caesar's.

Your sacrifice is a huge help to other believers. It strengthens them. it encourages them. It will help them.

It will help ensure them that they will be vindicated before God, that they will run the race, they will continue the course. And when you see that, and when you know that, it brings you joy. Fourth, this sacrifice demonstrates that gospel partners share the same mindset.

It brings joy because it demonstrates that gospel partners share the same mindset with one another. Back in chapter 2, verse 2, remember that Paul wrote, complete my joy by being of the same mind.

So, as the Philippians sacrifice themselves for the good of one another, they're knit together with each other. They're knit together. They're bound together in love. Why?

[37 : 28] Because they're learning to think like Jesus Christ. And when I start thinking like Jesus Christ, when I have the mindset of Jesus Christ, and when you also have the mindset of Jesus Christ, well, we're naturally going to share the mindset of Jesus Christ with one another.

It's the transitive property of sanctification, if you want to get all complex about it. When we think like Jesus Christ, we start thinking like each other. and isn't that great?

Isn't it wonderful to sit in a room? Isn't it so refreshing when you sit down for coffee with someone and you begin to recognize as you talk to them, this is someone who thinks like me. This is someone who loves what I love.

This is someone who's passionate about what I'm passionate about. You become one-souled, like-minded, and it brings you joy. And your sacrifice demonstrates to a watching world that gospel partners share the same mindset.

Unbelievers, one of their chief criticisms of Christians, of course, is that, man, you know, you guys all believe different things and you can't get along with one another and there's so much conflict in the church. Be the counterexample.

[38 : 38] Be the example that demonstrates the mindset of Jesus Christ. Fifth and finally, this sacrifice demonstrates your union with the Lord Jesus Christ.

It brings you joy because it demonstrates your union with Jesus Christ. Chapter 4, verse 4, Paul writes this, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice.

And he doesn't just say rejoice, he says rejoice in the Lord. That phrase, in the Lord or in Christ, Paul uses that a lot in his letters. He uses that all over the place. It's not just a throwaway line that he says to be all spiritual, like, you know, have a great day in the Lord.

You know, he doesn't just say that for no reason. It means a lot. It means that we are united with Christ. We're in Christ in his death. As he died on the cross, as he bore our sin against God, so we too died to sin.

We too rose to a new life empowered by the Spirit of God. Christ will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

[39 : 53] And as we live out that same mindset of Jesus Christ, we prove that we're made out of the same stuff he is. We prove that we belong to him, that we're with him, united with him.

Your sacrifice will demonstrate that you are united with your Lord Jesus Christ and that will bring you joy. There's no greater joy than knowing that you are united with Christ. that he is no longer your enemy but your friend and your brother and your God.

That is such a joy and such a blessing. So if you're weary and worn out, if you feel like you've been barbecued as a sacrifice long enough, if you feel like you've been poured out until you're empty and you're dry and you've got nothing left to give, be glad and rejoice.

Because by your faithful and consistent service, your partnership in the gospel, it's going to remain fresh and renewed. It isn't going to fall by the wayside and have no lasting impact.

God will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Be glad and rejoice. As you sacrifice yourself, the glory of Jesus Christ is proclaimed to a watching world, so be glad and rejoice.

[41 : 05] As you pour yourself out in prayer for other believers, the Holy Spirit is going to strengthen them. He's going to empower them to live a life that's pleasing to God. Their faith is going to be vindicated on the day of judgment, so be glad.

Rejoice. And as you abandon selfish ambition and conceit, you're going to start thinking like Jesus Christ instead, and you're going to be knit together with fellow believers.

You're going to learn to think like Jesus Christ, and your partnership will blossom. It'll grow new, just like the new flowers emerge every spring. It's going to give you new hope and energy, so be glad.

Rejoice. And as you choose each day to die to sin, as you choose each day to live to Christ Jesus, you demonstrate that your union with Jesus Christ, it is the real thing. You truly are a new creation.

You truly are a citizen of heaven. You truly are a fellow heir of our Father's kingdom, along with your brothers and sisters. So be glad. Rejoice.

[42 : 07] Brothers and sisters, that's how you can stand firm before the Lord. That's how you endure. The joy of the Lord is your strength. So may you continue to sacrifice yourselves for one another.

May you continue to grow in joy and to be glad. May you rejoice in the Lord always. Our God and our Father, we thank you so much that you have not simply ordered us to follow you without empowering us to do it.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit who strengthens us with each passing day. Who when we've given all that we have to give, gives us a storehouse full of energy and hope and joy.

Lord God, there are people here who have been giving and giving and giving and giving and they are worn out. Oh God, please help them. Be with them. Strengthen them. And give them rest so they may be renewed and strengthened with each day to serve you faithfully.

Lord, if there are people here who either because they do not believe in Jesus Christ or because something's holding them back, Lord, may you work in their hearts so that they may give themselves faithfully and completely to you.

[43 : 24] That they may devote themselves to Christ Jesus in so fine joy that they have never experienced before. An unspeakable joy. The joy of our Lord Jesus. Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen.