

Introduction: The apostle Paul wrote letters to churches in seven cities or regions. With which church was there a close and reciprocal relationship of partnership, and deepest affection, in The Gospel of the Savior? *** It was the churches in Philippi, for five reasons. (Gordon Fee) They prayed for each other in the partnership of The Gospel (1:4, 19). Even when absent from each other, they shared concern over their Gospel calling (1:27; 2:12). There was giving and receiving between them (4:15). There was a mutuality in what each other was doing (1:27; 2:19; 2:20-24). Finally, and most important, they shared in the suffering and persecution that accompany Gospel proclamation, just as their Savior had said they would (1:29-30; 2:12-18; John 15:17-20). *** Today is the first of sixteen messages from this letter that focuses on THE Messiah and His Gospel. As we go through it, starting with how Paul approached The Father in his prayers from prison for his beloved partners, we will see the joy of the fellowship God creates among all who partner to proclaim THE Good News of what He has done in THE Messiah Savior!

I. Greetings to converts IN Christ being in Philippi. (Verses 1-2)

A. Bond-servants OF Christ Jesus, to all being made holy IN Christ Jesus. (Verse 1)

1. Paul and Timothy identify as bond-servants OF Jesus. (Verse 1a)

Bond-servants: By calling themselves servants, Paul and Timothy are taking the role their Savior said would make them first in relation to the rest (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45). When Jesus instructed the twelve, He used deacon to describe Himself, in parallel with servant to describe them, because both words mean to help others by serving them. The word Paul uses literally means 'slave'.

2. To ALL the saints IN Christ Jesus, being in Philippi, with overseers and ministers. (Verse 1b)

Holy IN: 'Saints' is used for people who are being made holy by The Savior because they are IN Him through the faith He is giving them. All who are IN Christ are being sanctified – made holy!

ALL: The word 'all' is from the root 'pan'. We know this root because of the COVID-19 pandemic – a virus that is covering 'all' the earth! Paul uses this root 36 times in the letter, supporting one of the two themes of the letter: all the 'saints' (converts to faith IN The Messiah) in Philippi are completely united. He uses the word 'all' seven times in his prelude of thanksgiving before he presents his prayer petitions.

B. Double blessing from Father God and The Lord. (Verse 2)

1. Grace to 'you all' and peace. (Verse 2a)

Greek and Jewish: The typical Greek greeting of blessing was 'grace' ('charis') and the typical Jewish greeting of blessing was 'peace' ('shalom'). IN The Savior King, Greeks and Jews are united into one 'new man' reconciled to God by The Cross (Ephesians 2:11-22). This is THE Good News!

2. From God our Father and The Lord Jesus Christ. (Verse 2b)

Source: The ONLY source of grace and peace is Father God through the work of His Son, The Lord!

II. Grateful prelude to prayer for converts who are partnering with Paul in The Gospel of Grace. (Verses 3-8)

A. I am thanking God, always in every petition on behalf of 'you all', on your participation in The Gospel. (Verses 3-5)

1. I am thanking my God on all the remembrance of 'you all'. (Verse 3)

All remembrance: Every remembrance Paul has of the 'saints' in Philippi causes him to be thanking his God. It is a good church when every memory their church planter has of them causes thanksgiving!

2. Always making every petition of mine on behalf of ALL of 'you all' with joy. (Verse 4)

Petition: A petition is a prayer on behalf of other people. It is a strong plea and request to God on behalf of another person or persons!

ALL of 'you all': This is the first of four times Paul uses a favorite phrase of American Southerners to address all the converts IN Christ in the church of Philippi. In a story she wrote, Debi named a southern girl Olive Yalle in honor of this Southern phrase about unity of family and community.

Joy: Joy is the other theme of Philippians. In fact, a good summary of this letter would be: Joy comes from being united with others IN Christ to share His Gospel.

3. Because of the fellowship (participation) of 'you all' in The Gospel from the first day until now. (Verse 5)

Participation: There is a strong degree of fellowship in The Holy Spirit uniting the church planter Paul with all the members of the church in Philippi because they are full partners with him in The Gospel of The Lord who is The Savior King! This is the very unity The Savior prayed for to His Father before He went to The Cross. (John 17)

'You all': Again, this thanksgiving and joy of fellowship partnering is because of the unity Paul is experiencing with all of the saints in Philippi as they proclaim The Gospel together. (1:12-18)

Joy comes from partnering in proclaiming The Gospel

B. Confident that God will complete your good work of partnering with me in compassion as I share The Gospel in prison. (Verses 6-7)

1. Indeed, being confident of this: The One having begun a good work in 'you all' will complete it until The Day of Christ Jesus. (Verse 6)

Confidence in God: Paul has been persuaded to confidence by The One God concerning all of them.

God completes: Whatever good work God begins in His people, He will complete it until the end! We sang this as a song of worship to God this morning. This is the heart of our faith IN The Faithful God: whatever work he has called us to and begun in us, IF we stay IN Him, He is certain to complete it in us.

2. For it is also right for me to think this on behalf of ALL of 'you all' because I have 'you all' in my heart. (*Verse 7a*)
Right to think: This fully persuaded confidence in The One Faithful God is a right way for me to think on behalf of ALL of 'you all'. This is now the second time Paul has used this Southern phrase.
'You all' are in my heart: Because I am having 'you all' in my heart. His whole soul (mind and heart) is fully involved with them.
3. In BOTH my imprisonments AND the defense and confirmation of The Gospel, ALL of 'you all' are being full partners (fellows) of The Grace with me. (*Verse 7b*)
Partners: He now says a third time ALL of 'you all' are in fellowship with me, even in my imprisonments. (*Acts 16:16-40*)
Gospel: And your full fellowship with me is as I am defending and confirming The Gospel as I am bound as a Roman prisoner. Nothing can steal Paul's joy as they partner in proclaiming The Gospel.

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- C. God is my witness how I am longing for ALL of 'you all' in the deepest compassion OF Christ Jesus. (*Verse 8*)
Witness: Paul is praying, because God is his witness. Everything he has prayed about his joy in their unified mutual fellowship in proclaiming The Gospel, and his confidence that God will complete the work He began in them, is because he has them in his heart and mind as fellows with him in the grace (*verse 7b*) – my confidence is because God is my witness!
Strong relationship reciprocity: All my prayers are as to my longing and desire with love for ALL of 'you all'. This is his fourth and final use of this Southern phrase for the saints in Philippi he loves for partnering in fellowship with him for The Gospel.
'Gut level' feelings: It is all summed up in the deepest compassion OF Christ Jesus. The word for this deep feeling is literally 'bowels'. It is a metaphor for compassion and love so deep it can be expressed by the figure of speech 'gut level'. I think we are all are experiencing this 'gut level' feeling this morning. For eight weeks we have been unable to worship together face-to-face. We have all been missing the privilege of worshiping together at the deepest level. I think it is safe to say we have all been hurt deeply by enforced quarantine due to COVID-19. We have all been longing for each other because we are fellow sharers of the Grace OF Christ.

We long for fellow-sharers of grace with the compassion OF Christ

Bottom Line: The bottom line of Paul's thankful prelude of prayer for all the saints in Philippi is joy is the result (or fruit) when all who are being made holy IN Christ partner together in proclaiming The Gospel in both words and deeds. So, as we have more opportunity to get out in the days ahead, let us pray that we too will partner together to proclaim The Good News that we are reconciled into a relationship with The God of LOVE because of the faith we have in the work The Savior did for us. It is one thing for us to know this in our hearts and minds. It is another thing for us to actually DO this as a lifestyle of being led by The Holy Spirit. But, the only way we will receive joy as a gift, is IF we DO proclaim The Gospel of The Savior Jesus together!

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Conclusion: The church planting apostle Paul approaches The Father on behalf of those being made holy in The Savior King in Philippi, longing for all of them in compassion in his 'gut' which is the same as King Jesus. He does this because they have always fully partnered with him in the defense and confirmation (proclamation) of The Gospel, even though he is now in prison in Rome. And, he is thankful with joy that The Father will complete the good work He began in them until the day of The Savior King.

Joy comes from partnering in proclaiming The Gospel