

Introduction: The vast majority of Biblically literate American Christians would give ‘joy’ as the theme of *Philippians*. Closer reading of the letter reveals that ‘unity in Christ’s Church’ could also be a theme. Every letter the church planting apostle Paul wrote reflects that ‘The Gospel of The Savior King’ was the primary focus and only theme of his life. A final theme comes from the fact he wrote this letter while a prisoner in Rome and told them God had given them BOTH to have faith IN Christ The King AND to ‘suffer’ for Him. *** Putting it all together, a good sentence to sum up *Philippians* would be: Joy comes from being united in suffering to promote The Gospel. *** The excerpts from the beginning of the letter of *Philippians* we are considering this morning include all four key truths (themes) that run throughout the letter. Three are obvious. But the fourth truth about suffering for Christ is implied in the second part. Paul told them that to him ‘to die is gain’ (*verse 21*); and as a prisoner of Caesar in Rome, knowing that he executed disciples of The Savior Messiah (psychological suffering), Paul says he will remain with them and the glory they have IN Christ will abound to him when he comes to them again (*verses 25-26*). In the meantime he is remaining absent (*verse 27*) from his partners in The Gospel (*verse 5*), and this is suffering. *** We will now look at these truths (themes) from our excerpts in light of the whole letter.

I. Paul thanks God and petitions with joy for his Gospel partners, convinced God will complete His work in them.

(*Verses 3-6*)

A. Paul thanks God and petitions with joy for his Gospel partners, convinced God will complete His work in them. (*Verses 3-5*)

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

My God: When Christ Jesus took hold of him (*3:12*), he became God’s child, and God his Father.

Gift: Here he remembers them thankfully for the gift they gave by Epaphroditus (*2:25; 4:18*)

2. Always in every petition with joy making petition. (*Verse 4*)

Joy: Words for joy occur sixteen times in this letter: five times as a noun and nine times as a verb. Two times Paul uses the compound verb ‘rejoice with’. These two are significant because he is being poured out as a sacrificial drink offering from their sacrificial service of faith so they may ‘rejoice with each other’. (*2:17-18*)

There is joy in mutual suffering for The Gospel.

Complete: Later, he will ask them to make his joy complete by being united in the character qualities given by Christ through His death on The Cross. (*2:2-11*)

3. On your partnership in The Gospel from the first day until now. (*Verse 5*)

Partnership: Partnership is fellowship. At the end of the letter Paul will remind them that they know they were the only Church to partner with him financially from the day the church began (*4:15-16*), starting with the wealthy widow Lydia. (*Acts 16*) God has ordained that The Gospel be communicated to the world by the unity and fellowship of His disciples (*John 17:20-26*). May we be willing to crucify our individualism to partner together in the work of The Great Commission.

Chrysostom: He gives them a great testimonial ... as one might give to apostles and evangelists. ‘The fact that you have been put in charge of one city ... does not mean you care for that one alone, but you do everything so as to become partakers of my labors wherever I am. It is as though you are with me everywhere as my coworkers and companions in preaching’. ... For the care of the saints is no small thing. It is indeed a great one, for it makes you partakers of the blessings laid up for them.

Gospel: What is The Gospel? It is the good news that whoever comes to Jesus The Savior admitting he is a helpless sinner in need of a savior, and has the faith to die to his sins with The King on His Cross so as to have His resurrected life in him through The Holy Spirit, will be given grace and strength to obey by faith all Jesus commanded of His followers.

This is a life filled with The LOVE of God which produces joyful obedience.

B. He is convinced God will complete the good work He began in them. (*Verse 6*)

1. I have been convinced (of) this thing: that The One who began a good work in you all ... (*Verse 6a*)

2. ... will complete (it) until The Day of Messiah Savior. (*Verse 6b*)

Good work: By bringing up the good work in them begun by God, he anticipates his command to them to cooperate with what God is doing so they work with Him with ‘fear and trembling’ (*2:12-13*).

Augustine: God can work in our acts without our help. But when we will the deed, He cooperates with us.

Last Day: Paul lived his whole life in light of and looking forward to the second coming of his Lord on The Last Day.

In his testimony in this letter he said he is pursuing (YLT) the goal of the prize of the upward call of God

IN The Messiah Savior; and, his Lord will transform our lowly body to become like His glorious body (*3:13-21*).

Then God’s work in His people will be completed in His Son – The Savior.

God finishes what He begins in The Savior

II. Paul is convinced he will remain with them in their progress in The Faith that their glory abounds IN Christ so he will hear they stand firm, as one, striving for The Gospel. (*Verses 25-27*)

A. He has been convinced to know he will remain with them and continue with their progress in The Faith so their glory abounds to him IN Christ. (*Verses 25-26*)

1. And I have been convinced to have known that I will remain. (*Verse 25a*)

2. And I will remain with all of you all to your progress and joy of The Faith. (*Verse 25b*)

The Faith: The Faith is the humble dependent faith IN The Savior, through The Gospel, that leads to Holy Spirit enabled joyful obedience to The King of God’s Kingdom. Paul is now taking them back to his reminding them of their past and current partnership, and informing them he has (prophetic) knowledge he will remain with them because they need him.

Progress: One measure of progressing in The Gospel is when the disciples of a church increase in God's LOVE toward others (1:9; 2:1).

Joy: He will later command them to make his joy complete by having the same mind as him and The Lord, namely: They unite to put away selfish pride to love each other in humility (2:1-11). This will result in mutual joy. May we all commit to make progress in God's LOVE as disciples of Jesus in The Faith. Then we will enjoy the fruit of The Holy Spirit.

3. So that your glory will result in abundance to me IN The Messiah King. (Verse 26a)

Glory: Glory is the rightful boasting of praise to God for His Savior Son, to Paul's reward (3:14).

Victorinus: This means, 'Your glory will abound for me. For I will be present to see how your glory exults and abounds IN Christ. I will see how you love Christ, how you serve Christ and how you rejoice in your service of Christ.'

3. Through my coming again to you all. (Verse 26b)

Visit: Again, this was prophetic. Paul was released from being chained to soldiers in Rome and he did visit his beloved church in Philippi. He did not die in Rome this time.

- B. Only be citizens worthy of The Gospel of Christ so that I may hear you all are standing firm in one spirit, striving together for The Faith of The Gospel. (Verse 27)

1. Only, worthy of The Gospel of The King, you all must be citizens. (Verse 27a)

Citizens: Later he will say they share citizenship in heaven. This citizenship is a present reality while they wait for full citizenship rights to be given in the judgment on The Day of The Lord, when God finishes the work He began in them in The Messiah Savor!

God finishes what He begins in The Savior

2. So that whether having come and seen you all, or I am remaining absent. (Verse 27b)

3. I may hear concerning your deeds that you all are standing firm in one spirit. (Verse 27c)

One spirit: This is the one spirit of The Lord he commanded they have in the unity of love (2:1-4).

Victorinus: The summing up of ... life for a Christian is ... to conduct oneself according to Christ's Gospel, to announce His grace steadily both to oneself and others. To have hope in Him, to do all that one does according to all His commands. ... A person can live honestly and uprightly, but this is not adequate to Paul's meaning. Rather we are to conduct ourselves according to Christ's Gospel regardless of what happens and to do so in a worthy manner. Living according to Christ's precepts and doing what Christ wants.

Concern: He warned them about selfish pride (2:3) and those who are enemies of The Cross through self indulgence (3:18-19). He sent Timothy ahead because he desires he may be comforted by news about them (2:19-24), that they live by standing firm in The Lord. (4:1)

Partners in The Gospel progress in The Faith with joy, standing firm

4. With one soul you all are striving together in The Faith of The Gospel. (Verse 27d)

Strive: He would later ask a member of their congregation to help two women who had striven together with him in The Gospel. (4:2-3)

One soul: Again, the main theme (truth) of unity is expressed by his desire to hear they strive with 'one soul'.

May we always live as citizens of God's Kingdom, united to stand firm and strive together in THE Faith of The Gospel.

Partners in The Gospel progress in The Faith with joy, standing firm

Bottom Line: May we be moved to be faithful citizens in God's Kingdom so as to know by experience the joy that comes from being united in suffering to advance The Gospel.

Partners in The Gospel progress in The Faith with joy, standing firm

Conclusion: Paul, the church planter, thanks his God for the congregation he planted in Philippi, petitioning with joy because of their ongoing partnership with him in The Gospel, confident God will complete His work in them until The Day of The Messiah Savior. And, he is convinced he will remain alive and come to them again for their glory IN The Messiah Savior SO they will live as citizens in God's Kingdom, worthy of The Gospel of The King, standing firm and striving together in THE Faith of The Gospel.

Partners in The Gospel progress in The Faith with joy, standing firm