

The sermon

Intro

Recently we've had some good discussions in Sunday school. We've talked about fellowship. We pondered what fellowship actually is. I heard the word *koinwni*, a|.

We've talked about assurance of salvation. How can we be sure we're saved, forgiven, have eternal life?

Last week we talked about being real, authentic, genuine, transparent with each other. Not putting on a false front of perfection and invincible strength.

This morning Paul touches on fellowship and assurance. Thinking fellowship brings up transparency. Let's look to Philippians for guidance on these matters.

READ PASSAGE

Body

Passage Focus

Two points. Paul's prayer life overflows with joy because of his gospel partnership (fellowship) with the Philippians. And Paul expresses his confidence in the security of their salvation.

Point 1: Pray for gospel partners with joy (1:3-5)

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, – 1:3

As he remembers the Philippian church. The individuals (Lydia, the jailer, others he baptized). A functioning church with overseers and deacons that's doing gospel work and supporting missionaries (Paul). As he remembers the individuals and the organization, Paul gives thanks. To Lydia? To the overseers and deacons? No. He thanks God. Why thank God? Because God is the source behind the existence of this church (1:6).

always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, – 1:4

Paul thanks God whenever he prays for this church. Evidently Paul has a prayer routine he follows. And the Philippian church is on that routine.

How does Paul pray for them? Joyfully. When Paul thinks about saved friends, saved gospel partners, a functioning local church, in a place that once had none of this, he rejoices. Joy overflows when we meditate on what God has done. Joy meaning great gladness. The Philippian church makes Paul happy.

Like we might find happiness in food, travel, snowmobiling, sports, quilting, Paul finds gladness in the local church.

because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. – 1:5

Paul's joyful because of an ongoing partnership.

"from the first day until now" = since he first spoke the gospel to Lydia and the jailer's household and they believed and were baptized.

And 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. ¹⁶ Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. – Philippians 4:15-16

That's why I said last week Paul was like a supported missionary of the Philippian church. They've been partners thirteen years at this point. (Paul first visited Philippi in 49 AD and he's writing in 62 AD) They're partners. They're invested in one another (giving and receiving).

Non-Christian

The **gospel** = the good news of salvation from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died on the cross as a substitute to rescue sinners. If repent and believe, turn from sin to trust Jesus, we'll be forgiven and heirs of eternal life.

Fellowship

We have a Fellowship Ministry. What exactly is fellowship? The word translated "partnership" in 1:5 is the Greek word *koinwni,a|* that's elsewhere translated "fellowship." "entered into partnership" in 4:15 is the verb form of *koinwni,a|*. Why does the ESV use partnership instead of fellowship?

There seems to be two general uses of the word.

- 1) A close association that involves **mutual interests** and sharing of resources.
- 2) A close association in terms of people who have **deep, personal relationships** with one another.

When mutual interests are highlighted, the ESV uses words like partnership, participation, sharing, and contribution for *koinwni,a* (Rom 15:26; Phil 1:5; 2:1; Philemon 1:6).

When deep personal relationship is highlighted, the ESV uses the word fellowship (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:13; 1 John 1:6-7).

In Christian fellowship, both mutual interests and deep personal relationships are involved. We have relationship with one another because we first have a common mutual interest: Jesus, the gospel, the Bible. It's not guns, hunting, quilting, political affiliation that bring us together. It's God, his word, salvation in Christ.

In 1:5, it's "*partnership in the gospel.*" Paul has friendship with these people because of shared gospel interests. The gospel brought Paul and Lydia and the jailor together, not the Patriots, quilting, snowmobiles.

I'm not saying it's sin to watch the Patriots with Darryl. I'm saying I watch the Patriots with Darryl because of prior gospel partnership.

Immanuel Baptist Church

Looking back on my travels, I'm amazed at how quickly and easily deep relationships were formed because of shared gospel interests. When we moved from Maine to Louisville, Kentucky in January 2018 we only knew one person in the city. A seminary professor. We didn't have any family, college friends, past church members in Louisville.

We had some ideas about the church we'd join. While Kaitlin was taking Anna to ballet classes at the seminary, she met a woman whose husband was from Bangor. They invited us to their home for the AFC Championship (Patriots against Jaguars) to watch the game with Patriot fans from the church. The Senior Pastor happened to be there. Over a Patriots game we got to talk about the church and get to know each other.

That church (Immanuel Baptist Church) wasn't on my list. We visited the church the next weekend and settled on membership there. Then we joined a small group (four young families) where we had instant, close, meaningful relationships. We had fellowship.

At small group the adults had a couple minutes each to share prayer requests, give updates. We shared and prayed through everything shared till we went through everyone. A 30 minute Bible study followed prayer. Mostly focused on applying the past sermon's teachings.

Last week Gerald highlighted authentic, transparent lives. At small group people shared real struggles. We weren't fake. My point is we had deep, meaningful fellowship with strangers we'd never met in the span of a couple weeks. All because of a **mutual allegiance** to Jesus, his gospel, his word. **Shared gospel interest creates meaningful relationships!**

Immanuel Network

At Immanuel, an odd thing happened. They were near a seminary and seminary students kept coming to the church. So the church was loaded with aspiring pastors and missionaries. They began a three year program called the Pastoral Apprenticeship. Over time, dozens of pastors and missionaries were sent by one church. They knew they had something special. But they didn't know what to do with it. Thus came the Immanuel Network.

- 1) Monthly Zoom meetings over the web among Network partners and churches.

Monthly I'm talking with pastors from Massachusetts, New York, Louisiana, South Carolina, Kansas, Hawaii, Canada, etc. Monthly I'm talking with missionaries in Mexico, Ireland, Indonesia, India, Africa, Central Asia. I've received pastoral counsel from missionaries in Africa.

- 2) An annual conference at the church called the Network Summit.
- 3) Planting a new church once a year.
- 4) Pastoral, in-person visits to missionaries on the field.
- 5) Pastoral, in-person visits to pastors on the field (my small group leader and a pastor/elder visited me in July 2020).
- 6) Church members moving to join missionaries already on the field.
- 7) Church members moving to be part of the churches being planted.
- 8) Church members moving to come on staff at a church where a previous Immanuel member pastors.
- 9) I could apply to have an intern come for six months if you're interested.
- 10) Un-programmed phone calls between partners (I talk and pray with an elder from one of their church plants every month).

The Immanuel Network is Philippians 1:5 gospel partnerships spread throughout the globe. All from one local church. I was there for just 19 months and gospel partnerships abound.

What is fellowship?

Gospel partnership rooted in mutual allegiance to Jesus that overflows into deep, meaningful personal relationships.

What does this mean for us?

Fellowship is gospel partnership. We share resources for a common purpose. Gospel advance. That's making new disciples. And helping those new disciples mature in the faith. That's evangelizing together. Praying for each other's evangelism. Encouraging each other in evangelism. That's helping new believers. Befriending those who join with us. Getting to know them. Praying with each other. Reading good Christian books together. Spending time with each other.

[normal: talking about who we're trying to reach; sharing struggles; prayer requests; sharing what we're learning in God's word]

Because of shared gospel goals and time together, deep relationships form. That's transparency. That's partnership.

Jesus, his gospel, his word is the glue that holds us together. Not Patriots, not guns, not quilting.

Let our fellowship be seasoned with Jesus, his gospel, his word. Pray for one another. I'm talking spontaneous conversations that aren't programmed.

Point 2: Be confident in God's saving (& keeping) power (1:6)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. – 1:6

- 1) Paul expresses confidence (“*I am sure of this*”).

Sure of what?

- 2) God will complete what he began.

Complete what?

- 3) A past “good work in you.”

The “*good work in you*” must be salvation. Last week we saw in Acts 16 that Lydia’s household and a jailer’s household believed and were baptized.

That’s saving them from their sin. Both pardon, forgiveness of sins. And power to fight sin. The new birth, born again, newness of life, a new heart. The new birth is the work **in them**.

The God who drew them to himself will raise them on the last day (John 6:44). That’s confidence that when God saves a person, he ensures they won’t fall away and fail to be glorified and enter the heavenly city.

When will this “good work” be completed?

- 4) “*at the day of Jesus Christ*”

Paul details the nature of this completion later in the letter.

But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself. – **Philippians 3:20-21**

As heaven’s citizens, we await Jesus’ return. The day when God will transform this perishable body into a glorious body, like Jesus’ resurrected body that can’t die (Rom 6:9).

Our salvation is complete “*at the day of Jesus Christ.*” We just finished Malachi where we encountered the day of the LORD (Mal 4:5), the time when wicked will be judged and the righteous will leap with joy (Mal 4:1-3). In 1st and 2nd Thessalonians, the day of the Lord is the coming of Christ to raise his people and punish the wicked (1 Thess 4:15-17; 5:1-3, 9-10; 2 Thess 1:5-10; 2:1-2).

1/2 Thessalonians was written approximately 50 AD. In Philippians the day of the LORD is now “*the day of Jesus Christ.*” Jesus is God.

Certain glorification

Elsewhere, Jesus and Peter spell out the certainty that salvation begun always results in salvation completed.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸ I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹ My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. – **John 10:27-29**

When Jesus gives a person eternal life and they can’t perish. Peter elaborates.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ to an inheritance that is imperishable,

undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. – 1 Peter 1:3-5

That's God caused us to be born again (began a good work in us) and makes our future, eternal inheritance imperishable (completes what he started) because God guards that inheritance through faith (the Holy Spirit in you strengthens your faith). The point is God's work/power in us ensures our faith won't fail so that we'll experience final salvation (glorification). That's confidence in God's keeping power.

Assurance

In terms of assurance, Paul's confident the people he's writing to are saved people. He can tell who is a Christian and who isn't. He's also confident they won't fall away some time in between conversion and glorification. That's assurance of glorification.

Perseverance and falling away

I'm assuming we need to keep trusting in Christ till the end to inherit the promises because of passages like:

For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end. – Hebrews 3:14

Proof of past salvation is continuing in the faith. We need to hold our confidence till the end!

If everyone who begins is glorified, and those who begin but fail to continue aren't glorified, those who fail to continue never began. Not to say that true believers can't fall into sin for a time, but God's power will always bring them back.

I'm assured I won't fall away (the good work will be completed) because Philippians 1:6 says it (that's trusting God's promises) and 1 Peter 1:3-5 says God will strengthen my faith.

That's confidence in God and his promises through and through. Not confidence in myself.

In our weakness we need confidence in God!

Assurance

As for assurance of past salvation, how can we be sure God began a good work in us?

- 1) We trust God's promises. If I trust God's promises I trust they're true for me.

If you recognize your sin and need for Jesus, trust him today!

- 2) God has changed my life.

Is there evidence of the Holy Spirit's work?

- 3) The Holy Spirit brings assurance to the saved (Rom 8:16).

Application

God wants us to be sure he'll complete their salvation. God wants us to be sure that he'll strengthen our faith and glorification is certain.

If you want an illustration, God is like a top-notch builder. He erects an unshakeable foundation that can't be moved (Jesus' substitutionary atonement and the indwelling Spirit). He works without stopping until the building is complete (he never leaves us to ourselves and our own strength – we have the Spirit strengthening our faith). He finishes the job (he gives us glorified bodies when Jesus returns).

Conclusion

Pray for partners with joy. Rejoice in those you partner with.

Be confident in God's saving (& keeping) power. He'll complete what he began in you!