

Subject: *Christian Fellowship in the Gospel, Part 1*

Scripture: *Philippians 1:1-7*

I love the one true church and I have a special love for our church because we are faithful to Christ. We understand that He is the foundation of our church, the head of the body, and the heavenly bridegroom and we are His bride. I recently heard a message that dealt with three elements that are essential for every true biblical church.

Three Essential Elements of a True Church

- 1) Unity (oneness)
- 2) Purity (holiness)
- 3) Fidelity (commitment to biblical truth)

Now is a good time to be reminded of the importance of our church, our foundation, and our mission. It is also a good time to be reminded about Christian joy and how it is God's gift to believers in spite of our trials and troubles. Let's look at our text in Phil. 1.

The theme of Paul's letter is Christian joy. A form of the word "joy" or "rejoice" is found 16 times in these four chapters. Christian joy comes from salvation in Christ and the gospel, therefore Paul wrote about fellowship in the gospel (Phil. 1:5), defense and confirmation of the gospel (1:7), furtherance of the gospel (1:12), defense of the gospel (1:17), striving together for the gospel (1:27), serving in the gospel (2:22), laboring in the gospel (4:3), and spreading the gospel (4:15).

Paul wrote this letter from prison (1:7, 13, 14), but he still had real joy in his soul.

1. INTRODUCTION AND GREETING (vs. 1-2)

A. The writers (Paul and Timothy)

As customary of first-century letters, Paul identified himself and Timothy as the writers. Paul and Timothy had a close partnership in the Gospel ministry. They were partners on two missionary journeys.

They are identified together in six of Paul's letters (Philippians; 2 Corinthians; Colossians; 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon). Two more of Paul's letters were written to Timothy (1, 2 Timothy).

Timothy was Paul's spiritual son in the faith, and eventually became Paul's assistant. In verse 1, they are bondservants (*douloi*, slaves) of Jesus Christ. A bondservant (slave) had no rights, no property, no agenda, and no ambition of his own. His sole purpose was to please his master. The Jewish rabbis said: "It is the worst insult you can ever give a human being, to be a slave." Paul and Timothy had different thoughts because they had the best Master.

B. The readers (all the saints in Christ Jesus...in Philippi)

Paul writes to *all* of them (1:1), prays for *all* (1:4), loves *all* (1:7), yearns for *all* (1:8), hopes to continue with them *all* (1:25), and greets them *all* (4:21). The word "saints" is

always plural in the New Testament. This name means “holy ones, separated ones,” those whom the Lord has set apart to glorify Him. The word “saints” is related to the word sanctification. Saints are those who are separated by grace through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Saints are set apart to live holy lives, to represent Christ and serve Him. Saints are separated by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Their spiritual position is in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17, and many other NT references). This describes their spiritual union with Christ.

Their physical location is in Philippi. This was a city in Macedonia and the first church in Europe. Paul wrote this letter about 11 years after the church was started. We read about the start of the Philippian church in Acts 16.

Paul also mentions their spiritual leaders (bishops and deacons). Bishops (Gk. *episkopos*, overseers) are also called pastors and elders. Deacons are literally “those who serve.”

C. The customary greeting (grace to you and peace...)

This is the standard greeting in Paul’s letters reminding believers of God’s grace (Eph. 2:8-9) and the resulting peace that comes through Christ (Rom. 5:1).

2. GRATITUDE AND ASSURANCE (vs. 3-8)

Paul had the fondest memories of this church and was thankful for them. This is one of the best things that could ever be said of a believer or a church. He is thankful for their fellowship (Gk. *koinonia*, common life, sharing together) in the gospel. Paul looked back to their first days together (Acts 16).

- A. Timothy was added to Paul’s mission team (Acts 16:1-5)
- B. God’s providential leading (16:6-10)
- C. Lydia’s conversion (16:11-15)
- D. Opposition to the ministry (16:16-24)
- E. Conversion of the jailer and his family (16:25-34)