

TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

(Philippians 1:3-11)

Series: "Philippians: The Joyful Letter" (Part 3)

...Have you ever noticed on our money; that is, all coins and most of the bills; there appears the phrase "E Pluribus Unum," meaning, out of many one. Since 1782 this has been our country's motto, and refers to forming one nation from the original 13 colonies. Today we are one nation, but seem to be a very divided people...

...The church is truly the only place where people of every conceivable background and life situation can join together as ONE, and enjoy the partnership in the Gospel. Heaven is the ultimate "E Pluribus Unum."

...Paul in writing his "Joyful Letter," tells that the secret of his joy was a single mind; he lived for Christ and the Gospel. He tells that one of the sources of Joy is found in the common partnership enjoyed in the Gospel.

THREE WAYS THAT WE, LIKE PAUL, SHOULD EXPRESS OUR PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL WITH ALL BELIEVERS.

...It is only the Gospel glue that binds our hearts together in the unity found in the Body of Christ.

...The word "Fellowship" means to have in common. We are partners in our common faith in the Lord Jesus.

I. **Minds: We Should Have The Welfare Of Others In Our Thoughts. (vv.3-6)**

...Looking upon the interests and needs of others, not focusing upon ourselves.

- A. It is remarkable that though Paul is in a Roman prison for the Gospel, he is not fixed upon his own dire circumstances. No pity party here! (He is now 4 years in prison...)
- B. Rather, his thoughts went back to the believers in Philippi and every memory of them brought him joy. Though he suffered there for Christ, he was beaten and jailed, yet through all of his sufferings, men, women and children came to saving faith in Jesus.
...Paul told them, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you."
- C. As Paul remembered his friends, he was encouraged to know that God was still working in their lives. (v.6) "From the first day until now."
...Salvation is "The good work" God does in us when we trust His Son, and then He continues to work in us through His Spirit. (v.6) In other words, salvation includes a three-fold work:
 1. The work God does for us...salvation.
 2. The work God does in us...sanctification.
 3. The work God does through us...service.

II. **Hearts: We Should Carry The Burdens Of Others In Our Hearts. (vv.7-8)**

...Paul now moves deeper, he tells that more than merely being in his thoughts, they were in his heart.

- A. Christian love is "The tie that binds." Love is the evidence of true salvation. (1 John 3:14)
...One writer calls love "The spiritual lubrication keeping the machinery of life running smoothly".
...Paul used the phrase "You all" nine times in his letter. All were included here, none left out!
- B. How did Paul evidence his love for them?
...He was suffering on their behalf. His bonds were proof of his love. Christianity was going to get a fair hearing in Rome because of his prison and trial. The outcome would affect all believers throughout the Roman Empire, and especially the church at Philippi.
- C. How can we practice this kind of self-denying burden bearing, this kind of love?
 1. This is not something you work-up. It is something God does in us and through us.
 2. Paul longed for his friends, it was Christ's love channeled through Paul. (1:8)

- D. How can we tell if we are truly bound in love to other Christians? Two Ways:
1. We have a deep concern about them. The believers in Philippi were concerned about Paul and sent Epaphroditus to encourage him and a gift of money to help him.
 2. We have a willingness to forgive one another. (1 Peter 4:8) "Above all things have a fervent love among yourselves: for love covers the multitude of sins."
...Christians who practice love always experience joy. Both come from the Holy Spirit.
(Galatians 5)

III. Prayers: We Should Remember The Needs Of Others In Our Prayers. (vv.9-11)

...Paul found joy in remembering his friends before the Throne of Grace in prayer. Your prayer list...

- A. The High Priest of Israel would wear the ephod over his heart. This had 12 precious stones, one stone for each of the 12 tribes. (Exodus 28:15-29) He carried the people over his heart in love.
- B. Here Paul prays for their maturity, and he began with love. For abounding and discerning love...
...He also prayed they would have a mature Christian character...pure, blameless, righteousness.

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN YOUR LIFE?

1. Be happy and rejoice, that though you may not belong anywhere else in this world of ours, you belong here...for we are all one in Jesus through His Gospel. We are all the children of God, it does not matter where you came from or who you are, if you know Jesus as Savior and Lord, you are family. You belong here!!! Welcome!!!
2. Since we are all one family in Christ, we must concern ourselves with the well being of one another. This means we make it our business to know what our brothers and sisters are going through and do what we can to help. "We rejoice with those who rejoice, and we weep with those who weep." We are to bear one another's burden. Be a blessing to others in this, and joy will flood your heart.
3. Examine your prayer list. Does it include the needs of others? Today begin to pray for the spiritual needs of others. Physical needs are important, but vastly more important are the spiritual needs of people.
4. Today Jesus is calling sinners to salvation. If you died today, do you know that you would be in heaven? If so, how do you know this? If you answered yes, the only correct answer as to how, is that Jesus died in your place. Have you asked the Lord Jesus to be your sin substitute? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved." Come and join the most wonderful family ever!!!!