

In verses 1:9-11 Paul says *“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.”* He found joy in remembering them in prayer. The deepest Christian fellowship and joy we can experience in this life is at the throne of grace, praying with and for one another.

As you may know, we, Faith Church, have a prayer meeting on Wednesday evening. Usually, five of us gather to pray for almost all of the Faith Church family by name, especially for those who are on the prayer request. Please remember that our prayer group is counting on you in prayer. If you are too busy to come to the prayer meeting, please remember this sacred moment of prayer time and join us in spirit and prayer wherever you are. I know that prayer is power.

Paul prayed that they might have mature Christian character. He prayed that they might experience abounding love and discerning love. Christian love is not blind. The heart and mind work together so that we have discerning love and loving discernment. Paul wanted his friends to grow in discernment.

Paul prayed for them to have mature Christian love and character, *“without offence till the day of Christ.”* This means that our lives do not cause others to stumble, and that they are ready for the judgment seat of Christ when he returns. Paul also prayed that they might have mature Christian service. He wanted them filled and fruitful. He was not interested simply in church activities, but in the kind of spiritual fruit that is produced when we are in fellowship with Christ. In John 15:4 Jesus says, *“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”* He wanted them to remain in Christ and allow Christ to work through them.

Paul says we need true Christian fellowship. Let us have one another in our minds. Let us have one another in our hearts. Let us have one another in our prayers. This is true Christian fellowship and the way to increase our joy.

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Philippians (2): **How to Increase Your Joy**

Philippians 1:3-11

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

As we begin this morning let me talk about this word, “fellowship” for just a moment. We use that word and throw it around so lightly sometimes that I think we forget or don't even realize the true meaning to this word. We say things like: ‘Are you coming to the fellowship dinner?’ ‘That was a great time, we had some great fellowship.’ ‘We would love to have you over for some fellowship.’ Many times, we think that getting together or having some food constitutes fellowship.

But let's dig a little deeper. The word, “fellowship” simply means "to have in common." We tend to think that fellowship is really only acquaintanceship or friendship. We cannot have fellowship with someone unless we have something in common. For Christian Fellowship, this means we possess eternal life with the person or people we are fellowshiping with. Unless a person has trusted Christ as his Savior, he knows nothing of "the fellowship of the gospel." In Philippians 2:1, Paul writes about the "fellowship of the Spirit," because when a person is born again he receives the gift of the Spirit. There is also the "fellowship of his sufferings" in Philippians 3:10. True Christian fellowship is much more than having a name on a church roll or being present at a meeting. We can have fellowship with those who live miles away from us spiritually. One of the sources of Christian joy is this fellowship that believers have in Jesus Christ. Paul was in Rome, his friends were miles away in Philippi, but their spiritual fellowship was real and satisfying. Paul uses three expressions in verses 1-11 that describe true Christian fellowship:

First, Paul had his fellow Christians in Philippi in his mind (1:3-6)

Let us look at verse 3 through 6: *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a **good work** in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”* Paul was thinking of others and not himself. While he's waiting for his trial in Rome, Paul's mind goes back to the believers in Philippi, and these thoughts bring him joy.

In Acts 16 we can find some of the first members of the church at Philippi.

These are some of the people who were on Paul's mind:

- Lydia who was a seller of purple fine linen and wealthy
- Slave girl who was broken and poor
- Jailer who was a blue collar, rough hands, and uneducated

These are the people Paul has in his mind along with others when he is writing the letter of Philippians. These thoughts brought him joy.

In verse 5 he is thankful for their “*partnership*” in the gospel. It is very possible that he is referring to their financial support. The church at Philippi was the only church that entered into fellowship with Paul to help support his ministry.

In verse 6 Paul uses the words “*good work*.” This may also be focusing on the sharing of their resources. It was started by the Lord, and Paul was sure the Lord would continue it and complete it. Paul encouraged them to do God's work of salvation and Christian living.

During my ministry at First Church in Crystal Lake, we had no worship services one weekend a year, Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Instead, we had various community service activities on Saturday and packing meals at a school gym on Sunday morning. We just had an opening prayer in the beginning of the project and blessings at the end of the projects. Eight people gathered as a team for packing meals. From pre-school kids to elderly persons, all people could participate in the project. The praise band played various praise music and sang praise songs during the work. We sang along with the praise team while we packed the meal. The group could have a break with refreshment from time to time. It was great joy and fellowship. When we share our resources and do “good work,” we find joy from it.

Salvation is the good work God continues to work in us through His Spirit. (Phil. 2:12-13) In other words, salvation includes a threefold work: 1. The work God does for us is salvation. 2. The work God does in us is sanctification. 3. The work God does through us is service. This work will continue until we see Christ, and then the work will be fulfilled. It was a source of joy to Paul to know that God was still working in the lives of his fellow believers at Philippi. This is the real basis for joyful Christian fellowship, to have God at work in our lives day by day. Paul had joy as he thought about these people in his mind.

Paul now moves even deeper in his expressions of true Christian Fellowship.

Second, Paul had his fellow Christians in his heart. (1:7-8)

Let us look at verses 7 and 8: “*It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you **with the affection of Christ Jesus.***” Paul moves this relationship in the fellowship even deeper. Paul's sincere love for his friends was something that could not be disguised or hidden. Love is the evidence of salvation. Christian love is what binds relationships together.

How can Christians today learn to practice this kind of love? Christian love is not something we work up; it is something that God does in us and through us. Paul longed for his friends, “*with the affection of Christ Jesus.*” (8) It was not Paul's love channeled through Christ; it was Christ's love channeled through Paul. Romans 5:5 says, “*And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.*” When we allow God to perform His “good work” in us, then we grow in our love for one another.

I am so thankful to John Deguia for his time and work waxing the Fellowship Hall, especially the Fireside room and kitchen the floor. I think God stirred his mind to work for our church. One day, while he was working in the Fellowship Hall, Vernon Swanson came to church looking for a pickup truck or a minivan to move furniture he brought. As I listened to his explanation, I thought he needed muscles as well as a truck or minivan. I came to John and asked if he could help for moving furniture. John said, ‘yes’ and I brought Vernon to the Fellowship Hall and introduced him to John. Both of them worked together, got to know each other and became friends. I saw they had joy in helping one another.

Here's the truth. Christians who practice love always experience joy. Love and joy come as a result of the presence of the same Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22 says, “*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy.....*” Paul had joy because he had them on his mind, in his heart, and last in his prayers.

Third, Paul had his fellowship Christians in his prayers (1:9-11)