

## Communion

Last Tuesday, David called me around 1:30. He was on his way to an appointment when a beeping sound alerted him. A message on the dashboard said the engine overheated and was going into idle mode. The warning came just before getting on the highway, so he was able to pull into a parking lot. I packed up and headed to where he was.

For a couple days I had noticed some fluid under the car that wasn't there before, so I knew there was a problem, thinking it was either transmission or coolant. Because of conflicting schedules, I didn't have time to check it out. When he told me the engine had overheated, I surmised that it was coolant. Fortunately, I had some in the garage, and it was on my way to where he was. My plan was to add coolant and drive it to the repair shop which was just a few miles away. David took my car home and I headed to the repair shop.

Watching the temperature gauge on the dash it jumped from halfway to overheating in a matter of seconds. I'm not even sure I drove a mile. I called a tow company to haul me to the repair shop.

Thinking about that experience, I considered how that correlates to us. We can get behind the wheel of life and go places and do things and over time we might see a little puddle but think it's no big deal and we'll get to it sometime later only to find that it's a bigger problem than we thought. So what do we do? We try to fix it ourselves. We think our efforts are all we need to do to get us to where we need to go only to find out it only gets us so far when we find ourselves in trouble again.

The puddles that we discover are what the Bible calls sin. Everyone has puddles (**Romans 3:23**). Your puddle may be different than mine, but it's still a puddle and it will sideline us. So we try and fix our puddles by ourselves only to find that our fix was only temporary. As a matter of fact, it wasn't a fix at all. If we want a permanent fix, there is only one, if I can use the term, spiritual tow truck, that will take care of the issue of sin. And that's what Jesus Christ did on the cross.

The Bible tells us that the puddle of sin leads only to one destination – permanent death or separation from God. But Christ takes a broken down soul to the repair shop of the Father where the Holy Spirit transforms us into something new, giving us a permanent fix. Christ died in our place to remove all the puddles of sin so that we could have eternal life. **Romans 6:23 “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

Like a tow truck service, you can call on Christ at any time of the day on any day for Him to repair your broken life. When you do that, you become a new creation.

**II Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, He is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold all things have become new.”**

Communion is a reminder that Christ permanently fixed our sin problem, that the shedding of His blood cleanses us from all the puddles of our unrighteousness. It reminds us that we are now in fellowship with Him and so when He instituted communion on the night He was betrayed that led to His crucifixion the next day, He said **“Do this in remembrance of Me.”** His sacrifice gives us a permanent fix to the puddles of sin. Communion reminds us of what He did for us and we thank Him that His tow truck picked us up and took us to the place that fixes our broken lives.

### A Partnership of Proclaiming the Gospel Philippians 1:3-6

This past week as I was studying for the message, a song popped into my head, and I began to mull it over. Written by a Catholic priest, it was popular in the mid to late 60's during the Jesus movement and perhaps written because of what the Jesus people perceived as a need within the church. The song *They'll Know We Are Christians* was based on Jesus' words in **John 13:35**. Non-believers in the first century would say of early Christians **“Behold, how they love one another.”**

Perhaps Father Scholtes saw the growing schism in

the church and wrote the song to encourage unity in the body of Christ. As a refresher, here are the lyrics to his song: Hymn #429.

We are one in the Spirit;

We are one in the Lord.

We are one in the Spirit;

We are one in the Lord.

And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will walk with each other;

We will walk hand in hand.

We will walk with each other;

We will walk hand in hand.

And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

We will work with each other;

We will work side by side.

We will work with each other;

We will work side by side.

And we'll guard each one's dignity and same each one's pride.

And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love.

Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love.

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As we have been discussing, we understand that at the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit joins us together in a unique relationship we call the church, or more specifically, the body of Christ. We rightly call this place a church. There are many local churches in this town, in our state and country and in fact all over the world. But the church we are talking about is what we call the universal church. It's not a building or even a denomination. The church we are referring to is comprised of all those who through faith in Jesus Christ for salvation are joined in a body bound together by the Holy Spirit. Christ is our head and we are the members that make up the body, just as a physical body has many

members all housed in one body. And just as there are unique parts of the physical body with different functions so each member of the body of Christ is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit to use those spiritual gifts for the benefit and growth within the body. This union of benefit is for our good and God's glory. And that is how the song begins – “We are one in the Spirit.”

**What was it though, that compelled the author to pray that one day all unity would one day be restored?**

His words seem to suggest that unity in the body of Christ is absent or somehow illusive or even yet future with the hope that when it does occur, we will finally let others know that we are Christians by our love. It seems to me, that he is indicating that love is the glue by which unity happens.

I suppose he is right, because love for others is the external expression of the internal work of the Holy Spirit giving evidence that we are genuine Christ followers according to **John 13:34-35**.

The second stanza then is the demonstration of what loving each other looks like in that we will walk hand in hand. I don't suppose he means that physically believers are holding hands, although I enjoy a bit of that expression with Robyn from time to time when the occasion arises as a way of showing others that I love her, that we are together.

I think we would agree that the author of the song is speaking metaphorically of what holding hands looks like because it implies tenderness, love, and care for one another who are in the body of Christ as a way of showing the world that loving others is a compelling evidence of the unity that exists between us, that we all get along and actually like each other and like being with each other. Or maybe it's blending passages like **Galatians 5:22-23** where we allow the Spirit of God to develop His fruit in us along with **I Corinthians 13:4-8** which describes components of genuine love. All of this boils down to God given love that results in Christian unity. It's similar to what we discussed last week from **Amos 3:3** in the rhetorical question the

farmer/shepherd meant when he wrote **“Can two walk together unless they are agreed?”** I think that agreement implies you get along. Walking together hand in hand then, suggests that we are in agreement with each other seen in the affection that exists between believers because we are mutually in Christ, living in obedience to Christ.

The third stanza of the song brings us to our text this morning in **Philippians 1:3-6** where we find that another demonstration of walking in agreement with each other is in our working together. Unity involves working toward a common goal or purpose. That purpose, as I have titled the message, is a partnership of proclaiming the Gospel.

Consider from **verses 3-4** the fellowship of prayer.

## I. THE FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER – vv. 3-4

We discovered from our discussion of **Acts 2:42** that one of the components of fellowship within the early church was that the believers devoted themselves to prayer. We see this played out a few chapters later (**chapter 12**) where Peter had been imprisoned by King Herod who had just put James to death. The church held a prayer meeting at the home of Mary, Mark’s mother in which they earnestly prayed for Peter’s release. We nervously chuckle that while their prayer was answered, they initially didn’t believe it and it makes me a bit uneasy because how many times have I prayed but not believed when the answer was at the door step?

Prayer was a big part of fellowship in the early church and was a regular habit of Paul praying for others as we see in his letters.

**Romans 1:8, 10** **“I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you...and I pray that now at last by God’s will the way may be opened for me to come to you.”**

**I Corinthians 1:4** **“I always thank God for you...”**

**Ephesians 1:15-16** **“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped**

**giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”**

**Colossians 1:3** **“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.”**

**I Thessalonians 1:2** **“We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers.”**

So here in our passage as we think about the fellowship of prayer, the first thing we see from this verse about prayer is that it’s personal.

### A. It’s Personal – v. 3

Paul’s prayers are pointed in only one direction. It’s not to some statue carved out of wood or stone or metal sitting in a little alcove or on a shelf or in a temple somewhere deafly staring back at us.

It’s not to some heavenly body orbiting in space.

It’s not to some creature on land, in the sea or air.

The focus of his prayer is to God, and God alone with whom Paul had a personal encounter in the person of the resurrected Christ on his way to Damascus.

It’s the same personal God addressed in **Psalms 23** when David referred to Him as his shepherd who guides, protects, provides, sustains.

For Paul, God was personal and the term **“my God”** expresses the deep and intimate relationship Paul had with God as he lived to obey Him and serve Him. Only someone with such an abiding relationship could or would endure the kinds of hardships Paul encountered and still refer to Him as **“my God”** and mean it affectionately rather than with disdain or contempt.

Remember that Paul wrote this letter while sitting in prison. While we’re at it, keep in mind that Paul and Silas on their first journey spent a night in jail in the very city to whom he is now writing. He knew then as he did now that his God was with him, and despite the hardships, he could have joy and give thanks.

To Paul, God was a personal God to whom he prayed. Despite his many persecutions, he enjoyed personal and sweet fellowship with God and for others and did so in prayer.

**Are your prayers offered to a personal God with whom you enjoy sweet fellowship?**

If we are not in fellowship with the Lord or with one another, we cannot experience prayer that is personal.

The second thing I notice regarding the fellowship of prayer is that it's persistent.

### **B. It's Persistent – v. 4**

In **verse 3** he said, **“every time I remember you.”**  
In **verse 4** he said, **“all my prayers for all of you, I always pray...”**

This is a general term for prayer and speaks of making a request or supplication and it is always directed to God.

Paul didn't pray for them sometimes or sporadically. He regularly prayed for these believers.

When he remembered them, he prayed for them. When he prayed for them, he prayed for all of them, even for the likes of Euodia and Syntyche to whom he urged in **chapter 4** that they would reconcile their differences and restore their unity which would restore unity within the church. **Would you agree with me that when two people in the church are at odds, the church is not in unity?** Let me just say so there is no confusion, that to my knowledge that's not the case here at Fellowship Bible.

Paul says these two ladies contended for the faith alongside him, which means they were in the trenches with Paul fighting for the sake of the gospel. They had been a part of his ministry spreading the good news in Philippi and he included them in his prayers for this church.

In our series on prayer, we talked about praying for one another. It is a command, not a suggestion.

**James 5:16 “Pray for one another.”**

**I Timothy 2:1 “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.”**

Here are some ways we can pray for others. It's not an exhaustive list but can be a springboard as you pray for people.

1. Pray that God would help you know how to pray for them.
2. Pray for specific needs if you know what those are.
3. Pray for protection and safety if they are travelling or when they are working, etc.
4. Pray for their spiritual growth.
5. Pray for their emotional well-being.
6. Pray for their physical needs like health.
7. Pray for their relationships.
8. Pray for their financial or other tangible needs.

Something else we should mention in prayer that often goes neglected is giving thanks to God for others. **How often do we focus on just thanking God for someone when we remember them?** Paul did.

Thank the Lord for their friendship.

Thank the Lord for their spiritual growth.

Thank the Lord for their met needs.

Thank the Lord for their contribution to the body of Christ.

Thank the Lord for their service to the church.

Thank the Lord for the encouragement they were to you during a personal need of your own where they did something or said something that was evidence of God's hand in your life through them.

Paul was persistent in his prayer to the Lord for these believers. They brought joy to him and that's the third point from these two verses about the fellowship of prayer – it's praiseworthy.

### **C. It's Praiseworthy – vv. 3-4**

Paul is joyful and gives thanks for them.

When he thought about them it brought a smile to his face and joy to his heart and he paused to give thanks to God for them.

I would think He thanked God for their salvation.

I would think He thanked God for their spiritual growth.



As we'll see in a moment, Paul was thankful for their participation in the gospel with him. He had no regrets about his relationship and fellowship with them whenever they came to mind. He did not allow what happened to him in Philippi on his first visit or any ensuing difficulties to cloud the joy he felt for them when they came to mind.

Let me add here as well, that it probably encouraged the church a great deal to know not only that Paul prayed for them regularly, but that he was joyful when he thought about them. That makes a church feel good about itself.

So let me ask a question. **Who do you always remember with gratitude and who do you give God thanks for?** Paul thanked God for the joy he had for the Philippian church in the fellowship he shared with them, even though he was apart from them.

John MacArthur writes: "A Christian who willingly forsakes fellowship with other believers will inevitably be without genuine, Spirit-given joy. It is impossible to live faithfully or happily apart from fellow believers in Christ. But the believer who regularly is in the company of fellow saints fulfilling the responsibilities that such fellowship requires and provides will just as inevitably be filled with divine joy."

That was Paul's experience and he told them so.

The fellowship of prayer includes thanksgiving for others – it's praiseworthy.

Moving on to **verse 5**, we see the fellowship of participation.

## II. THE FELLOWSHIP OF PARTICIPATION – v. 5

We have been studying these past weeks the idea of koinonia, translated fellowship, partnership, and sharing because that is what koinonia is. When there is that kind of unity, there is a unity of heart and purpose that directs the actions of a church toward achieving a common goal. Here Paul speaks about their participation or assistance in this partnership.

### A. Their Assistance in This Partnership

Some suggest that the partnership Paul refers to here is their mutual faith in Christ that binds them together as part of the body of Christ. They participate in the same body through the Spirit.

Most believe Paul is referring to their joint effort in sharing the gospel. Remember that at one time Euodia and Syntyche contended at Paul's side for the sake of the gospel.

It also refers to the monetary contributions they sent Paul as he continued to travel throughout Asia Minor spreading the Gospel. Their partnership or fellowship is based on their contribution to spreading the gospel, both personally and prayerfully.

#### Philippians 4:14-19

Think about it this way. In your bulletin there are two pages of missionaries that we as a church support. The contributions we send join us together in a partnership or fellowship of sharing the gospel with them even though we are not physically present with them in their efforts. You are just as much a part of sharing the Gospel, whether it's in Thailand or India or Russia or Togo or the US as those who are the boots on the ground doing the actual ministry of evangelism in those countries.

In case you may be wondering, in the recent budget we approved for this current fiscal year, we give over \$36,000 or just over 27% of our budget to missions. We currently financially support 18 missionaries with whom we partner in sharing the gospel I am sure that all of them are overjoyed when they think of the support we give them.

We received a letter last week from Elias talking about the summer CEF ministry. His ending speaks to what Paul is saying when he writes: **"Together we can impact our generation for Christ."**

That's the essence of what Paul is saying here that when we support others for the work of the spreading the gospel, we are partners with them.

The church at Philippi had contributed to Paul's

missionary efforts. It had been approximately 10 years since the first visit to Philippi and his arrest.

### Acts 16:11-15

The rest of the chapter is about Paul's arrest, illegal flogging and imprisonment. At midnight there was a tremendous earthquake that shook the jailhouse where all the cell doors opened, and chains were loosened. Waking from the earthquake the jailer supposed all the prisoners had escaped when Paul told him not to do himself any harm, that all the prisoners were still there. He ran in to Paul and Silas who had earlier been singing and praying and asked them what he had to do to be saved. That night the jailer and his household all received Christ as Savior and were added with Lydia and others who earlier had trusted Christ for salvation. She was the first to open her heart and then her home to Paul followed by the jailer and his family.

This group of believers supported Paul's missionary journeys. They were partners in support and in supplication. They **provided financially** and they **prayed faithfully** for Paul. That's what partnership in the gospel does for each other. No wonder Paul had such joy for them when he remembered them.

Because of the assistance in their partnership, we see their action from this partnership.

### B. Their Action From This Partnership

**Did you catch what Paul said?** The action of their partnership began when Paul first visited Philippi, which I mentioned was about 10 years earlier. It didn't happen later as they grew in their faith, or had a church budget to support missionaries. It started right away and that partnership continued on to what Paul describes as "**now**", referring to the close of his first imprisonment in Rome. It started when they were first saved and continued to the present.

The word "**in**" is a preposition of motion, referring to a continuation of activity. Here it is referring to the progress of the gospel that was being preached, from the beginning of their salvation until the time

of Paul's letter there was perpetual activity in this partnership of sharing in the gospel.

So as Paul talks about the fellowship of participation, in the broadest sense it is their participation in spreading the gospel through their partnership with Paul as their missionary and in the narrowest sense referring to their ongoing financial assistance that made it possible for him to continue his missionary efforts of proclaiming the gospel.

Their fellowship was one of prayer.

Their fellowship was one of participation.

Their fellowship was one of perfection.

### III. THE FELLOWSHIP OF PERFECTION – v. 6

When we are in genuine partnership with God and others for the proclamation of the gospel, God uses the very gospel we believed in to perfect us, to grow us in our faith. Notice first that Paul speaks of the confidence in the gospel.

#### A. The Confidence in the Gospel

The word "**confident**" is in the perfect tense which indicates a settled conviction. Paul had every assurance that what God said in His Word about the work of the gospel in their lives would happen. He had no doubt about it. What God had begun when they were first saved bringing them into fellowship of the body through their faith in Christ, Paul had conviction God would continue in them. That same promise is for us as well, that the work of the gospel will continue in our lives.

Simply put, what God starts, He finishes.

William Hendriksen puts it this way: "**God is not like men. Men conduct experiments, but God carries out a plan. God never does anything by halves.**"

F.B. Meyer writes: "**What His grace begins, His arm of strength will complete.**"

Warren Wiersbe says that salvation is the threefold work of God.

**Salvation** is what the work God does for us. Only

He can save us.

**Sanctification** is what the work God does in us. As you have heard me say about **I John 3:3** “I’m not what I was, and neither am I yet what I’m going to be.” That’s the progressive work of the Holy Spirit in my life as I yield to His work of making me more like Christ in character each day.

**Service** is the work God does through us. That is the evidence of my salvation. Grace alone through faith alone saves me. My service is an external evidence of the internal work of grace.

The work of God continues until Christ takes us home through death or the rapture of His church.

Paul had every confidence in the Gospel. He then mentions the cause from the gospel.

### **B. The Cause From the Gospel**

**“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you (referring to our salvation), will carry it out to completion.”**

Other translations say perform, develop, perfect, complete, finally finished, and bring it to a flourishing finish. The work God began, He will carry on and complete. He won’t stop until His work in you is done. That’s part of what it is in this partnership of proclaiming the gospel. How you live is your testimony of what God is doing in your life since you trusted Christ as Savior.

Imagine, if you will, that you are Michelangelo painting the Sistine chapel. High up on scaffolding, he was on his back for four years working on his masterpiece. It would not be the masterpiece it is today if he had decided to stop somewhere in the middle.

**I Thessalonians 2:13** “And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”

Your fellowship with God won’t end because God

is tired of trying to chisel out His masterpiece while you resist. He keeps working until what He started is finished, which brings me to my closing point.

### **C. The Culmination Through the Gospel**

**“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.”**

Every day God is working in you and He won’t stop until the day of Christ. This is when He returns and our salvation is completed. All this work in us is about God.

God **commences** salvation in the believer.

God **continues** salvation in the believer,

God **completes** salvation in the believer.

There will be no failure on His part.

There will be no partial completion.

The completion of God’s work of salvation in us will happen when Christ returns and we are glorified, made righteous. Our state will be just like our standing. That is the fellowship of perfection. It will happen to every believer regardless of where they are at in their spiritual journey. That is the benefit of the partnership of the gospel.

It’s in our prayer.

It’s in our participation.

It’s in our perfection.

Let Him do His work to perfect our fellowship with Him as we partner with others to proclaim the gospel.