

Remnant Life Church
January 16, 2022
The Church of the Philippians
Part 2
Partakers
Phil 1:3-8

Review: The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi

- A Roman colony located in Greece
- It is a letter filled with joy in spite of the fact that Paul is in prison as he is writing
- Let me ask you something right here at the start - Are your circumstances and situations the things that determine your demeanor?
- If you're having a difficult time, does your entire countenance reflect that or are you able to rise about that and show the joy of the Lord?
- If you are controlled by your circumstances examine or ask yourself what is it that has control of my life?

We examined the first verse of the letter

1. Paul describes himself and Timothy as servants of Jesus Christ
 - a. Doulos – a bondservant given freely to the master
 - b. This means that the master is one that is loving, kind, and thoughtful
 - c. A bondservant serves the master in humility
2. Paul addresses the letter to all the saints in Christ Jesus
 - a. A saint (hagios) was set apart, different, and distinct
 - b. Paul is confirming and emphasizing that believers in Jesus Christ are not the same as they once were – their lives have been changed
 - c. He also is addressing ALL of the believers
 - d. Their standing in Christ is not determined by the station, position, education, or spiritual gifts

READ – Phil 1:3-8

As we read through the first several verses of the letter it is evident what Paul's feelings are for the people of this church

- He is filled with joy every time he thinks of them
- Most all of Paul's letter include in their greeting a prayer of thanksgiving but none are at the depth of feeling that Paul has for this group of believers

In the 5th verse Paul reveals the source of that joy in the people – their partnership with him in the gospel

- Partnership can also read fellowship, participants, or communion
- It is from the Greek word *koinonia* used to describe working together in a common purpose or goal
- It is also a positive word – there is no strife or conflict in *koinonia*

This is one reason why Paul has so much joy – there is virtually no strife

- He does go on later in the book to encourage two women who are at odds to work it out (Phil 4:2) but it is not a problem within the body
- Is there anything more destructive to the health of a church than internal factions, cliques, or divisions?
 - Paul had to deal with divisions in the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus and those issues still try to work their way into churches today
 - Failed churches never have their walls pushed in from outside, they always fall out from the conflict within
 - But this is not the case in Philippi

Though we are not likely to grasp the full meaning of Paul depth of feeling for these people, there are three words that can begin to help us see what it means to participate in the Gospel within our own lives today.

1. Privilege

- a. The privilege we have to be participants is spelled out in the first two verses
- b. Verse 1 told us from our time together last week, that we are *servants of Christ Jesus*
 - i. We have given our lives to Him because of what He did for us
 - ii. And as servants of the Master, He cares for us, provides for us, and guides us in the content of our daily lives
- c. Then we are told that we are *saints IN Christ Jesus*
 - i. IOW we are in a relationship with Jesus
 - ii. It is the state of our being as His servants – loved, and cared for
 - iii. The New English Bible expands on that first verse and presents it as, “to all those of God’s people, incorporate in Christ Jesus”
 - iv. What does that imply?
 1. That we are not simply living within a new religion with its associated belief systems, we have been given a new status in relation to God
 2. That status is forgiven, accepted, redeemed
 3. And not only are we given a new status, but a new life, and a new community as we join with others in the fellowship of other servants
 - v. And then consider this
 1. The message of the Gospel is universal, it is for everyone
 2. But the privilege of being a servant of Christ is an exclusive one
 3. It is given only to those who belong to Jesus Christ who, by faith, have given themselves to Him

2. Promise

- a. Now our privilege is a new status in relation to God, a new life, and a new community
- b. What we must realize is the promise of this new life is IN Christ!
 - i. It is through Him that we are justified

- ii. And while that justification is secure and firm, we must new forget what is required for us to give ourselves full to Him
- c. ILLUSTRATION – A man who totally and in every way down and out comes to you seeking your help. He is homeless, jobless, filthy, and in every way in need. But those are only the outward signs. For he is also hungry and sick. And so, you respond by welcoming him and giving him a place to bathe and you provided a clean change of new clothing. But you quickly realized that was not enough. He is undernourished and sick needing food and a doctor. Yet he needs even more. He needs love and friendship, healing of emotional hurts, a restoration of his dignity, a new purpose and a new meaning with a solid foundation and a clear direction for his life.
And so, we too came to Jesus in that same way. Not wearing filthy rags, but certainly clothed in the garments of sin. We were spiritually starving and spiritually sick even unto death as a final result. And we were welcomed by Christ. We were bathed in His love and forgiveness; we are clothed in His grace and mercy. And the Great Physician knows that we are sick. He gives us Spirit to live within us to heal and strengthen. We are received as His children as though we were sinless.
God see us as righteous IN Christ – that is our new status!
- d. But there is also a great caution we must be aware of...
 - i. And that is becoming despondent when the glow of these new clothes begins to fade when the struggles, trials, and temptations of life are bombarding us
 - ii. Theologian Maxie Dunnam said this about the believer's existence - *The Christian life is not an achiever's game. The Christian has no right to expect to fare any better in his own self-efforts than the non-Christian. What the Christian can count on is a God who keeps faith.*
 - iii. It is this truth that Paul presses to his readers in verse 6 when he writes, *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.*
- e. We can expect this because it is a promise of God!

The first word is privilege, the second is promise, the third is...

3. Partakers

- a. The last part of verse 7 Paul writes, ...*all of you share in God's grace with me*
- b. Other versions use the word partake in God's grace
- c. That word, in the original language, is *sygkoinonos* (soong-koy-no-NOS)
 - i. A companion or joint-partner
 - ii. A partner in any situation not confined to business, personal, financial
 - 1. ANYTHING a person is doing with a companion
 - 2. It is a personal and almost intimate term
- d. Paul is telling them that they are in this together from, we read in verse 5, the *first day*
 - i. That is not a timeframe of 24 hours
 - ii. It is in reference to the first time Paul visited them

- iii. It was in that first trip, the first day as Paul calls it that much took place
 1. A woman by the name of Lydia gave her life to Christ in that first meeting
 - a. As a result of her conversion, she opened her home to Paul and Silas (**Acts 16**)
 - b. That home became the meeting place of the first church in Europe
 2. Paul's first trip to Philippi produced an encounter with a young slave girl, possessed by an evil spirit able to foretell the future
 - a. Paul prayed and the evil spirit left her
 - b. Her owners, now denied the income she produced, had Paul flogged and imprisoned
 3. But even in prison, God was working
 - a. The jailer and then his entire family came to know Christ
 - b. The little church began to grow immediately
- e. Each of these new believers were now partaking in the fellowship of this new community
 - i. It remains vitally important today – perhaps even more so as the attack on the church, Christians, the Bible, and even Jesus Christ intensifies
 - ii. It is hard for us at RLC, as a church family, when we cannot be together
 1. The fellowship of believers is one where we can partake in the truth of God's Word together
 2. Paul emphasized the point again in the **8th** verse when he says, *God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

Paul called the believers in Philippi, this brand-new church, participants in the Gospel with him

- It was then, and is today, a privilege to be called saints in Christ Jesus
- That privilege is present because of the promise of God in His Son
- And we are therefore all partakers, companions, and joint helpers together because of Him as well as in and through Him

None of this, however, is dependent on our will

- Yes, we make a choice
- But in the account of Paul's first journey here found in **Acts 16**, the author clearly states in the **14th** verse that the first convert, Lydia, did not come only of her will but...*The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message.*
- Theologian Alec Motyer writes, *The human will blows hot and cold, is firm and unstable by fits and starts; it offers no security of tenure.*
- It is God's will that all come to know Him
- He will open the heart but the person will choose whether to follow or ignore
- Continue to pray for your loved ones who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior

Those first believers of Philippi are little different than us today

- Let us live in the same measure of conviction they did to stand firm in our faith in the midst of the world's opposition

- It is His strength that will sustain us – His servants and saints in Christ