



Philippians 1:3-7

The Fellowship is the Thing

(NASB)³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me.

Joy, gratitude, great faith, confidence

- Paul is moved for this group of Believers
 - He cares and they are “in his heart” (vs. 7)

RIGHT (dikahyos: “correct, righteous”) – “For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart”

- “Approved by God” (J. Thayer)
- “Just in the eyes of God (Souter)
- “Describes what is in conformity to God’s own being -- His Will, standard of righteousness (WORD Helps)

WHY? Because of their “Partnership” in the Gospel (vs. 5 and 7)

- *Koinonia* – “What is shared in common as the basis of fellowship” (HELPS Word Studies)
 - “A fellowship in the spirit” (Strongs Concordance #2842)
- UNION – of identity and purpose

Fellowship with one another comes back to **IDENTITY** and **PURPOSE**

“Who am I? What is my purpose?”

We all search for identity and purpose

- Life is about self-discovery

Normal path = we are in control and define who we are

As Believers and Disciples of Yeshua, we cannot approach it this way

- WHY? Because our lives are not our own – we’ve been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20)

→ Everything is God’s ←

- It is only **HIS** purpose that matters.

Our true purpose is found within God’s Purpose

But...does this really answer our deepest questions of identity and purpose?

We all live within a tension regarding identity and purpose.

We love God and desire to do His will.

- We’re also selfish and wake up each day in the driver’s seat of our own bodies, our own lives

- Paralyzed by the unknown – too many choices
- Overcome with anxiety at the thought of failure – the pressure to BE someone and achieve a purpose

There is a war within us – reinforced by our MINDSETS.

- Who am I...really?
- What I'm going to do with my life
- Being good enough -- ...successful, righteous, fill in the blank

I've got **GOOD NEWS** for you!!
The Gospel resolves this tension within us.

If we are to have union (Koinonia) with each other, much less with God, we need to get clear on God's PURPOSE

Romans 8:28-29 -- And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”

God's work (or “purpose”) is **Christlikeness** –to remake us into the image of the Son

- Renewing of our minds
- Puts to death Self-life that seeks to meet our own needs through our own will
- Freedom, Abundant Life, Liberty

Jesus didn't just come to save us from our sins; He came to save us from ourselves

- Crucified with Him, baptized into His death and raised to newness of life
 - Allows us to REST because it's His life not ours
 - Our value is not based on what we do

Pursuing Christlikeness does not only fulfill God's greatest purpose for your life, it is also the most natural and “self-actualizing” thing you can do

Another crucial element to *Koinonia* with God – and with each other.

SUFFERING

Part of the work that God is doing in us involves suffering

You can't read the book of Philippians and not see this truth

- Paul was likely in prison when he wrote the book
- “In chains” (vs. 7); Poured out like a drink offering (2:17)
- “Hard-pressed” (vs. 23)

The book of Philippians and all its richness and life-giving marrow is the fruit of suffering

Most of us recoil and put up our defenses at the very mention of suffering
Keep your hearts and minds open for a new understanding of SUFFERING

(Once again) The key is PURPOSE.

What are we suffering **FOR**?

- We retreat at the very notion of suffering because our hearts are still attached to Self-Life.
- We must RENEW our minds – get back to the root – the PASSION or burden that stirs our heart to the deeper life of God
 - **WHAT** we're living for...**WHO** we're living for

Philippians 3:7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and [f]the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

- Vs. 10b-11 (TPT) I will be one with him in his sufferings and I will be one with him in his death. 11 Only then will I be able to experience complete oneness with him in his resurrection from the realm of death.

Application:

- 1) Set your heart on a single purpose for your life – Christlikeness
 - a. ALL THINGS work together for good
 - b. ALL THINGS are rubbish compared to growing closer to Christ
 - c. The key is our UNION with Him
- 2) The fellowship of Christ's suffering
 - a. Remember HE is the Purpose – sacrifice for the One you love
 - b. Imitate Him – do what He did
- 3) Remember your brothers and sisters suffering for the Gospel
 - a. Be of one heart with them – establish the *koinonia* that Paul enjoyed with the Philppians
 - i. Prayer, giving, short- and long-term missions (VOMRadio.net – PodCasts)
 - b. Marvel at the extreme devotion to Christ
 - i. [“Exceeding joyful times of solitary confinement”]
 - ii. Ask the Holy Spirit to establish the same love of Christ in your heart

[Watch video: YouTube: “Fassal: Pakistan”] (4 min 44 secs)

Excerpt from The Overcomers, by Richard Wurmbrand:

“Even the best of Christians are troubled by the question, “Why does an almighty God send, or at least allow, suffering?” When you are nagged by thoughts like this, say to yourself, “I am still in elementary school. When I graduate from the university of Christian life, I will understand His ways better and doubts will cease.

“Great love for Christ is one of the quickest ways to ascend to a mastery of life. One such master is Bishop Victor Belikh, a Ukranian Christian whom I met in Kishinev. He had spent twenty-four years in Communist jails. The first twenty he passed in solitary confinement without ever knowing anything about his family and friends. He was allowed no family visits and no correspondence.

Every evening a straw mattress was put in the cell for him to sleep on for seven hours. In the morning it was taken away. The rest of the time he was not allowed to lie down even on the cold concrete, nor was he allowed to sit or stand still on it. For seventeen hours a day he had to walk around his cell uninterruptedly, as horses do in a circus. He was surveyed by jailers through the peephole in the cell door. If he stopped or broke down, they threw buckets of water on him or beat him and he was forced to continue.

After *twenty years* of such a regime, he was sent for another four years to forced labor in northern Siberia, where the ice never melts. I asked him, “How could you bear this suffering after the years in solitary confinement and a starvation diet?”

He replied by singing a song he composed: “With the flames of love’s fire that Jesus kindled in my heart, I caused the ice of Siberia to melt. Hallelujah!” His face shone. The Bible writes that the face of Stephen, first martyr of Christianity, shone when he was sentenced to death. I did not feel worthy to stand before such a man. What an honor Jesus gave me to be called a “brother in faith” by such a man, to have become a member of a family that breeds such exemplary humans! But more than that, the possibility is given to each of us to become such conquerors of life. This is not only the grace of God but also assiduous work on your own character.”