

The Fellowship of the Gospel

Chapter 7

Audio Lesson: New Testament #61



Objective: To introduce Paul's epistle to the Philippians and to understand the concept of the fellowship of the Gospel.



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. 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.

– Philippians 1:3-8

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

– Philippians 1:21

Paul planted the church at Philippi after having a heavenly vision through the Holy Spirit. (Acts 16) Paul's love for the Philippians shows in his letter to them; it reads like a love letter. He calls the bond between himself and the Philippians "the fellowship of the gospel." This church was an ideal or model church because it was a missionary church. The people grew in Christ and reached out to the community around them with the Gospel.

Paul thanked the church at Philippi for supporting him financially so he could focus on his ministry instead of trying to earn a living. He also thanked them for their gift to him while he was in prison.

In chapter 1, Paul wrote about the philosophy for Christian living. The word philosophy simply means how you see things or your outlook or mindset. Paul's philosophy of life was based on expendability--that is, he was ready to be sacrificed for Christ. He did not know if he would survive prison, but he wanted Christ to be glorified in him as long as he lived. And if he died, that would be far better, because then he would be with Christ.

Paul also wrote about the passion for Christian living. He was pleased that others were spreading or furthering the Gospel. He encouraged the Philippians to live so that the people around them could see the faith of the Gospel. He loved the Philippians and urged them to be a fellowship of the Gospel.

1. True or False: Paul's letter to the Philippians shows a special bond between them.
2. True or False: Paul planted the church in Philippi as a result of a man from Asia asking his help.



3. True or False: The purpose of the Church is to reach out to nonbelievers.
4. True or False: The church in Ephesus supported Paul financially while he ministered to the Philippians.
5. True or False: Philippians is one of five letters Paul wrote from prison.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

6. What other letters did Paul write from prison? (Choose all that apply)
 - a. Romans
 - b. Ephesians
 - c. Colossians
 - d. 2 Timothy
 - e. Philemon
7. Why did Paul consider the Philippian church to be an ideal or model?
 - a. Its members did not sin.
 - b. It was a missionary church.
 - c. It was the only church he planted.
 - d. It did not have serious problems.
8. How is this letter different from Paul's other letters?
 - a. It is short.
 - b. He wrote it with his own hand.
 - c. He delivered it himself.
 - d. He expressed his special love for them in it.

9. Other people were spreading the Gospel while Paul was in prison. How did he feel about that?
- a. He was excited about the furtherance of the Gospel.
 - b. He told the Philippians to stop those people because they had the wrong motives.
 - c. He was angry because laypeople should not take on the work of the ministry.
 - d. He was jealous about their success while he was in prison.
10. What was Paul's magnificent obsession?
- a. To preach the Gospel.
 - b. To grow the Church at Philippi.
 - c. To get out of prison.
 - d. To teach pastors how to confront false teachers.
11. What does a "fellowship of the Gospel" mean? (Choose all that apply)
- a. It is a picture of what the Church should be.
 - b. The Church exists so that it can share the Gospel with the world.
 - c. Every Christian in the church lives a life of faith so the world will believe the Gospel.
 - d. It is a regular gathering of the church to eat and get to know each other better.



What did Paul mean when he said, "*To live is Christ. To die is gain*"? (Philippians 1:21)
Do you feel the same way?



Praise God for Paul's faithfulness to Christ that he would write letters even while he was in prison. Ask Him to help you put into practice in your own church what you have learned about the fellowship of the Gospel. Ask God to help you live so that non-believers around you will believe in the Gospel. Ask Him to help you glorify Christ always and to look forward to being with Him in heaven someday.



Going Deeper

1. How many times does Paul mention the gospel in the first chapter of his letter to the Philippians, and how does this show us what we might call “The Passion and Philosophy of Christ-Like Living”? _____

2. Describe and apply the way verse 27 of chapter 1 profiles what Paul labels “A Fellowship of the Gospel.” _____

3. How do you apply Paul’s plan for his ideal church, or this fellowship of the Gospel, to the church of which you are a part, wherever it may be? _____

4. Describe and apply what Paul meant when he wrote, “To me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (verse 21) _____

5. Describe and apply to your own new birth the meaning of Paul’s words when he wrote (in 1:6) that he was confident that He who had begun a good work in them would continue that work until the day of Christ. (Consider also the Source of his confidence in 2:13) _____

6. Describe and apply to your own philosophy of life and death the tension Paul describes (in chapter 1: 22-26) regarding his desire to pass on and be with Christ, which he considers to be far better, but that his motivation for staying in this life was to be fruitful in the furtherance of the faith of these believers. _____

7. How can you apply to your own suffering verse 29 of chapter 1, where Paul clearly states that it was not only granted by God for them to believe, but also to suffer for Christ? _____
