



Blessings of Unity



SERMON SERIES IN PHILIPPIANS

IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH
SERIES: THE BLESSINGS OF UNITY
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INTRODUCTION

Today we are starting a new series entitled "The Blessings of Unity." In this series, we will look at three passages found in Philippians.

Philippians is a letter in which Paul emphasizes both *joy* and *unity*. He seems to suggest that unity within a church body contributes to both personal and corporate joy. Notice these verses:

- "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy..." (1:3-4)
- "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith." (1:25)
- "So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." (2:1-2)

- "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me." (2:17–18)
- "Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved." (4:1)
- "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me... for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." (4:10–11)

The world we live in today suggests that joy can be found in individual pursuits—such as material possessions, success, entertainment, or food and drink. But the Bible paints a different picture. It teaches that *true joy is found in the gospel and in being part of a unified Christian community.*

This series will explore how joy and unity are deeply intertwined.

Text

Philippians 1:3–4

[3] I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,
 [4] always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,

Explanation:

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let's briefly highlight two key emphases in these verses.

First, notice the repetition of the word "*all*." Paul gives thanks in *all* his remembrance, *always* in *every* prayer, and for *all* the members of the Philippian congregation. Clearly, Paul held deep affection for this church.

Second, consider the connection between thankfulness and joy. One of the most important ways we can express joy is through thankfulness to God. Often we show joy by clapping, smiling, singing, dancing, or laughing. But a form of joy that we might overlook—and should practice more—is prayerful thanksgiving.

Thanking God in prayer makes perfect sense: it acknowledges that the source of our joy is ultimately God Himself.

Discussion Questions

- Which are common expressions of joy for you: clapping, smiling, singing, dancing, laughing—or something else?
- When you express joy, does it typically overflow naturally, or do you have to be intentional about it?
- When you pray to thank God, does it feel more like a duty or a natural overflow of joy?

Text

Philippians 1:5–6

[5] because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
[6] And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Explanation:

Joy in Unified Partnership for the Gospel

Paul's reason for joyfully praying for the Philippians is because of their partnership in the gospel. As we will see throughout this letter, the Philippians supported Paul—especially by meeting his needs as a missionary.

In Philippians 4:14–15 Paul writes:

"Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only."

Not only did they support Paul financially, but they also encouraged him while he was in prison. Paul's imprisonment is mentioned in Philippians 1:12: "I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel..."

One key supporter was Epaphroditus, whom Paul describes as: "my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need" (Phil. 2:25).

Paul sees their partnership as a work of God. He thanks God because it is God who began the good work in them and will carry it to completion. Their unity and support are evidence of God's ongoing transformation in their lives.

Discussion Questions

- Do your friendships usually form instantly, or do they grow over time?
- Have you experienced "on and off" friendships?
- What bonds you most deeply to your friends?

Text

Philippians 1:7-8

[7] It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

[8] For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Explanation:

Unashamed of His Joy

In case anyone might be surprised by Paul's joyful feelings, he defends them. His joy is not just understandable—it is right. These feelings are appropriate, even praiseworthy. We should strive to have similar affection for our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul reaffirms what he said earlier: the Philippians are partakers of God's grace with him. Specifically, they have stood by him in his imprisonment and in defending the gospel.

Rather than being embarrassed by Paul's chains, the Philippians supported him boldly. This support strengthened their bond and increased Paul's joy.

Discussion Questions

- Paul was unashamed to express his joy and affection. Are you more likely to hide or openly express your gratitude toward others?
- What brings you the most joy in friendship—when someone supports you in a hard time, or when you get to support someone else?

Text

Philippians 1:9–11

[9] And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,
[10] so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
[11] filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Explanation

Paul's Prayer

Having expressed his joy and gratitude, Paul now shares his prayer for the Philippians. Earlier, he mentioned that he always prays for them. Now he reveals what he prays for:

Paul's main prayer is that their love may abound more and more—but not just emotionally. He prays that their love would grow with knowledge and all discernment.

We often associate love with feelings or emotion, but Paul connects it to wisdom. He wants their love to be discerning, wise, and thoughtful—love that recognizes what is truly excellent.

Why? Because such love leads to purity and blamelessness, and a life that reflects the righteousness of Christ—bringing glory to God.

Discussion Questions

- How can love grow in knowledge and discernment?
- Is your love for others usually driven by feelings or thoughtful decisions?
- What is the connection between love and truth?
- What do you hope for most in your friends' lives?

Conclusions/ Applications

THE DEEPEST JOY COMES FROM GOSPEL PARTNERSHIPS

A gospel partnership is a bond between friends that goes beyond shared interests—it is rooted in a mutual commitment to glorify God and advance the gospel.

There is no deeper, richer, or more joyful friendship than one built on eternal purposes rather than earthly ones.

Let us seek joy through these kinds of gospel-centered, Christ-glorifying relationships.