

## Our Partnership in the Gospel

Philippians 1:1-11

Getting Excited About Church (2)

KSBC

11/8/09

**Intro** What is it in the Christian faith that excites you? What is it that excites you about Kossuth Street Baptist Church? What is it that in any culture or time gives a local church that recognizable sense of life and energy?

The discussions and debates on this question have produced much heat and little light in our day of church marketing, seeker driven efforts and an intensely privatized approach to church and God. Are we left with only being excited about worship styles, diversity, dress standards, times of meeting, availability of child care, quality of the coffee, helpful topics, friendly people and above all your personal comfort? Arguably most of these have some significance at some level, but they do not clearly communicate the most exciting thing about being a part of a Gospel focused, Christ centered church.

The most exciting, life promoting and energy producing part of a local church is the presence and power of Christ seen in the gospel. While people, methods, meetings and leadership have important roles, it is the gospel that is responsible for the joy profoundly evident in the assembly of Christians committed to it. It is only as the gospel is marginalized – moved to the periphery – that church naturally morphs into something that reflects us more than Jesus Christ.

The gospel is simply the good news that God forgives and gives new life to people through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Pointing others to and exalting Jesus Christ is the unique and remarkable component of a Christian church. The heart of distinctive and God honoring fellowship is a self sacrificing conformity to a shared vision . . . that vision being the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The early verses of Philippians chapter one record the Apostle Paul's prayerful concern, grateful praise and joyful affection regarding the local assembly of believers at Philippi. The key thought or foundation of these loving reflections is the partnership that Paul and the Philippian Christians shared in the gospel. This church had its roots in a visit by Paul and his missionary team about 10 years earlier (Acts 16). Paul, now in prison, writes this epistle to thank the church for their support in prayer and finances, to refer 2 other men to them for leadership and teaching and to correct some internal disturbances that he had become aware of in the assembly. A major theme throughout the appeal of the letter is the centrality of the gospel . . . our partnership and fellowship is in the gospel, not in any other concern.

So what is it that excites you about church? It should be the same as what excited Paul about the Philippian church . . . their partnership in the gospel.

In the opening verses of this letter, five characteristics are highlighted of a church that has a self sacrificing conformity to the powerful good news of Jesus Christ. As we review and learn more of them this morning we are led to evaluate our own commitment to the gospel. Are these the things that excite our own hearts? Are these the behaviors and attitudes that the gospel produces in us? Whether it is the latest of trends from within the church or the expectations of those outside the church, we are too easily distracted from our essential identity as partners in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## Read Philippians 1:1-11

Get excited about our partnership in the gospel at KSBC . . .

1. Transformed people – the gospel changes our direction. 1-3
2. Sacrificial activity – the gospel calls forth our commitment. 4-5
3. God centered confidence – the gospel gives hope for completed new life. 6
4. Christ like affection – the gospel causes us to care for each other. 7-8
5. Life changing prayer – the gospel connects us to heavens power. 9-11

Get excited about our partnership in the gospel at KSBC . . . let's review the 3 characteristics we studied last week before looking at the final 2.

### 1. Transformed people – the gospel changes our direction. 1-3; Acts 16:12-40

Note the direct references to the people who made up the Philippian church. When Paul expresses grateful joy for this church, he is thinking about people impacted by the gospel. The references to 'the saints', the comprehensive 'all' (1, 4, 7, 8) and the frequent remembering all point to a personal attachment to specific people. These people are now referred to accurately as saints – set apart people of and for God. It is appropriate to be excited about people who have been transformed by the gospel. Meet three of the transformed people that caused Paul to express his gratitude to God. Transformed people are exciting!

- Lydia – a converted religious person. Acts 16:12-15  
Hears gospel   heart opened by God   believes/baptized   active in gospel ministry
- Slave girl – a delivered oppressed person. Acts 16:16-21  
Hears gospel   delivered by power of Christ   changed life
- Jailer – a saved scared person. Acts 16:22-34  
Hears gospel   life/world rocked by God   believed/baptized   active ministry

### 2. Sacrificial activity – the gospel calls forth our commitment. 4-5

Note the cause for the Apostle's excitement and joy is the partnership in the gospel from the very beginning of their relationship. His expression of frequent joyful prayer for all of them is a response to the memories of common sacrificial commitment to the cause of Christ. The stories that the Apostle would be able to share about the sacrifice, commitment, generosity and faith of this isolated group of Christians at Philippi were significant. What are the sacrificial commitments that Paul had in mind . . . what are the kinds of sacrifice and commitment that the gospel still coaxes out of God's people today? Sacrificial commitment is exciting!

2. Sacrificial activity – the gospel calls forth our commitment. 4-5

- Prayer 1:19
- Suffering 1:30; 2:30
- Witnessing 1:27-28
- Leadership 2:19-21, 25
- Giving 4:10-20

Illus. The life giving sacrifice of Epaphroditus (2:30) and the loyal service of Euodia and Syntyche (4:2-3) is attractive, motivating, exciting . . . it is because of the beauty of the gospel of our lord Jesus!

3. God centered confidence – the gospel gives hope for completed new life. 6

Note the Apostles clear confidence and certainty in God. It is the continual presence of God doing his creative work in the hearts and lives of each believer. All of life is interpreted through the grid of the simple question: “What is God doing in and through this?” Disappointments, tragedy, success and reversals are all tools in the hand of our great craftsman God who is faithfully making us into the likeness of his dear son Jesus. This confidence is specific and personal. It is not content with mere general references to a God who may show up or not. God centered confidence is exciting!

- Confident that God began a good work in you. sovereign initiative
- Confident that God continues his good work in you. sustaining grace
- Confident that God will complete his good work in you. the day of Christ

Illus cmp Gal. 3:3

4. Christ like affection – the gospel causes us to care for each other. 7-8

Note the Apostle’s statement of warm affection and desire to be with them. It is difficult to imagine ever expressing ourselves to each other in similar terms, especially in a church setting. Something has happened that has drawn the mutual affections and hearts of the Apostle together with the Christians at Philippi. Paul’s attitude or mentality of affection and desire seem almost overstated and exaggerated, he even appeals to God in the form of an oath. Outside of your family and marriage, can you count the number of people that you feel this way about? Where do these feelings come from?

- The unusual depth of affection expressed. 7-8  
Have you in my heart 7 I long for all of you 8
- The gospel source of our mutual affection. 7-8  
God’s grace – mutually dependent as we advance the gospel. 7  
  
Christ’s compassion – seeing each other through his eyes. 8

The grace of God and the compassions of Christ are the sources for the unusual, warm, expressive care that exists in a gospel centered partnership. Contrast with affection based on needs being met, mutual preferences, similar economic and educational backgrounds, agreement on politics, etc.

Cmp. 2:26; 4:1

John 13:34,35

## 5. Life changing prayer – the gospel connects us to heavens power. 9-11

Paul reconnects with his thought from verse 4 to teach us the dynamic of how change takes place in our lives. The gospel is something that God did in Christ Jesus that continues to empower individual lives to radical change for God's glory. The way God has ordained for his people to connect with this power is through prayer. Intercessory prayer – simply praying intelligently, biblically and fervently for each other is productive for the gospel of Christ and the glory of God in the following ways:

- Our love grows. Love may abound more and more  
Our love for God, for others and our appreciation of God's love for us overflows current boundaries as a result of prayer. 9
- Our situational recognition is sharpened. Knowledge and depth of insight  
A closeness to God that produces a keen awareness of and appropriate response to what he is doing in your life is a result of prayer. 9
- Our obedience is connected to growing discernment. Discern best/pure & blameless  
Focusing our godliness on that which is most important to the cause of the gospel in a world of many options is a result of prayer. 10
- Our change into Christ likeness is observable. Filled w/fruit of righteousness  
Demonstrable results of the righteousness of Christ through the work of Christ and his Spirit are seen in our lives as a result of prayer. 11

The Philippian church began with a group of people looking for a place to pray (Acts 16:13). Somewhere around any gospel centered church alive with the energy of God is a significant effort of intercessory prayer.

### Take Aways

1. Repent and believe in Jesus Christ so you can be made right with God.
2. Acknowledge your lack of concern for others and ask God to help you grow in grace and compassion.
3. Acknowledge your lack of commitment to prayer for others and ask God to help you change.
4. Repent of your self-focused approach to church and God.

## Study Questions

Questions same as last week as several groups did not meet – some new questions added. Review some of the Q&A from last week if your group met.

1. What concerns, questions or observations do you have from this study?
  2. Read and review Phil. 1:1-11.
  3. What are some typical ways churches advertise/market themselves? Share ways you sometimes feel pressure to distinguish your church from others by appealing characteristics.
  4. Discuss the following statement from the introduction. Agree, disagree? Strengths, weaknesses?  
*The heart of distinctive and God honoring fellowship is a self sacrificing conformity to a shared vision . . . that vision being the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
  5. Develop a working definition of the gospel. What are the essential components to the gospel? What is gospel ministry? Do a quick search for places in Philippians where terms *gospel* or *work of Christ* is found. How do these verses inform your understanding of 'gospel ministry'?
  6. What impresses you most about the stories describing the beginning of the church in Philippi in Acts 16:12-40? Why?
  7. Why is it rather common or simple to lose sight of the joy and excitement of transformed people in our congregation? What are some ways we can encourage concern, praise and affection for transformed lives through the gospel?
  8. Why is sacrificial commitment attractive to you? How often do you feel the joy of being something far bigger than yourself at church? Why or why not? How can sacrificial commitment to the gospel be provoked/grown in our church?
  9. Share an example from your recent past when the confidence in God expressed in 1:6 was a significant help for you.
  10. Spend time as a group sharing observations and thanking God for transformed people, sacrificial commitment and God centered confidence that you notice around Kossuth Street.
  11. What do you want to do, use or remember from this study this week?
- New ? 12. How would you express Paul's affection stated in verses 7-8 in your words? Why is it difficult for you to express affection to other Christians verbally? What are ways you can grow at expressing the love of Christ for others through you?
13. Explain Paul's thinking in verse 7 about sharing in God's grace. How is that related to his affection for the Philippians? How does it relate to your changing your attitude toward other Christians?
  14. What do Luke 7:13, 10:33 and 15:20 have in common related to compassion for people? What is the lesson for your growth in caring for others?
  15. Do you believe you are as dependent on God's grace and power to grow and change as you are to be saved? Why or why not?
  16. In general, why are prayer meetings usually not very well attended at KSBC? Do you believe that for the attractiveness and power of Christ to be seen at KSBC in greater ways, you need to change your attitude about prayer?
  17. Review the 4 ways that God changes us through prayer. What impresses you the most? Why?