



PHILIPPIANS 1 PART 1

When the Apostle Paul speaks of "fellowship in the gospel," he uses a Greek word packed with meaning: *koinonia*. In our modern world, "fellowship" often brings to mind casual gatherings, like sharing coffee after a church service. However, *koinonia* goes far deeper. It signifies a dynamic partnership, a joint participation, and a shared investment in a common mission. It's the difference between being spectators and being partners on the same team. For Paul, the believers in Philippi weren't just a friendly audience; they were co-laborers who had entered into a sacred partnership with him to advance the message of Jesus Christ. This shared commitment formed the very foundation of their relationship and the source of Paul's immense joy.

This active participation in the gospel was multifaceted. For the Philippians, it meant supporting Paul financially during his ministry and imprisonment, making them direct participants in his work. It meant they were "partakers" with him in grace, sharing in both his sufferings and his work of defending the gospel. For us today, this principle remains the same. True *koinonia* is not passive; it is our willing cooperation with the work God is doing. It is God working in us through His Word and Spirit, and us working that truth out in our lives through service, prayer, and sharing the good news with others. This joint participation is what gives us the confidence that God will see His work in us through to completion.

Study Questions:

1. Paul introduces himself not as an "Apostle," but as a "bondservant." Read the principle of the bondservant in Exodus 21:1-6. How does this Old Testament law illuminate the beautiful choice we have to serve Christ wholeheartedly after He has freed us from the bondage of sin? (Philippians 1:1, Exodus 21:1-6)
2. Paul includes Timothy in his greeting, highlighting partnership in ministry. How does the relationship between an experienced believer (Paul) and a younger one (Timothy) reflect the biblical model for discipleship seen elsewhere in scripture? (Philippians 1:1, 2 Timothy 2:2)
3. We are promised that "he who began a good work in you will complete it." How does this promise in Philippians give us confidence during times of personal struggle or failure in our spiritual walk? (Philippians 1:6, Jude 1:24-25)
4. Paul calls the Philippians "partakers with me of grace," both in his imprisonment and in his defense of the gospel. How does sharing in both the sufferings and the victories of fellow believers deepen our sense of partnership? Are we more willing to partner with others in their successes than in their hardships? (1 Corinthians 12:26)
5. Partnership in the gospel involves learning God's word, growing in it, speaking it, and serving its work. What is one specific, practical area—your time, a skill you have, or a spiritual gift—where you could more intentionally partner with the work of the gospel in your local church or community this week? (1 Peter 4:10-11)