

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



“What is ‘Sharing the Gospel’?”

Rabbi Cosmo Panzetta

Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 1:3-6; 1:1-11; 2:1-2; 4:15-16; Acts 16:11-40; 1 Thess. 5:16-18;

When the Message Becomes Visible. We have all learned to be a little suspicious of promises that sound better than they prove to be. Commercials tell us that a product works, an infomercial demonstrates how easy it is, and somebody we have never met assures us that our lives will be different if we will only buy what they are selling. But then we get the product home, it does not work the way it did in the commercial, and we begin wondering, “Did I do something wrong, or was I sold something that was never really what it claimed to be?” The older we get, the more skeptical we can become of anything that sounds too easy, too quick, or too good to be true.

We have Good News—but the Good News is not merely something we are supposed to “sell” with our words. Paul’s words in Philippians show us something much fuller. The Good News is Messiah—who He is, what He has done, and what He continues to produce in those who belong to Him. Sharing the Good News, therefore, is more than giving someone a prepared explanation of salvation. It is *koinonia* in the Good News: a life of participation, partnership, proclamation, and demonstration. It is the message of Yeshua being spoken with our lips and increasingly made visible through our lives. In Phil. 1:3-6, Paul shows us what that kind of gospel-sharing life looks like.

1. SHARING THE GOSPEL BEGINS WITH AN UPWARD AND OUTWARD LIFE

Paul writes, “*I thank my God at every memory of you, always praying with joy in every prayer of mine for you all*” (Phil. 1:3-4). What makes those words remarkable is where Paul is when he writes them. He is in prison. The natural response when we are hurting, stressed, disappointed, or overwhelmed is for our world to shrink until our pain becomes the dominating focus of our thoughts and prayers. “You do not understand what I am going through. I do not have the energy to think about anyone else right now.” Yet Paul’s perspective remains upward-focused and outward-focused. In prison, he is thanking God. In his own discomfort, he is praying for others. This is what life begins to look like when we are daily dying to self and becoming increasingly alive in Messiah.

And Paul says that these prayers are offered “with joy.” Biblical joy is not pretending that painful circumstances are pleasant. Joy is deeper than an emotion; it is a settled contentment and a perspective that rises above the immediacy of the present circumstance. It is knowing how the story ends even while we are living through the difficult middle. Paul practices here what he later teaches elsewhere: “*Rejoice always, pray constantly, in everything give thanks; for this is God’s will for you in Messiah Yeshua*” (1 Thess. 5:16-18). Joy does not deny the prison; it recognizes that God is still at work inside it. When our eyes remain fixed on Yeshua, even hardship can become a place where the reality of the Good News is displayed.

2. SHARING THE GOSPEL MEANS PARTICIPATING IN THE GOOD NEWS

Paul says his joy comes “*because of your sharing (κοινωνία, koinonia) in the Good News from the first day until now*” (Phil. 1:5). The word translated “sharing” is *koinonia*—pointing to something held in “common”, to a relationship; and so it is often translated fellowship, communion, partnership, participation. The Philippians had entered into a shared life centered around the Good News. And for Paul, the Good News is not merely a body of teaching or a message we memorize. The Good News is ultimately Messiah Himself—His person and His work, what He has accomplished and what He continues to accomplish. To proclaim Messiah is to proclaim the Good News. Therefore, to live “*worthy of the Good News of Messiah*” (Phil. 1:27) is to live a life worthy of the Messiah whom that Good News reveals.

What they held in common—their *koinonia*—certainly included material partnership. Paul later reminds them that they were uniquely faithful in supporting his ministry: “*Not a single community partnered with me in giving and receiving—except you alone*” (Phil. 4:15). But gospel partnership is much bigger than giving money. It includes every word spoken and every deed done on behalf of the Good News. Think again of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail. The prisoners did not simply hear a sermon; they experienced it being lived out as they observed two men who had been unjustly beaten worshipping God in the darkness. When the earthquake opened the doors, Paul did not become self-absorbed and run for his own freedom. He remained, protected the jailer’s life, and demonstrated selfless love toward the very man charged with keeping him imprisoned. That is *koinonia* in the Good News. The message was declared with their lips, but its reality was demonstrated through their lives. Our desire should be that the closer people get to us, the more convinced they become that the transformation Messiah produces is real.

3. SHARING THE GOSPEL TRUSTS GOD TO FINISH WHAT HE STARTED

Paul continues, “*I am sure of this very thing—that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the Day of Messiah Yeshua*” (Phil. 1:6). His confidence is striking because it has very little to do with the Philippians and everything to do with the Lord. The One who began the work is the One who will bring the work to its goal. Their participation in the Good News had continued “*from the first day until now,*” and Paul was confident that it would continue because God Himself was at work within them. The gospel had not merely given them a new message to believe; it had begun producing a new people.

That means sharing the Good News is a progressive work. We are still becoming. Paul will soon pray that their love would “*overflow **still more and more** in knowledge and depth of discernment*” (Phil. 1:9). There is always a “still more and more.” We have been made *kedoshim*—holy ones—and now we are learning to walk in the reality of what He has made us. God is producing something in us through the pressures, trials, relationships, disappointments, acts of obedience, prayers, giving, serving, and opportunities to love when loving is costly. We are not yet at the end of the story. But we can live with joy in the middle that may sometimes as painful as a Philippians prison because we know the One who wrote the beginning, and we trust Him to finish what He started.

CONCLUSION: Let the Good News Be Seen

Sharing the Good News, then, is much more than knowing what to say when someone asks us what we believe. It is allowing the Good News to take hold of the whole of our lives. It is learning to turn upward toward God and outward toward others rather than continually inward toward ourselves. It is participating in the work of Messiah with our prayers, our words, our resources, our actions, our relationships, and our character. It is asking the Spirit to work in us so that when people observe us closely—especially when life is difficult—they would see something that cannot simply be explained by personality, circumstances, or human strength. They would see the life of Yeshua increasingly being formed in us.

Today, let our prayer be this: “Lord, make the Good News real in me. Not merely something I can explain, defend, or proclaim, but something that can be observed in the way I live.” Bring before Him the places where stress has caused you to become consumed with yourself, the places where your words and your life are not telling the same story, and the places where you have become discouraged because the transformation seems unfinished. Surrender them again. Ask the Spirit to produce His fruit in you—to make you a living demonstration of the hope you proclaim. And then rest in this confidence: “*He who began a good work in you **WILL** carry it on to completion until the Day of Messiah Yeshua*” (Phil. 1:6).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do Paul’s prayers in Phil. 1:3–4 reveal about where his attention was focused even while he was imprisoned?
2. How is biblical joy different from simply feeling happy or pretending that difficult circumstances do not hurt?
3. What does *koinonia* in the Good News include beyond verbally telling someone about Yeshua?
4. When you are under stress or experiencing pain, does the focus of your thoughts and prayers tend to turn primarily inward, or are you still able to look upward toward God and outward toward others?
5. If the people who know you best judged the reality of the Good News by what they observe in your everyday life, what would they see? Where would you like the Lord to continue His transforming work?

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, thank You that You have called us Your *kedoshim* and that the work You have begun in us is not finished. Teach us to live with our eyes fixed on Yeshua, with hearts turned upward toward You and outward toward others. Give us joy that rises above our circumstances, and teach us to pray continually and give thanks in every situation. May the Good News not simply be words on our lips, but a living reality demonstrated through our character, our relationships, our generosity, and the way we respond when life is difficult. Holy Spirit, produce Your fruit in us so that those who come close to our lives would see that Yeshua is real. And where we are still unfinished, help us trust that the One who began the good work will faithfully carry it to completion until the Day of Messiah Yeshua.

B'Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.