

# Key Words in Philippians 04 the Word 'Fellowship'

by David Clifford

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*Fellowship is a vital aspect of Christian living, representing a deep sense of community and connection with God and others.*

**Duration:** 45:41

**Topics:** "Christian Stewardship", "Sacrificial Living"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of presenting ourselves as living sacrifices to God. He references Romans 12:1, which states that the sacrifices God desires are broken and contrite hearts. The principle of curiosity is highlighted, explaining that when we honor God with what we have, He will be glorified and pleased, and the work for God will continue. The speaker also discusses two situations - poverty and abundance - and how the apostle Paul was able to master both. In poverty, Paul trusted in God's provision and was content, while in abundance, he used his resources to support others and spread the gospel. The sermon encourages believers to find joy and blessing in being used by God in ministry.

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## Transcript

May we read from Philippians, Paul's letter to the Philippians, the verses to here and there. We have to do this kind of here and there reading in these morning sessions because as you know we are picking out the key words and they are found just here and there. First of all in chapter 1 verse 4, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

Being confident of this very thing that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Even as it is neat for me to speak this of you all because I have you in my heart. Inasmuch as both in my bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel ye all are partakers with me of grace.

And that word there is again the Greek word for fellowship, koinonia. For God is my record how greatly I long after you all in the compassions of Jesus Christ. Now chapter 2, if there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort flowing from love, the love of God, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any compassions and mercies fulfilled ye my joy that ye be like-minded.

And then chapter 3 please, verse 8, yea doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For whom I have suffered the loss of all things and do counten but refuse that I may win Christ and be found in him. Not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his suffering being made conformable unto his death. Then chapter 4, verse 11, no 10 for the sake of connection. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at the last your care of me has flourished again.

Wherein you were all so careful that you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want for I have learned in whatsoever state I am there was to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.

Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry. Both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through or in Christ who strengthens me.

Notwithstanding you have done well that you did communicate with my affliction. And the word there is the same for fellowship. You had fellowship with my affliction.

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity not because I desire a gift but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. I have all.

I abound. I am full. I have received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you an odor of a sweet smell a sacrifice acceptable well pleasing to God that my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

The Lord bless to us all his wonderful word and now our meditation on it. What a wonderful word fellowship is. Well I think all these key words in Philippians are wonderful.

I don't know what you think. But this week they've been a special blessing to me because most of the morning subjects I hadn't got them completed. So I've had the joy of getting up early in the morning and sorting them out rather more correctly for our messages in these mornings this week.

And that has been a great blessing to me. I hope you've had some encouragement and help yourself from the study of these key words the gospel joy and mind and now fellowship. Paul always appreciated fellowship.

We appreciate fellowship. We are glad to see you here. We're all glad to be here in this happy fellowship.

You if you are a believer you were made by God for nothing less than Christian fellowship. Amongst the blessings of God's full salvation is the blessing of fellowship. And we must learn the sooner the better that we cannot really in this life do without fellowship.

And in eternity we won't be without it. We shall enjoy it to the full. We are naturally I'm going to say but that's not the right word spiritually gregarious people.

We depend on one another. We look to one another. We help one another.

In short we have fellowship one with another and God meant us so to do. When I was quoting that scriptural phrase fellowship one with another actually in the context there and I have to be so careful after what I said yesterday. In the context there the fellowship one with another is not your fellowship with mine and so on and you with one another but it's the fellowship with the father and his children.

If they confess their sin he forgives them and we have fellowship with the one God with the other the one who confesses his sin and there's no fellowship until we do that thing of course no fellowship with God. So this is a beautiful keyword in Philippians and it talks about in these portions we have been reading fellowship in different ways fellowship in the gospel fellowship in grace fellowship in God's spirit and fellowship in grief and suffering and fellowship in giving too which is Christian stewardship. That's what we're reading about rapidly in the fourth chapter.

Now not only did Paul appreciate fellowship very very much and he spoke always very highly of the fellowship that was shown to him and he always went out of his way to show a lot of fellowship to others and his fellowship with the Philippians was fantastic in every way. When Paul missed fellowship when he was without it he really missed it very much when it was denied him so as you can tell a pain in his heart just like now for instance this morning there must be a pain in my wife's heart she's been with me for years in my ministry and now she is not and that's sad. Now Paul felt sad like that when fellowship was denied him but of course God all has his purposes in all this I want to take just a moment to do and this is part of the introduction one of my biggest problems in my ministry is and my wife always kicks me off about this that my introductions are far too long and I see one or two brethren nodding you agree well never mind here's another one that I'll try to abbreviate for you but it's very important at this stage because I said he not only appreciated fellowship but when he didn't get it he missed it but when he missed it God made up to him in other ways because God is faithful.

You see when the cloud is over us in one way or another through lack of fellowship or any other way God sends a ray of sunshine through the cloud in his faithfulness and grace another way of putting that is this he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind that's always been a favorite text of mine. God is gracious but he does allow testings to come from time to time and Paul was tested. Now what about this for the testing in all these references in this introduction are in Timothy 2 Timothy 1 15 all those in Asia are turned against me.

Have you ever heard a sermon on that? Can you understand that? The churches in Asia he formed hundreds of believers there he led to Christ the whole lot of them had turned against him and he was an old man now and he needed their fellowship and they turned against him. Can you understand that? Beyond me except that we know how frail and fickle humanity is and when Christians are not very spiritual and walking in the light with God they are just fickle and frail like that too. But please notice in that same context where he says all Asia all the people the Christians in Asia are turned against me he said but now here it comes the ray of sunshine but Onesiphorus bless his heart Onesiphorus often refresh me.

When he was in Onesiphorus area where he lived he came and had some fellowship with Paul and he remembered it now in his time of need and when Onesiphorus came to Rome he sought him out there and had some fellowship with him in prison. Now wasn't that good? Wasn't that a ray of sunshine? That real fellowship. Now he missed it on another occasion in chapter 4 of the same epistle he said Demas hath forsaken me.

Now that was sad because he'd had a lot of good fellowship with Demas and he was sending greetings in Colossians to the saints there from all the Christians and he just put and Demas. He didn't say beloved Demas or our dear brother Demas just said and Demas greets you. And maybe by this time the real character of Demas was beginning to show itself and he was you know loving this present evil world and eventually of course he left the apostle Paul and he felt it very much the lack of fellowship with Demas but he comes in with his butt again but he said although I haven't got fellowship with Demas now I've got fellowship with Luke but Luke is with me.

Only Luke is with me. No wonder he's called the beloved physician. You see he came with Paul from Galatia.

He joined the team not just to help in gospel ministry but to help Paul himself with his bad eyesight maybe or his asthma maybe or malaria maybe and to be with him and that was the greatest blessing. That Luke brought to Paul standing by his side when others went he was there continuing in real fellowship with him. And there's one more in chapter 4 and verse 16.

He said no man stood with me. When fellowship was denied Paul he missed it very much. And now he was standing before Nero and he was telling Timothy about it and he said when I was there before my judge, you remember there was Brethren Timothy that met me a double-barreled decimation of Brethren from Rome who came down Italy and met me as I was walking up Italy as a prisoner coming from Jerusalem and Malta to Rome as a prisoner and you know how they gave me such a welcome and brought me into the city and came and visited me in my own hired room.

Well those Brethren the older ones who got as far as the younger ones who got as far as the Appii Forum and the older ones who got as far as the three taverns. I don't think they went inside. They met him there.

He said those younger Brethren they were standing on my right supporting me and those older Brethren in Rome they were standing on my left supporting me as I made my defense before Nero. Do you remember that? No? Neither do I. It's not there. He said listen Timothy not one of them came.

Not one of them would stand with me and speak in my defense. But he said nevertheless he said in an authorized version. Nevertheless there was a ray of sunshine Timothy when this great cloud was over me and the ray of sunshine was this that the Lord him I enjoyed his presence.

He stood with me and although I hadn't got their fellowship I'd got his fellowship and that meant more to me than anything. Now you know that the word fellowship of course you only read it about three or four times in the authorized King James Version but in the Greek you'll find it there about five or six or seven times and I've chosen five of those. And the Greek word koinonia does not just simply mean participation in something like forming a social society or just coming together for a gathering and drinking coffee and eating cookies and just talking and doing nothing.

That's not the idea behind the meaning of the Greek word here for fellowship. It is rather an association with others in doing something. You join others in fellowship to perform some deed in a spiritual way for the glory of the Lord.

Now the five that I have chosen therefore are as follows. Fellowship in the gospel and the principle of sister's service. Two, fellowship in grace and the principle of Christian love.

Three, fellowship in God's Spirit and the principle of Christian gregariness. And fourthly, fellowship in grief and suffering and the principle of the Christian's cross. And fifthly, fellowship in giving and the principle of Christian stewardship.

So we must get on very quickly having spent far too long on the introduction. So here in chapter one, as we saw the other day, he is referring when he talks about fellowship in the gospel the first day to Livia's hospitality to him and to his gospel team. Paul appreciated the fellowship of sisters and he often mentioned it later.

He never forgot their work and their fellowship. God appreciated the fellowship, the work, the labours of the sisters and he never forgot it. And I'm sure the sisters themselves appreciated the privilege of fellowship with God's servant and servants.

And they would never forget it. Because when you have fellowship with God's servant in the propagation of the gospel as these sisters did, that's a great privilege and it's a great thrill and there's always a great blessing to one's own soul. Therefore I link chapter one verse 5a, your fellowship in the gospel the first day, Livia, with chapter four and verse three.

Help those women who laboured with me in the gospel. Now which women is he talking about? I don't know to be honest, but I would think it was these two women he mentioned in the verse before, Euodia and Syntyche. They would ask the earth to open up and swallow them when their names were read out as the letter to the Philippians was read to the congregation and they were there.

And everybody knew now that they were not getting on well together even if they didn't know before. Everyone knew now. But you see that grief was tempered by the fact that Paul was not only exalting them to unity, but he was remembering their fellowship in the gospel with him.

What a pity that their temporary disunity rather spoiled their faithful labouring with him in the gospel. But he would never forget it. God never forgot it.

He put it down here and they would never forget having such wonderful fellowship with the apostle Paul. And he says, I implore you also to your fellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel. These sisters helped me, brother, you help them.

And if the principle is, you see, if you will have fellowship with God's servants, maybe missionaries come to your mind overseas, then God will also find a way of you getting fellowship and help when you need it. You see you always reap what you sow. Bottomley was in prison for swindling.

And when his friend visited him, he was making mailbags because that was what they had to do in British fish prisons years ago. Now they have to watch the television and send out for fish and chips. So when his friend came in, he said to him, hello, Bottomley, what are you doing, sowing? He said, no, reaping.

And if you sow to righteousness, you shall reap blessing in your soul. And if you have fellowship in the gospel, somebody's sure they're going to have fellowship with you, God will see to it. Help those women.

Now who was he talking to when he said, help those women who labored with me in the gospel? He said, I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow. Well now Epaphroditus was apparently the amanuensis, can't be too definite about that. And while he was taking this down at Paul's dictation, Paul turned aside and said, now true yoke fellow, you help those women I've just spoken about.

They help me in the gospel. And he put it down. And it was really a word for him.

And my secretary's often done that, you know. I've been dictating a letter and I've suddenly said, now when you come here, when this brother comes here, I want you to remind me to do so and so or say so and so to him. And she's put it down in a shorthand.

I believe that's what happened here. And the Holy Spirit has left it like that and erased it so. So that we know that Epaphroditus going back was not only going to be honored himself, but he had a work to do for God to help the sisters who helped the apostle Paul.

Now I'm quite sure if brother Willie, I hope you'll pardon me mentioning his name, I'm not going to take it in vain, I hope. But if brother Willie were to write a history of the Park of the Palms, as I hope one day he will, I don't know where he'd get the time from, but you know he will jolly well have to include the labor and the work of dozens of sisters. He does so much himself that the world would collapse without the sisters.

God remembers their work and the workers must appreciate and always remember what the sisters do in faithfulness. Now there is a young sister who in Glasgow, England today, Glasgow, Scotland today, thank you brother, my geography's gone wrong this morning, who has put herself at the Lord's disposal to have some fellowship in the gospel with me. And now I do appreciate.

Her name is Anita and she's my daughter and she's going to work with me in the Lord's work. She's been full time in the Lord's work for three or four years now. Acknowledged by the local assembly in this way, doing a lot of preaching.

You know we have women evangelists in our country, we are ever so wicked. But who do you think's going to reach the young women of the land if it's not the young women of Christ? I can't reach them, I can't talk their language to start with. Who's going to minister God's word to the sisters' fellowships and so on? What a great blessing is sisters' ministry.

And I knew a lady quite well. She gave herself to God for the gospel ministry. And she had a lot of fellowship with me in it too.

Oh I did appreciate it. You know she used to pray for me morning, noon and night. She even prayed for me before I was born.

It was my mother. What a ministry. And some years ago a young lady said to me, I'll have fellowship with you in the gospel.

I said that's just the answer I want. And I married the girl and that's my wife. And while I'm preaching today, she's praying there.

And that's real fellowship, sisters' ministry. In a thousand ways may God give us grace to grasp all the opportunities in our labours for the Lord. What great opportunities here.

And I see lots of sisters take that, take them. All right now quickly, fellowship in grace. And the principle of love.

Here in chapter one and verse seven, the apostle says, I have you in my heart. Or the margin says, you have me in your heart. Those were absolutely true.

And he said, you all are having fellowship with me in grace. That's God's grace of course. Grace is love.

It's the principle of love to the unlovely and undeserving. And they were having fellowship in the grace of God through the Lord Jesus Christ, their mutual Saviour. Partakers, koinonia, fellowship in grace.

And of course whatever we are doing for the Lord and however we have to live, the grace of God in Christ is enough for us. I preached some time ago an axiomatic sermon. That is preaching from a principle.

Now some brethren think it's a horrible thing to do. Not preaching from the text of scripture but from a principle. But I think it's a lovely thing to do because underneath every portion of scripture you will see a divine principle.

And if you can preach from the underlying principle instead of from the actual text, you are telling the people how God works and what is in the mind of God. And you've got your basis for that on the text itself. And I was preaching a sermon on Romans chapter 5 and the underlying principle, by the way there are several underlying principles in Romans 5, but the one that I was talking about was the principle of grace.

God's love for the undeserving. And the idea was this, this was the axiom, the grace of God in Christ will always triumph. That's the principle.

And in verse 8 of chapter 5 of Romans it triumphed at the cross. In verse 17 of the same chapter it triumphed in the life. And in verse 25 it shall triumph for all eternity.

Thank God for fellowship in such marvellous grace. It was the grace of God that laid hold of Paul. It was the grace of God in Christ that laid hold of them through him.

And now they were partakers together of the same grace. Don't read it as in the authorised King James version, partakers of my grace, because it doesn't say that. It says partakers with me of grace.

That's the grace of God, not Paul's grace. And then thirdly there's fellowship in God's spirit. And it's the principle of gregarity.

And I get this from chapter 2 and verse 1. We are a gregarious people as I said. I'm not quite sure whether I've coined a word there. When I can get a hold of a good dictionary I'll try and find out and let you know.

But gregarity seems to me to be a nice word and it's just the right idea for this section. Because here you see the Apostle is saying three things and he brings in the Trinity. He said, since you know consolation in Christ.

Now you all know that. Through believing in Christ you have the greatest comfort in your soul for the present and for the future life. And since you know comfort flowing from love which is God's love.

And what a comfort it is to know that God loves us in spite of ourselves. And God's love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us. And since you know the fellowship of the Spirit.

The fellowship of the Spirit and compassion and mercy. Now since you know the fellowship of the Spirit. Not fellowship in the Spirit as some would interpret this.

It's not talking about fellowship in the Spirit. You and I having fellowship together in the Spirit. Now that perhaps would be a beautiful application.

But it's not the interpretation of this word. He is talking about fellowship in the fellowship of the Spirit. And His fellowship with us.

And Christ's consolation for us. And God's love in us. Now of course it's true that the fellowship of the Spirit into which we have been brought by faith gives us fellowship together in the same Spirit.

But what a wonderful thing it is that we have the fellowship of the Spirit. That day by day along life's way God's Holy Spirit is having such close fellowship with you. That He walks with you.

He talks with you. He corrects you. He gives you God's peace in your heart as a matter of fact by His own person He indwelt your heart and life.

The big problem is that most Christians don't recognize His presence. And His indwelling sufficiency if they did their need would be met. Fellowship of the Spirit is a tremendous thing.

He has fellowship with me. And not just that we have fellowship together because of Him. That He has fellowship with me.

Dr. Oswald Smith says, to strive after a spiritual experience or other is fatal. But to acknowledge the person within the life of the believer is the success, is the secret of spiritual success. Then fourthly, fellowship in grief and suffering and the principle of the Christian's cross.

And we get this in chapter 3 and verse 10, that I may know Him, the power of His resurrection, and know the fellowship of His sufferings being made conformable unto His death. It is quite true that there is more in Christ for us than we've ever conceived up to this present moment of time. Our great desire should be to go on with the Lord so that we may know more of the Lord, this glorious person, and the mighty power of His resurrection in our own lives.

But here we notice that we shall get to know Him by entering into the fellowship of His sufferings. How do we do that? Well, if to know Christ is the greatest attainment, and to be found in Him is the greatest prospect, and to be clothed in His righteousness is the greatest or highest perfection, and to know the power of His resurrection is the greatest enabling, then to know Him and the fellowship of His suffering is the greatest test that brings the greatest reward. How do we enter into His suffering? Well, first of all, we say Amen to all that God is doing with us.

And when we suffer for Christ's sake, where we bear reproach for the sake and name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we accept it from the Lord, and we are partakers of His suffering and humiliation in that way. But, Commibere and Houston, in their translation from the Greek of the New Testament, they put it like this. Knowing the fellowship of His suffering by being made conformable to His death.

And if that is true, and I believe it is, then the apostle is saying, I want to get further and further and further into the death of Jesus. I want to have continuous identification with the death of Christ day by day. I want to die with Christ, enter into His sufferings continually, and that is how I am going to know Him more.

And is there another verse of scripture for that? Of course it is. If we are made in the likeness of His death, so shall we also be in the likeness of His resurrection. If we bear about in our body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that is the Christian's trust, then shall the life also of Jesus be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

It cannot be Christ liveth in me. It cannot be that until it is this, I am crucified with Christ. Now one must precede the other.

That is scriptural order, and there are about ten scriptures to show that it is scriptural order, first things first. Lord, day by day I do Thy wondrous cross, the cross of Calvary. Day by day I stretch my hands thereon and die with Thee.

The daily cross means daily loss of all that keeps from Thee, and the daily cross means daily gain of all Thou art to me. And somebody said to George Muller once when he was a very old man, over 90 years of age by this time, Mr Muller why is it you are so successful in God's work and you have so many answers to your prayers? Well he wouldn't deny it because it's absolutely true. Seven and a half million dollars in dollars went through his hands in Stirling of course, for his missionary work and for his orphans in Bristol, and he never took up an offering or asked for a penny or gave a hint in a letter to anybody, just prayed.

So he is very very successful. Now why is it you are so successful he said, they said to him. And he buried it all back to the ground as far as it would go and he said listen, a day came in George Muller's life when George Muller died.

He said there was a day when I died, I utterly died. Died to George Muller and his opinions and his preferences and his tastes and to George Muller's will. I died to the world and to its approval and censure.

I died to the approval and blame of my own brethren and friends. He must have been really dead. And since the day I died I have started only to show myself approved unto God.

When did you die? Always bearing about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus. In God's estimation you have died. And in God's estimation your life is hid with Christ in God.

But when in your experience did it come to pass. So there is a fellowship in grief and spiritual and suffering and there is the principle of the Christian's cross voluntarily taking up the cross which is something to die on and not something to wear. And finally as I close, because it is just time to close.

Fellowship in giving. This is chapter 4 verses 14 and 19 and as a matter of fact this idea runs all the way through the epistle because it is an acknowledgement this letter of their kind gift for him recently and their fellowship in a practical way of Christian stewardship with them ever since they got to know him and he led them to the Lord. Fellowship in giving and the principle of Christian stewardship.

He says you did well that you did communicate with my affliction. You had, and that's the word there, fellowship again, koinonia again, you had fellowship with my affliction. What was his affliction pray, that they had fellowship with him in? It was poverty.

It was poverty. And this is what he says in this connection. I know how to abound and have plenty in my pocket and I know how to conduct myself when I have nothing in my pocket.

He says I can do all things. He says I am master of every situation. And in this context there were two situations.

One was poverty and the other was abundance and he was master of both. He was master of the situation of want because in it by the grace of God he was content, trusting God's faithfulness. He was master in the situation of plenty.

Because when he had plenty he didn't keep it for himself. I'll tell you what he did. He went down, he got up early in the morning and made some tents or tent material.

And then he'd go down at ten o'clock to the market place and sell it. He would put the money in his pocket and before he left he would preach the gospel to the people there. And then he would go home rather tired by this time and when he got home he'd go round to some of the poor saints, give them a few dollars.

He says these hands have ministered to my necessities and to the necessities of those that were with me. I have supported the weak, he said to the elders from Ephesus when he was talking to them at Mileta. I have supported the weak.

He said I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. I am master of every situation and when the situation is me I'm content to rest in God. And when the situation is abundant I know what my responsibility is to God and to his poor saints.

And this he said, and I continued the reading this morning purposely, this communication with him and his need, he said, is a sacrifice to God. An acceptable sacrifice to God. There are many sacrifices that God's people should make today.

Not to atone for their sins because his sacrifice was once and for all and enough. But you know Romans 12 and verse 1 don't you? Present day sacrifice. The sacrifices of God are a broken and contrite heart.

Do good and communicate says Hebrews 13 and forget not with such sacrifices God is well pleased. And the principle of stewardship is such that when I honour God with what I have, the result will be God shall be glorified and pleased. It will be a sacrifice acceptable to him.

And the others who are in need will be blessed in their work for God will continue if they are workers for the Lord. I have in my mind to help. And then thirdly in my own soul there must be great blessings and joy.

That God would use me in this ministry. And God is no man better than those that honour me in Christian stewardship. Then, O God we thank thee that thou hast brought us into such a wonderful fellowship with thyself, with the Lord Jesus and with the Holy Spirit who indwells us.

And Lord thou hast brought us into fellowship with one another. What a joy this is and what a responsibility this is. Teach us all these lessons.

We pray thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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