

Sunday School Lesson for the Months of March & April 2024

Christian Fellowship

(Philippians 1:3-5)

Sunday, March 3, 2024

If Christianity does not make a man happy, it does not make him anything at all. Philippians has been called, “the Epistle of Joy.” Again, and again woven throughout the fiber of this letter are the words, “joy” and “rejoice.”

But from what, does a Christian derive joy? What was Paul’s cause for Christian joy, and what is ours? It is the fellowship of believers. For Paul said, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you – for your fellowship in the gospel.” (Philippians 1:3-5)

That which brings real joy to the Christian today is not the building in which he worships, the programs in which he participates, or the good that he does; if there be any real joy in his life, it comes from fellowship with other believers. The absence of this fellowship explains well the absence of joy in the lives of countless Christians today.

If ours is to be a life of “Christian Joy,” it must be a life lived in the fellowship of believers.

Sunday, March 10, 2024

I. The Greeting this Fellowship sends!

In Philippians 1:1-2, Paul sends greetings to the Saints, “which are at Philippi,” the first church established in Europe, whose birth is described in Acts 16. What lay behind this church? What are the principles upon which any work of Christ depends and is built?

A. **The obedience of a Servant.** In Philippians 1:1, the Apostle speaks of “the servants of Jesus Christ.” Paul wanted to go to another City, but God closed

the door – “the Spirit suffered them not.” Then God called him to Macedonia, and he went. I think there’s something to learn from this – We have almost come to the position where we think it does not matter whether we obey God, because we can simply turn to 1 John 1 and claim the promise, “if we confess our sins.” We are seriously in danger of taking up the attitude that says, “it doesn’t matter if I sin.”

The lesson that stands out so vividly in this passage is that the work of God depends on the obedience of His servants. It matters if you and I are disobedient to the will of God. Here we find that the existence of a church depended on the obedience of one man who was prepared to accept God’s word and prepared to obey God’s calling. We need to do as Paul did, shut out all other voices and listen to the voice of God. The whole situation at Philippi turned around because of the obedience of a servant.

Sunday, March 17, 2024

B. The Operation of the Spirit. Paul says, “to all the saints in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:1). At the heart of the founding of this church, lay the miracle of salvation, and the work and operation of the Holy Spirit.

1. The Operation of the Holy Spirit reaches all kinds of people in all kinds of ways. In Acts 16, we see the origin of the church and how the Apostle Paul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, led three people to Church – Lydia, the slave girl, and the Roman jailor. Lydia was an Asiatic, the slave girl a Greek and the Jailor, a Roman. Lydia was of Paul’s Culture, the slave girl legally was considered not a person but a tool, and the jailor was middle-class. But all three of them became converted because of the witness of Paul, the Lord’s servant.
2. The Holy Spirit sets Christians apart. Those touched by the operation of the Holy Spirit are called saints. This word, “saint” means to be set apart for a special service to God. It is used in the Old Testament of the Priesthood, the tithe, the central part of the temple, and Israel. We are made different by being set apart by the Holy Spirit for the service of Christ.

Sunday, March 24, 2024

C. **The Opposition of Society.** The Apostle addressed the Christian, “which are at Philippi” (Philippians 1:1). Christianity is seldom popular when God is really working. Opposition at Philippi was aroused immediately. Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison. There are always birth pangs when a church is born or God’s work is flourishing. One of the sad commentaries on our day is that we expect the Spirit of God to work without cost or pain to us.

Sunday, April 7, 2024

II. The gratitude the fellowship shows is expressed in Philippians 1:3-8.

It is a lovely thing when remembrance and gratitude are bound up together. In our personal Christian relationships, it is great to have nothing but happy memories, and that is how Paul thought of the Christians at Philippi. But what are the things that bind one Christian to another Christian?

Here are three:

A. **A life common to the fellowship.** Verse 7 is better translated, “ye are all partakers with me of grace.” They had a life common to the fellowship.

1. Christian fellowship is shared by all. The wealthy business woman Lydia, the demon-possessed slave girl, and the middle-class jailor all shared the same Christian fellowship.
2. Christ fellowship is gracious towards all. Snobbery has no place in the church. Looking down on someone else is a terrible thing especially since we all are indwelt by the same Christ.

Sunday, April 14, 2024

B. A constraining love in the fellowship (vs. 7-8).

1. Such love is “the affection of Jesus Christ” (vs. 8 NIV). The Apostle is saying, “I yearn for you with the very compassion of Jesus Christ Himself.” Christ’s love flows through us to others.
2. Such love is a dependable love. There was a fellowship “from the first day until now” (1:5). That love had covered a span of ten years. Do people find your love and fellowship dependable?

C. **A Lord central in the fellowship.** “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” (1:6). Our fellowship is built around and upon Christ. Verse 6 says, that Christ both imparts confidence and makes certain that we persevere.

Sunday, April 21, 2024

III. The Growth this fellowship seeks (1:9-11).

Our fellowship seeks a growth yet to be realized. It seeks.....

A. **“That your love may abound yet more and more (1:9).** Love is extravagant. Love is unrestrained. Love never asks, “how little can I give?”

B. **That perception that guides the Ministry of love (1:9-10).** This is no sentimental love. It is a love guarded by true knowledge and wise judgment. Love is always the way to knowledge. If we love any person, we want to learn more and more about them and if we love Jesus, we will want to learn more and more about Him. Here Paul is thinking of a love that doesn’t need to be told because it knows. It means you have gained that perception that guides the Ministry of love.

Sunday, April 28, 2024

C. **That perfection that is the “must of love.”** “That ye may be sincere and without offence “till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God” (1:10-11). Here is the standard established by love – perfection, “without offence.” Although we shall never fully attain perfection in this life, we can at least aspire to it. The growth which fellowship seeks is a perfection – that ultimately achieves the “Christian aim.” But what is that aim? – To live a life that brings glory and praise to God.

The cause for Christian joy is the fellowship of believers. And our responsibility is to see that this fellowship is paramount in our church.

My Church!

I want my church to be a place,
where men can meet God face-to-face,
and meditate upon His Grace.

That I can think each time we meet,
A presence comes and takes its seat.

I want her doors to stand so wide,
no hungry soul who waits outside,
will think that he has been denied.

I want my church to be much more
than stone and timber, pew, and door,
or carpet laid upon a floor.

But oh, I know that it can be
no more than is found in me,
A Fellowship with man and Thee.

- Jessie Marle Franklin