

# THE JOY OF A FAITHFUL CONGREGATION



PHILIPPIANS 1:7  
SERMON BY  
PASTOR ROMMEL INSIGNE

## **The Joy of a Faithful Congregation**

### **Sermon by Pastor Rommel Insigne**

**7 For it is only right for me to think this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are fellow partakers with me in this grace. Philippians 1:7**

I entitled this devotion: The Joy of a Faithful Congregation. To start with, how to be a faithful Gospel Church? What constitutes a faithful church? What are the characteristics of a faithful church? What makes a church unfaithful and joyless church? It seems easy to answer, but why and what is the issue of many churches today? We need to understand the reason for joy and who takes away our joy.

Let us further ask you. Is our salvation real or fake? Is it the world and the forces of evil in this world (satan, demons, unbelievers and worldly pleasures) who rob our joy? Is it because you are living your own self-centred life? Living your life without God. The captain of your soul is you, not Christ? Is it because you have an ongoing life of bitterness and resolve to never and never will forgive that man or woman? Is it a lack of understanding of God's word (theology and doctrine)? Is it a lack of understanding of the sovereignty of God? Are we focusing too much on ourselves and the concerns (circumstances) we are going through? Is it because we are not grateful and thankful for God's providence (physical and spiritual)? Is it our dementia mind and heart who easily forget the goodness of God in their lives? Is it because you turned away from God and His words? Is it our lack of faith and demonstration of prayer life? Is it our successes and achievements that we have forgotten God?

Paul started his defence and commendation for the church in this verse. But before I continue, what did we learn from the last six verses of chapter 1 of Philippians? First, Paul enjoyed seeing the church receive the grace and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Second, Paul saw how they faithfully abide with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We learnt examples of their growth from the first day of conversion up to the present. Third, Paul also saw God's faithfulness. Their faithful service and ministry of evangelism and discipleship were commendable. Lastly, their generous giving to Paul and to other churches. Then, Paul's next message of joy as he expressed his love and affection, let us read verse 7 and see how Paul expressed his love for the church and Jesus Christ. **7 "For it is only right for me to think this way about you all."** Paul expressed what he thinks about the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the church in Philippi. Paul was reminded about their conversion to Christ, how they started the church, their partnership, and their faithfulness to God and Christ. Assigning overseers and deacons based on high standards of servant leadership. Paul was really impressed. He even confessed that he remembers offering prayers to God and always giving thanks. Their contribution in giving to the work of the Lord and proclamation of the Gospel of Christ. Paul, in short, was saying that the church was his delight and joy, and he was rejoicing for their faithfulness. But most important of all, seeing the pieces of evidence of God's faithfulness. God started the good works in them from the first day of their

conversion to the present time and promised to complete everything on the day of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul cannot prevent himself from thinking this way. He cannot restrain himself from thinking about the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the church (spiritually and morally). Paul was also saying the church is always in his thoughts and mind with joy and thanksgiving in his heart. Aside from an implied defence of them, the church is in his heart. All because of their faithfulness to God and the growth of the church. Not because they are a perfect church or because they are Paul's pride to make himself feel more good of himself. To boast about the works of God's Spirit and His sovereign grace (2 Corinthians 7:3). What was his purpose in saying that the church is in his mind and heart? The purpose was their fellowship with the Gospel, God's promised covenant, and His faithfulness. God started the good works in their salvation and sanctification and will perfect it on the day of Jesus Christ. Paul affirmed that the church is always in his heart despite his imprisonment. He and Timothy love the church, pray for the church, remember the church, and give thanks to God always. Paul's heart is to give more comfort and encouragement to the church to continue on the fellowship and partnership with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whether in preaching the Gospel or in generous giving.

When did the love of Paul start for the church in Philippi? First, **“since both are in my chains.”** Paul remembers the first day of their conversion and their ongoing serving to Christ. But Paul mentioned his chains. This is his imprisonment, his suffering for Christ and the Gospel proclamation. The physical and literal suffering. He was in chains and, at the same time, serving the Lord Jesus Christ as a slave in chains is metaphorical. Not only physical imprisonment but also being a slave of Jesus Christ. He is in chains forever at His service until he dies. Jesus is His Master and Lord. He is a bond slave of Jesus Christ. Willing to serve Christ and do His will. Not his will but the will of the Lord. That is what it means: he is both in chains, literally (physical imprisonment) and metaphorically (as a disciple of Jesus Christ).

You and I are all true slaves and servants of Jesus Christ. Just like Paul is a prisoner of Christ willing to suffer hardship and follow Christ no matter what happens to his life and plans. You are also in chains for Christ. Jesus is indeed your Master, and you are His slaves, a true bondservant of Jesus. Willing to follow Him with extra mile. Suffer and die. Willing not to be famous for the sake of the Gospel and for the advancement of the Gospel. That is why Paul was expressing to the church in Philippi that the church is a true joy to him. A faithful gospel church. It lingers in his mind and his heart the joy and appreciation of their sacrifices to God as true slaves of Christ. Paul was commending the church for being willing to be in chains for Christ. The church in Philippi was an encouragement to Paul. They became all the more faithful and committed to speaking the Gospel of Christ. Instead of closing down the church and abandoning the church and Christ. As they all know, Paul was already gone and in prison, and it was uncertain if he would still come back. But the church stayed steadfast. The church stood up! showed courageous strength, faith and fearless faith. Paul or without Paul, because they love Christ and His Gospel, they remained as a church for the glory and honour of God and of Christ. Their faith is strong and firm. They lived out Christ and served His church.

This is the reason why God honoured them as a church. God included the church in Philippi in the Bible. It is a commendable and recommendable church. A true joyful church. A church who have a consistent and growing love for the church. Faithful in morality, truthful, sincere and blameless. Many false teachers infiltrated the church and discouraged them from following Christ. However, the church in Philippi stayed faithful to Paul and to the Gospel. And despite Paul's chains, the church didn't stop proclaiming the Gospel and even had the courage to excel more in preaching the Gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:13-14).

Secondly, when did Paul's heart start beating for the church in Philippi? **“In the defence.”** What does this mean? In Greek, it is APOLOGIA, where we get the word apologetics. Paul is known as the defender of the Gospel. He preached and taught the Gospel right and was not ashamed of the Gospel. The word defence is a verbal and oral defence. A pure verbal communication of truth. A verbal persuasion with the intention of defending the purity of the Gospel. The Gospel that Paul defends is the suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and coming back of Christ again. His defence or his APOLOGIA was a sign of serious and wholehearted commitment to Christ's Gospel. He defended the Gospel to Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, governors and kings, gentile crowds (mobs who wanted to kill him), and Roman officials. He defended Christ as the Messiah, Lord and God. He defended that salvation is in Christ alone. He defended that salvation is by grace alone and we are saved by faith alone. He defended the words of Christ for our transformation. He defended that salvation we have in Christ is for the glory of God.

Paul was also reminded that the church in Philippi keeps growing in Christ because of their defence of the Gospel of Christ. They proved in their church, city, and community that Jesus Christ is the Way, Truth, and Life. They faithfully proclaimed the Gospel and defended the Deity and humanity of Christ. They faithfully lived out the Gospel through their genuine love for God, their love for others and their generous giving. That is why Paul's mind and heart are always for the church in Philippi. Paul was indeed very much encouraged and impressed by how they defended their faith and the Gospel.

The third, when did Paul's heart start beating for the church in Philippi? **“Their confirmation of the gospel.”** The church learnt about Paul's imprisonment and chains, his defence for the Gospel message and how the church in Philippi also went through persecution and hardship in following Christ. The church has a clear and steadfast commitment to the Gospel. They know what it takes to defend the Gospel and how to defend the Gospel. According to Paul, the confirmation of the Gospel is a firm, strong, and stable connection with the Gospel of Christ. The goal is to preach the Gospel to sinners regardless of their status in life. He and the church believe the Gospel is true and stand their ground and faith in the Gospel. They totally believed in the Gospel of Christ without doubt. Their calling to be slaves and preachers of the Gospel to the Gentiles is strong and steadfast. Their confirmation was from God. They were called and directed to preach and defend the Gospel. They know their mission and purpose as believers of Jesus Christ. God anointed and appointed them to defend the Gospel and suffer for the Gospel, and He and the church did all for the sake of the Gospel. They were willing to be opposed, persecuted, mocked,

rejected and hurt. Having one mindset and faithfully contending for the Gospel. They keep fighting for the Gospel proclamation until they all die.

As Paul contended, defended, and proclaimed the Gospel, the church fought with Paul to preach and proclaim the Gospel of Christ. They know and love the Gospel of Christ and are steadfast for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This confirmation shows that the church and the whole church are becoming stronger and stable in their faith and trust in God and in the Gospel. The church followed Paul's examples and commands of Christ. From the day of their salvation until the present time. They suffered, defended and contended for the Gospel proclamation. That is why Paul said, you are in my mind and heart. The confirmation of the Gospel of Christ is true and deep, and the church is spreading the good news everywhere and influencing not only Paul but other churches around the world. Paul was firm in his calling, and so was the church in Philippi. The church does not waiver in their faith in Christ. The church shows endurance and strength than before. The evidence is their growth and their faithful service. The church in Philippi is a true perseverance of the saints with the help of God.

Lastly, the fourth evidence of Paul's love for the church in Philippi, Paul said, **“you all are fellow partakers with me in this grace.”** All the saints, overseers, deacons and apostles of Jesus Christ around the world who are faithfully spreading the Gospel are all fellow partakers along with me in this grace. Their work of service, including Paul's, was all God's grace. There is nothing to boast about: Their achievements, faithfulness, and perseverance. But Paul wanted them to know that it was all by the grace of God. The calling and perseverance that God has given to them and the work of God in their lives and ministry is by God's grace. Their chains (bond slaves), their defence, and their steadfastness for the Gospel are God's works and by God's grace. That is why the church in Philippi are all fellow partakers, imitators and sufferers for Christ. Anointed with wisdom and discernment and with mission and purpose in life by the grace of God. A sincere and truthful associate of the church with Christ and His Gospel is the work of God's grace: To Paul, to the church, and to us as a church today.