

Theme: When people become Christians, they are united not only with Christ, but with other believers in a vital communion and partnership, which carries both benefits and responsibilities.

I. Intro - RHIP & RHIR

- A. RHIP - rank has its privileges
- B. RHIR - rank has its responsibilities
- C. We like to focus on privileges!
- D. We have many privileges in Christ?
- E. But do we have responsibilities as well?

II. Unchained Thanks

- A. Paul is giving thanks for Philemon

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Philemon 1:4–6

- 1. Paul states that he gives thanks for Philemon
- 2. Almost all of Paul's letters begin with thanks
- 3. The thanksgiving runs from vv4-6, but 7 links with it
I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. Philemon 1:4–7

- a. Note the chiasm in vv5-7 - love, faith, faith, love
- b. V7 not thanksgiving prayer, but continues thought

- B. Why Paul is thankful for Philemon

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus... ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. Philemon 1:4–5, 7

- 1. He is thankful because of Philemon's faith and love
 - a. Literally 'because of love & faith for Jesus & saints'
 - b. But idea is faith towards Jesus and love for people
 - 1. Note that in v7 love is clearly for people
 - 2. This is how Paul usually uses "faith" and "love"
 - 3. Parallel in Colossians 1:4
because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—
Colossians 1:4
- 2. Paul gives thanks to God for Philemon's faith (v5)
 - a. When someone believes we should give thanks!
 - b. Faith in God is nothing less than a miracle!
- 3. Paul gives thanks because Philemon loves other believers - the main emphasis here
 - a. Not just people in general - the saints (holy people)
 - b. Philemon loves the people of God and shows it
 - c. Philemon's love causes him to refresh the hearts/guts of God's people (v7)
 - 1. Note that 3 out of 8 occurrences of σπλάγχνα in Paul

are in Philemon!

2. Deep emotions going on in this letter!

d. This encourages Paul and gives him joy (v7)

C. Setting up the rest of the letter

1. Vv4-7 have a huge number of links with rest of letter

a. Love - vv5,7; v9

b. Partnership - v6; v17

c. Good thing - v6; v14 (favor or benefit)

d. Refresh - v7; v20

e. Hearts - v7; vv12, 20

2. Paul's thanksgiving sets up his main request

3. He is asking Philemon to do what he has always done

III. Unchained Partnership

A. Concept of partnership in v6 is central to Paul's prayer

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Phile. 1:6

1. This verse is difficult to translate and understand

2. Notice different translations

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (NIV 1984)

and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. (ESV)

That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. (KJV)

and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake. (NASB)

I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. (NIV 2011)

3. How are we to understand this key verse?

B. The key phrase - ἡ κοινωνία τῆς πίστεώς σου

I pray that **your partnership with us in the faith** may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. Philemon 1:6

I pray that you may be active in **sharing your faith**, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (NIV 1984)

1. I think the phrase refers to partnership in the faith

2. I will try to give my reasons for this next

C. Understanding κοινωνία as partnership

1. The basic idea of κοινωνία is to share in something

a. Translated as fellowship, participation, sharing

b. Key idea here - partnership

I pray that your **partnership** with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. (Philemon 1:6)

1. This is how it is used in Philippians 1:5
because of **your partnership in the gospel** from the first day until now, Philippians 1:5
2. He uses the related word κοινῶν in v17 to describe partnership
So if you consider me a **partner**, welcome him as you would welcome me. Philemon 1:17
3. This is a MAJOR theme in the letter
Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our dear friend and **fellow worker**—² also to Apphia our sister and Archippus our **fellow soldier**—and to the church that meets in your home: Philemon 1:1–2

because I hear about **your love for all his holy people** and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your **partnership with us in the faith** may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ **Your love** has given me great joy and encouragement, because **you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people**. Philemon 1:5–7

Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back forever—¹⁶ no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord. ¹⁷ So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. Philemon 1:15–17

2. Our theme for teaching - a good paraphrase of this verse: When people become Christians, they are united not only with Christ, but with other believers in a vital communion and partnership, which carries both benefits and responsibilities.
3. Coming into Christ changes everything
 - a. We now have all the benefits of being God's children
 - b. We are now in partnership with all believers
 - c. There is a vital union between all believers
 - d. Benefits from and responsibilities to other believers

IV. Applying the Word

A. Do we see the benefits of being in Christ?

1. Because of Christ, our way is open to God
2. In grace God gives us peace and all blessings
3. We are the unchained children of God
4. We are the heirs of God in Christ
5. Come to Christ to receive all of this!
6. If you are in Christ, this is all yours!

B. Do we have a deepening understanding of what it means to be in Christ?

1. Note v6 - our understanding can deepen
2. Also note how this happens - as we partner in the faith with others
3. Our growth in Christ is vitally linked with our love and service to others
4. Is my understanding of my blessings in Christ growing?
5. Is my active partnering and sharing with other believers through love growing?
6. We never grow in isolation!

C. Communion - Our Common Meal

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17

Unchained For Partnership

Philemon 1:4-7

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Communion

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13

I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers, ⁵because I hear about your love for all his holy people and your faith in the Lord Jesus. ⁶ I pray that your partnership with us in the faith may be effective in deepening your understanding of every good thing we share for the sake of Christ. ⁷ Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of the Lord's people. Philemon 1:4–7 (NIV2011)