

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas  
August 12, 2018

Koinonia of the Gospel  
Philippians 1:3-7

1:3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,  
1:4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,  
1:5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.  
1:6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.  
1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

### 1. The Letter of Koinonia

“Jargon.” This is the term used in a particular/specific group. In the publication industry, “mimidare” (running ears) means a question mark “?” and “amadare” (rain drop) means an exclamation mark “!” The shape of “mimidare” (running ears) looks like the question mark “?” and the shape of “” (rain drop) looks like the exclamation mark “!” In the hotel industry, “tanuki” (raccoon) means a customer without dinner because kanji “夕” (evening) and Katakana “夕” looks the same. “Tanuki” can be translated to “extracting evening meal.”

In the police, there are so many jargons. “Sanzui” means “graft,” “gonben” means “fraud,” “ninben” means “imitation.” These jargons came from a part of kanji character.

In the bank industry, “nihonn-cha” (Japanese tea) means “suspicious customer” In Japan, customers receive a complementary tea service when they visit a office. When the suspicious customer comes in, the staff is warned by saying, “Bring a Japanese tea, please?” When you hear “Japanese tea,” you might want to be cautious.

We can find “jargons” even in the churches, and there are many special terms used only in churches. “Majiwari” (fellowship) is one of them. “Majiwari” (noun) or “majiwaru” (verb) means “cross” or “intersect.” These words are not used frequently anymore in modern Japanese language. The original word of “majiwari” is “koinonia” and it is frequently translated to “fellowship.” The word, “fellowship” contains many means. Japanese Bible translators use a kind of old fashioned word, “majiwari” for “koinonia” because the meaning of the word “koinonia” has richer meanings than other casual words convey.

There is a good place to learn about this “koinonia.” It is the Letter to the Philippians. We can find “koinonia” three times in the letter; 1:5, 2:1, and 3:10. In the letter, not only “koinonia” was introduced but also the joy and happiness of “koinonia” was depicted. In this letter, the word, “Rejoice!” is repeated many times. Then, this letter is called “The Letter of Joy.” But actually, “joy” in this letter comes from “koinonia” I would say the Letter to the Philippians is the “Letter of Koinonia.”

Today, let us start the verse that “koinonia” first appears in the letter. It is verse 5. It says about the “koinonia of the gospel.”

## 2. Koinonia Into the Gospel

“Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.” (Philippians 1:5). There “koinonia” is used in the sentence of “your partnership in the gospel.” The words, “your partnership in the gospel” can be translate “your partnership into the gospel.” “Into,” instead of “in,” would be better nuances in the original language. The meaning is slightly different between “in” and “into.” If written in the figure, the “in” can be expressed by drawing a circle and small dot in it. It means “it's not outside, but inside.” In the case of “into,” draw a circle and an arrow toward inside to the circle from outside. It means “entered into the circle from outside.” There are direction and motion. Therefore, it can be said that “your fellowship and partnership in the gospel” is “koinonia into the gospel,” “koinonia heading to the gospel.” Then, what is the “koinonia heading to the gospel?”

It is that those who have never heard the gospel listen to it, believe and come to the truth of the gospel. It shows people outside the gospel move into the gospel steadily.

“The Gospel,” or the “Good News,” it is the truth to save people. “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved if you hold fast to the word I preached to you--unless you believed in vain.” (1 Corinthians 15:1-2) “This gospel” is the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are various “good news” in the world such as recurrent treatment using IPS cells has advanced; drugs effective for Parkinson's disease were developed; support money is granted to the people who have suffered from disasters. However, “good news” that saves people from sin, death, and destruction and leads them to

heaven is nothing but the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believed in this gospel and entered into it. Therefore, our “koinonia” depends on the gospel. The gospel is tying us. The gospel creates “koinonia” and forms it.

Philippians 1:27-28 says, “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.” There is the words, “life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.” This says that the “gospel” is not only a theory or concept. The gospel is the transforming power. It changes our inside first, and the change is brought in every area of our life. But that change is not made without any fighting. The Bible calls the world “an era of perverse.” A believer is trying to live right is analogous to trying to go straight on the winding road. And so collides somewhere, battles happen. It is not easy to live honestly and sincerely where lies are everywhere. Also, never easy to move on from “believing in the gospel” to “living in the gospel.”

This world not only labeled a foolish thing to “believing the gospel,” and hates “living the gospel,” but also attacks the gospel itself. Even though, it says “to attack” there is no outright opposition in the US and Japan today. They accept the Bible seemingly. But “human” is more important than God, Jesus is just a human; the cross is an unfortunate accident; resurrection is an illusion of his disciples. This world brings the idea to everywhere such as the important thing is friendship to get along with each other and accept everything without judging good or bad. By doing so, it replaces the gospel with

another idea, thus making ineffectual the most important part of the Bible, that may be summarized on this statement — “God sends Jesus Christ, His only Son, to save man by the Cross and the Resurrection.”

In such a circumstance, we need to keep the truth of the gospel, stay in the gospel, live the gospel, the church needs to “connect tightly and fighting together for the faith of the gospel. The gospel can be kept in the “koinonia” that listens to, believes, learns and lives the gospel. Let us pray hard that such “koinonia” will be built up among us.

### **3. Koinonia For the Gospel**

There is also another meaning of “into” of the “fellowship into the gospel.” It is “for.” This verse says about “koinonia for the gospel,” too.

You might hear this announcement in many churches after the worship service. “This concludes the worship service. Please go home after having fellowship.” People go out of the chapel and move to the fellowship hall and exchange words with each other while having coffee and donuts. Then they go to a parking lot. It is a very common sight that is seen in the most of the churches in the US. There is no mistake with the announcement. But, there is still a question. Wasn't there any fellowship until "coffee time" starts? I don't think the fellowship began with the “coffee time.” I think the fellowship has already started when the worship service began. Worship service is the window of heaven. We see heaven and praise God with the angels and the saints in heaven together. Is the worship service is the most

sublime “koinonia” among various kind of fellowship? At the Lord’s Supper we experience “koinonia” of the blood and body of Christ. It is real and holy communion rather than mingling with people in coffee and donuts. We have an intimate and ultimate “koinonia” in the Lord’s Supper.

“Aisan-kai,” which is meal fellowship, started in the early church along with the Lord’s Supper. However, it did not for only enjoying meals and chatter, it was meant to serve the poor people. That’s why the meal was called “agape” (love). “Fellowship” was not equal “eating and drinking” in the early church like in modern American church. Drinks and foods help to exchange words with each other, which is also important, but I think that “fellowship” should not be restricted only to that style. I would like to remind you that it is the “koinonia” that we share testimonies of faith, heartily pray together, and serve the Lord together.

To the church of Philippians Paul wrote a word of appreciation saying, “I thank my God .... because of your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”The church of Philippians had a close relationship with Paul and was one of the churches that supported Paul. This letter is written as a “thank you letter” for the support from the church. However, Paul is grateful for this than the friendship and support for Paul. It is the “koinonia for the gospel” that Paul appreciated. He was thankful that the “koinonia” of Christians in Philippi was aimed at the gospel. More briefly, he was thankful that all the Philippian Christians have been involved in the ministry of the gospel and evangelization.

Verse 5 is translated, “I appreciate that you have been in the gospel

from the first day until today” in the Colloquial Translation. But in the Japanese Bible , “From the first day I am grateful that you have been involved in spreading the gospel to this day.” In the New Japanese Bible, it supplements the word “spread” and interprets “koinonia for the gospel” as “koinonia for the ministry of evangelism.” It is a translation based on an interpretation, but I think that this translation is correct. Because one of the reasons for the existence of the church is to spread the gospel. If the church exists for that purpose, of course the “koinonia” is also for serving to spread the gospel.

When we say “fellowship,” we think it that friends are gathering and doing something. Such gathering tends to be the one of “inner ring” by all means. I call it a “gathering of fan.” “Fan” is something that sends wind to yourself. When a group becomes a gathering of “fan,” they only have a cool breeze. The group itself will become self-purpose. In that case, the group will not be able to serve for the ministry of evangelism, or bring a new person into the “gospel koinonia.” That “koinonia” will not be a “koinonia for the gospel.”

I want to see that the Christian gathering is not “fan gathering” but “gathering of an electric fans.” The fan sends wind to himself, but the electric fan sends wind to the outside. If it is a swing fan, it sends winds to a wide area both to the right and to the left. I think that people who are saved will be brought up from the gatherings with such a purpose of delivering the “gospel wind” to many people. I want to see that people are saved and become the “witness of Christ” at the gatherings.

Philippians not only supported Paul 's mission but also worked for the evangelization in their own town. In the early church times, where

the gospel was preached, if the gospel was told to a single person anywhere, it quickly spread to the family and relatives, and if it is told to a town, the gospel spread to the surrounding towns and villages. In Thessalonians 1: 8 it says, “For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.” People were saved, and the “koinonia” was born and brought up where the gospel was spread. Colossians 1: 6 says, “Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and growing--as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth.”

I sincerely hope that our “koinonia” is the “koinonia by the gospel” and “for the gospel.” I sincerely pray that each Christian will be tied up by the gospel and work together for the ministry of spreading the gospel.

**(Prayer)**

Father God, we thank you for teaching us that “koinonia” you gave us is based on the gospel and is for the ministry of the gospel. Please teach, guide, and help us to know the gospel further, live in the gospel, and share the gospel with our families, friends, and acquaintances. We pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.