

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
August 19, 2018

Koinonia of the Holy Spirit
Philippians 2:1-5

2:1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,

2:2 complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

2:3 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

2:4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.

1. Koinonia Built On the Bible

In the New Testament, “koinonia” was used in 17 verses. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 1 John 1:3, it was used twice each; therefore, it appears 19 times in the New Testament.

When we read along the verses where the original word is used, we might have better understanding. It’s a very useful method of studying the Bible. However, we learn the Bible in that way not because of a scholarly interest but because of the desire to understand the Bible properly, to strengthen our faith, and to establish our life based on the teachings of the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God. This means not only that we believe the inspiration of the Bible, but also we nurture our faith and establish the life based on the Bible. The church, especially the worship service is the place where we correct

our faith and reorganize our lives.

Therefore, the church needs to be established and organized based on the teaching of the Bible. We all have an opinion, saying, “Our church must be like this.” And taste, saying, “I love this kind of church” or desire, saying, “I would like to have this kind of church.” However, Jesus said, “I will build my church.” (Matthew 16:18) The church should not be built based on our own belief, preference, or desire. The church should be built according the will, plan and desire of Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Head of church. When we think about the church, we need to seek what Jesus wants for the church. We learn the Bible, pray, think and discuss because of finding his will, plan and desire for the church.

The word, “koinonia” is very important to find out what the church is, and how should it be. Today, we would like to learn about “koinonia” in Philippians 2:1 and find that what kind of “koinonia” should be in the church. In 2:1-2, it says, “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” In these verses, “koinonia” is translated to “any participation in the Spirit.” Then, what does “the participation in the Spirit” mean?

2. Koinonia Borm From the Holy Spirit

When you heard “koinonia of the Holy Spirit,” you may recall 2 Corinthians 13:13. It says, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” It is the last word of worship, “Blessing.”

In 2 Corinthians 13: 13, there are words “grac of Christ” and “love of God” besides “the koinonia of the Holy Spirit.” As well as the words “grace of Christ” and “love of God” mean “grace given by Christ” and “love given by the Father God,” the word “koinonia of the Holy Spirit” also means “koinonia given by the Holy Spirit.” That is, “koinonia” is produced and sustained by the Holy Spirit.

The church is a “koinonia” of the believers. It is made of the people’s gathering. However, this “koinonia” is not started by any human wishes, plans, or power. It was created by the power of the Holy Spirit. The church begins with the visible signs of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Not only the flames, winds and the sign of the various languages but also preaching and repentance were also the signs of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit made Peter proclaim the gospel boldly, and led people to repentance and confession. On that day, three thousand people confessed the faith in Jesus Christ, were baptized and the “koinonia” of the Holy Spirit was born.

People who believed in Jesus Christ were born as God’s children by the Holy Spirit. The church is the "koinonia" of the children of God, our one Father. It is also called the “family of God.” However, the church is not a “family gathering” in a sense, an entertainer calls their fans, "My family members!" as a lip service. In the Bible, “God’s family” refers to heavenly things such as angels, saints, God’s people, and also describes it as a public in the society. The church is never a private place; it is public spiritual and practical as well. Indeed, the church needs a “homey atmosphere” warmth. But it should not come from just human nature. It should come from the forgiveness of sins by Christ and the peace in Christ come from the forgiveness. And the

church members will be required for both “holiness” and “responsibility.” Every family has rules, and there need to divide responsibility among family members. Indeed, the church is public, so much more than families. The church should be “family-like” but, you should not behave like children and with its selfishness.

How can we do that? Remember that the “koinonia” of the church was created by the Holy Spirit and kept by the Holy Spirit. Galatians 3: 3 says, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” If initiated by the Holy Spirit, cannot be completed by the “flesh” that referring “human.” The “faith by the Holy Spirit” and “action of the law by the flesh” are compared in Galatians, “koinonia” produced by the Holy Spirit is incompatible with a human-made group of the people. When you become close to the people in church, you would be able to connect with the same hobbies, similar circumstances, or the same hometown. It is okay, but if that connection becomes too strong and it brings a “in-group,” it will become difficult to admonish each other’s faith. When trying to replace the “koinonia” created by the Holy Spirit with human connection, dangerous risk will arise. Galatians orders and recommends, “But I say, walk by the Spirit ...” (Galatians 5:16) “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.” (Galatians 5:25).

3. Koinonia Bond By the Mind of Christ

I've experienced “koinonia” which the Holy Spirit has created since I became a pastor. I became a pastor at a young age, so at the beginning the members of the church were almost elderly. When built a church building and graveyard, I worked with the oldest member. For that

person, I was about the same age as his son. But he respected me as his pastor, and I was able to trust in him. Even though it looked like there was no common things between us, we were able to work together bound by the love to the Lord and His Church.

While I was in Japan, I invited an English teacher from the United States for the evangelism through English class. I also invited People who came for job training from Asian countries, and international students from Africa to the church and my home. Words and cultures were different, but we could enjoyed to talk about the faith in Christ. For this year's VBS, we had a Korean Christian who spoke Japanese with Osaka accent. Though we had fewer students than the last year, she encouraged us by her testimony. All these things were "koinonia" that the Holy Spirit created.

This is what I have heard from a Japanese pastor in other state recently. A Korean Christian gave him a gift of ten thousand dollars even though the Korean Christian was not the close friend of the pastor. The Korean Christian said to him "Don't refuse this gift because the Holy Spirit guided me." At that time, he was planning to return home temporarily to Japan for the first time in ten years with his wife and two children, and praying for its monetary need. The Korean Christian didn't know anything about the pastor's Japan trip. This was exactly the answer of prayer. In the Bible the word "koinonia" is also used in the sense of "aid" or "contribution" (Romans 15: 26, 2 Corinthians 9: 13, Hebrews 13: 16). The gift given to him was a "concrete form" of the "koinonia" of the Holy Spirit.

How wonderful is the "koinonia" that the Holy Spirit produces and leads. It encourages each other's faith and brings concrete help. But

the most wonderful thing is that it leads us to the “mind of Christ.”

Today’s verses; Philippius 2 is a portion we want to read slowly and to speak to our heart. In this place Paul says. “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.” (verse 1 and 2) The church of Philippians was just an exemplary church, but still there was a need for seeking to be of the “same mind” and to have the “one mind.” Paul said, “Complete my joy,” but satisfying Paul's pleasures was nothing but pleasing Christ. And there is nothing other than the “mind of Christ” that pleases Christ. When we have the “mind of Christ,” we can please Christ. Therefore, it is said like this, “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” (verse 5) Having the “same mind” among the believers. What does it mean? It does not mean that to take the greatest common divisor of the opinion of all believers, and have unity. Rather, it is that all those who believe in Christ are led to the “mind of Christ.” It is that everyone has the “mind of Christ” that Christ lowered himself and carried himself the crucifixion. It is the grace that the “koinonia” of the Holy Spirit brings, as everyone is led by the Holy Spirit to the mind of Christ.

“Unity” that the Bible seeks and the Holy Spirit is about to lead is more than getting along. When Jesus prayed for disciples to leave on the earth and for the unity of the church, again and again, he said, “They may be one even as we are one.” (John 17: 11, 21, 22, 23). The “unity” in which Jesus prayed for the Church is the “unity” within the Trinity. Therefore, the “koinonia of the Holy Spirit” is prayed as the

“Blessing” together with the “grace of Christ” and the “love of the Father.” As the “grace of Christ” and the “love of the Father” are infinite, the “koinonia” of the Holy Spirit has no limit to be good enough. Whenever the Blessing is given at the worship service, we would like to direct our thoughts further to the “mind of Christ.” There we have the “koinonia” of the Holy Spirit, and it grows up and its blessing overflows.

(Prayer)

Our Father God, tell us that our “koinonia” represents your love, and is based on the grace of Christ, and was created by the Holy Spirit. And, please, lead us to the “unity” for which the Lord Jesus prayed. We pray in the name of Christ.