

THE JOY OF A FAITHFUL  
GOSPEL CHURCH (PART 2)  
PHILIPPIANS 1:7-11



SERMON BY  
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## **The Joy of a Faithful Gospel Church (Part 2)**

### **Philippians 1:7-11**

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

What did we learn from the last six verses of chapter 1 of Philippians? Paul delights in seeing the church receive the grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He observed how they faithfully abide and partner with Paul in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We learned about their growth from the first day up to the present. Paul also recognised God's faithfulness because of their dedicated service in evangelism and discipleship and their generous giving to him and other churches. Paul's next message of joy was to express his love and affection, noting that they are always in his thoughts and heart, and he longs to see and serve them. His motivation for pursuing love for the church stems from his love for Jesus Christ.

Today's passage is taken from Philippians chapter 1, verses 7-11. I have entitled this part two message: The Joy of a Faithful Gospel Church: Seeing Abundant Love in the Church. To begin with, let me ask you some sets of questions. What defines a faithful church? How can we be faithful as a Gospel Church? What are the characteristics of a faithful church? Additionally, what robs us of joy? What makes a church to be unfaithful and devoid of joy? Why can we not bring joy to others? The questions may seem simple and easy to answer, but why do we face these issues? We must understand the roots of joy and who or what strips us of it, leading to a joyless existence. Let's delve deeper in our questions. Is our salvation genuine or merely an illusion? Is it the world and the forces of evil around us (Satan, demons, unbelievers, and worldly pleasures) that are the culprits of stripping joy in our hearts and in the church? Is it because you live a self-centred life? Are you navigating life without God, being the captain of your soul rather than Christ? Is it due to persistent bitterness, unresolved conflict, and to resolve never to forgive? Is it a lack of understanding of God's word (theology and doctrine)? Do we struggle to grasp the sovereignty of God? Are we overly focused on ourselves and our specific circumstances? Is it because we fail to express gratitude for God's providence (both physical and spiritual)? Is it our forgetful minds and hearts that overlook the goodness of God in our lives? Have you turned away from God and His Words? Is there a deficiency in our faith and our prayer life? Have we become so wrapped up in our successes and achievements that we've forgotten God? Let's continue our sermon with the fourth point from the first sermon: The Joy of a Faithful Gospel church.

#### **4) The joy of loving a faithful church (Philippians 1:7-8)**

**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. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.**

Verses 7-8 reveal what Paul feels and thinks about the church in Philippi. He begins his defence and commendation for the church. Verse **7 "For it is only right for me to think this way about you all."** What does this statement mean? We learned about Paul and the church in Philippi and that Paul was involved in the life of the church in Philippi from the first day until now. For it is only right for Paul to think good and admirable about the growth of every believer in Philippi. Paul

defended the church as one of the faithful churches in the region. The reason why Paul could not stop thinking about the goodness and faithfulness of the church is their growth and partnership with Paul's ministry. From the beginning of their conversion to Christ and how they started the church, the growth of the church, their partnership in giving to the work of the Lord, and their faithfulness to God and Christ. He also mentioned how the church has overseers and deacons based on high standards of servant leadership. Paul can't help but think this way. He can't restrain himself from considering the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the church (both spiritually and morally).

Paul expresses that the church is always in his thoughts with joy and thanksgiving in his heart. **"Because I have you in my heart."** This is why, aside from implicitly defending them to encourage the church, they are in his heart, reflecting his feelings due to their dedication to God and the growth of Christ's church. It's not because they are a perfect church or because they are Paul's source of pride. Rather, Paul highlights his pride in the works of God's Spirit and His sovereign grace in the church in Philippi (2 Corinthians 7:3). In a way, his purpose is to commend the church in Philippi. Why does Paul reflect on the church's good works and faithfulness? The reason lies in their fellowship with the Gospel and the promised covenant of God and His faithfulness to all the saints. God initiated the good works in their salvation and sanctification and will complete it on the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:1-6).

When did Paul's love for the church in Philippi begin? When did he start remembering to pray for the church? First, **"since both are in my chains."** Paul remembers from the first day of their conversion until now. Paul mentions his chains as a symbol of his imprisonment and suffering for Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel. This reflects both his physical suffering and his spiritual commitment; he was in chains while serving the Lord Jesus Christ as a bond slave. He experiences not just physical imprisonment but also the identity of being a slave of Jesus Christ. He remains in chains for Christ for life and is devoted to his service to God forever. For as long as he lives, Jesus is his Master and Lord and willing to do His will. Not his own will but the will of the Lord.

You and I, if true followers of Christ, are true slaves and servants of Jesus Christ, just as Paul, a prisoner of Christ who is willing to endure hardship regardless of his circumstances and future life, would be. Willing to go the extra mile, suffer, and die. Willing not to seek fame for the sake of the Gospel. Advancing the Gospel is also your mission in life until death. That's why Paul expressed to the church in Philippi that they are a true Gospel church, a faithful church of Christ. Paul commended this church for being willing to endure chains and with joy in their hearts. The church in Philippi felt encouraged all the more to proclaim the Gospel rather than give up and close down the church and blame Paul. They all knew that Paul was already imprisoned and whether he would return to Philippi or not, yet the church remained steadfast to their calling and faith. The church stood up, demonstrating courageous strength, unwavering faith, and fearless commitment. Whether Paul was present or not, their love for Christ and His Gospel kept them united as a church, striving for the glory and honour of God and Christ. They embodied Christ and served His church wholeheartedly. This dedication to Christ and to His church is why God honoured them as a congregation. God included the church in Philippi in the Bible, highlighting it as a commendable and recommendable church. A truly joyful church with a consistent and growing love for Christ and one another. They were faithful and excellent. A well-tested church in morality, truthfulness, sincerity,

and blamelessness. Some were envious and instilled strife in the church because they did not like Paul and attempted to dissuade them from following Paul. Nevertheless, the church in Philippi remained loyal to Paul and the Gospel. Despite Paul's chains, the church continued to proclaim the Gospel boldly and even excelled in spreading the message of Christ (Philippians 1:13-14).

Secondly, when did Paul's heart begin to beat for the church in Philippi? **“and in the defence.”** He defended their faith. What does this mean? In Greek, it is APOLOGIA, from which we get the term apologetics. Paul is recognised as the defender of the Gospel. One way Paul defended the Gospel is by preaching and teaching the Gospel accurately and was not ashamed of it. The term defence refers to a verbal defence of the Gospel. Having a clear and persuasive communication of the Gospel of Christ aimed at defending its purity and truthfulness. How did Paul define the Gospel message that he defended? He preached the suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and the promise of the return of Christ. His defence (APOLOGIA) signified a serious and wholehearted commitment to Christ and His Gospel. He stood up for the Gospel before Jewish leaders, the Sanhedrin, governors, kings, gentile crowds (mobs that sought to kill him), and Roman officials. He defended Christ as the Messiah, Lord, and God. He affirmed that salvation is found in Christ alone, by grace alone, and that we are saved through faith alone. He upheld the words of Christ for our transformation. He asserted that the salvation they possess in Christ is for the glory of God.

Paul was also reminded that the church in Philippi continues to grow in Christ due to their defence of the Gospel. They demonstrated in their own 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, living out the Gospel through their love for God, love for others, and generous giving. This is why Paul's mind and heart are always with the church in Philippi. Paul was genuinely encouraged and impressed by how they defended their faith and the Gospel. Their work and fruit are his joy.

The third, **“Their confirmation of the gospel.”** When the church learned about Paul's imprisonment and chains, his defence of the Gospel message coincided with the persecution and hardship faced by the church in Philippi while following Christ, the church maintains a clear and steadfast commitment to the Gospel, understanding what it takes to defend it and how to do so effectively. According to Paul, the confirmation of the Gospel represents a firm, strong, and stable connection to the Gospel of Christ. They are fully convinced that the goal is to preach the Gospel to sinners, regardless of their status in life. They are fully assured that the Gospel of Christ is the only way, the truth, and the Life without a shadow of a doubt. Their calling to serve as slaves and preachers of the Gospel to the Gentiles is resolute. Their confirmation came from God, who called and directed them to preach and defend the Gospel. They understand their mission and purpose as believers in Jesus Christ. God has anointed and appointed them to defend the Gospel and endure suffering for it for the sake of the Gospel. They are willing to face opposition, persecution, mockery, rejection, and pain. They are united in their eternal perspective and faithfully contending for the Gospel. They, like Paul, continue the fight for the proclamation of the Gospel until their last breath. The church in Philippi embodies the true perseverance of the saints with the help of God.

Lastly, the fourth piece of evidence of Paul's love for the church in Philippi is his statement **“that we are all fellow partakers in this grace.”** All the saints, overseers, deacons, and apostles of

Jesus Christ around the world who faithfully spread the Gospel, and all those who are in chains and slaves in Christ, defending the Gospel and steadfast for the Gospel are fellow partakers with Paul by the grace of God. Fellow partakers are martyrs for Christ, imitators and sufferers. Anointed with wisdom, discernment, mission, and purpose in life. These faithful slaves of Christ boast in the grace of God and the calling of God. A sincere and truthful association with the Gospel reflects the work of God's grace. We do not boast for our own self-interest and influence but give all attributes to the grace of God. **"In this grace."** How does this work in our church? Paul was saying here that his success and their success are by the grace of God. No one is above and better in the ministry. All of us are partakers in the grace of God. The Holy Spirit gives us favour, wisdom, and guidance. This is our partnership with Christ and the Holy Spirit, and we didn't work alone and get credit alone. Our success and achievements, discipleship and Gospel message are God's reward to us all. Your joy is my joy in the ministry because of the grace of God.

Verse 8: **"For God is my witness how I long for you all."** What does this mean? Paul was earnestly longing and desiring to be with the church in Philippi. Having a deep longing and prayerfully wanting to be with the church. His motive was his love for Christ was overflowing. He was assuring the church that God knows the burden of his heart to see and serve the church in Philippi again. The affection or love was his joy and crown. The love, care, compassion, and desire he holds for the church and the churches are the same, if not greater. We are all experiencing the same love, compassion, forgiveness, and understanding from our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus longs to see us in heaven; that is the nature of His affection. Just as the Lord loves His people with pure love and compassion, so Paul shared that same kind of love for the church (Colossians 3:12; John 3:17). But clearly, the love or affection of Christ surpasses all. This is Paul's motivation: his affection and longing to see and embrace the church reflect the same love Christ has for the faithful (Philippians 2:1). For God knows. Paul's witness is His God. God understands the yearning of Paul to see the church with earnestness because of the love of Christ in his life.

As a church, we need to follow the examples of Christ and Paul. We must learn how to be truly partakers of the Gospel who are ready at all times to defend the Gospel. Who never gives up easily. Standing up for Christ. Offering encouragement and comfort. Join a fellowship. Engage in ministry and discipleship groups. With all these descriptions of being fellow partakers, our motivation stems from the love, affection, care, compassion, forgiveness, and salvation we receive from Christ. I tell you, you and I cannot experience the deep joy of service to the church without first experiencing the true joy and love of Christ that is found in our salvation. It should be real and genuine salvation. Without the love and mercy of Christ in our hearts, we are mere falsehoods and hypocrites in the life of the church of Christ. Consequently, without salvation in our hearts, sadness, loneliness, depression, and worry rule our hearts and lives.

True salvation produces joy and affection for Christ and the church. Without salvation, we lack the power to resist Satan. Fake salvation is influenced by demonic voices to do what is wrong, stealing the joy of our salvation and our love for Christ. True saving grace brings joy through the knowledge of God's sovereign grace in one's life. Such individuals do not complain, whinge, or get easily upset or angry, nor do they compromise by sinning more. They thank God for His providence and sovereignty in their lives. Jesus is our joy. You need to love Christ and find true joy in your life



in Christ, and you will also come to love the church as a by-product of that love relationship you have with Christ. Paul recognised another kind of joy in the church in Philippi, and his prayer was to see abundant love on full display, increasingly and exponentially:

**5) The joy of seeing abundant love in the church (Philippians 1:9)**

**9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in full knowledge and all discernment,**

As Paul longs to see them with the kind of affection Christ has given them all, his next encouragement of joy to the church in Philippi is to pray for them. The question is: what was his prayer for the church? In verse 9, he states, **“And this I pray.”** Before we address the question, what is prayer? What does it truly mean to pray? It involves making a request to God, asking for grace, favour, and blessing from God. To offer a prayer to God is part of one’s dependence on and worship of Him, as well as a way to foster a growing relationship with God by praying for the church. Can you imagine that, despite being in chains, he is still praying to God and asking for His grace for His people (including salvation and protection)? This statement from Paul represents an ongoing, regular prayer for the church (the saints, overseers, and deacons). Paul was a prayerful man; we can see this in his writings, which include prayers for the churches, such as in Ephesians 1:16-18, 3:14-19, Colossians 1:10, and 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 11-12.

What was his main prayer or his regular prayer of offering to God? **“That your love may abound still more and more.”** What is this abundant love? The love that Paul used here in Greek is AGAPE. Paul desired that their love for Christ, their love for the church, and their love for the lost would abound more and more. Love (AGAPE) seems to be important in the Christian faith. Jesus even commanded believers to love God with all their hearts, strength, and minds. The greatest godly character we need to have is love. Of course, faith and hope are important, but according to Jesus, love is the greatest because love is eternal, and God is love. It is a grace from God to be loved by God and to love others.

If the church is already loving and excellent in loving God, Christ, the church, and the lost, Paul encourages us to abound more and more in our love. Abound means not only increasing exponentially but also abundantly becoming more loving. Become more fruitful or plentiful in love. There are plenty of ways to love and give love. According to Paul, love more and more. Do not stop to love. Always offer love and show love. Actively (DE FACTO) and sacrificially. Active love that is selfless and humble, filled with compassion and care, and full of acceptance and understanding. Love can grow through your own volition and choice. You can make it happen. You can choose to love or choose to hate and not forgive. A true believer in Christ will love more and should love more abundantly. So, if you hate someone, you need to check your heart to see if you have the love of Christ in you.

How can I love? Do I have the power to love like Jesus, Paul, and the church in Philippi? What kind of love is abundant, increasing, more and more, and multiplying (abundance and plentiful)? What kind of abundant love should I seek? Love for God, love for my marriage and my family. Love for my church, love for my enemies. Love for serving, love for caring, love for giving and generosity. Love for the lost and love for your neighbour. Love for reading and studying the words of Christ. Love that is continuous: You harvest love, you sow in love, and reap in love.

What is the right model or description of the abundant, continuous love Paul wants? Or what was his prayer for the church in Philippi? What kind of love is sustainable, multiplying, and increasing? And what love is not hard rock-dead love, lazy love, fake love, and hypocritical love? Reckless love? Firstly, let's discuss the phrase **"In full knowledge."** What does it mean to have full knowledge? It refers to knowing everything about God. Jesus Christ embodies the full knowledge of God; He is God. All treasures are hidden in Him. Jesus is the answer to all our trials, tests, and questions in life. The full knowledge will be granted to us in heaven. However, while we're still here, we need to attain full knowledge of Christ. Seek the full knowledge of Christ. This demonstrates to God that you desire to know Him more deeply and intimately. Studying the nature and character of God with joy and passion. Full knowledge entails fully grasping and wholly knowing the love and mercy of God. It means being thoroughly informed about God's movements, His ways, His judgments and blessings, His atoning sacrifice, His sovereignty and providence, His joy, and His eternity. As the Creator, He is involved in His creation. Despite our finite minds and God's infinite nature, we should strive to know Him continually without ceasing. No backsliding, no quitting. This is His prayer for the church to have full knowledge of God.

But the Greek word here is EPIGNOSIS. The knowledge and action or participation of God. They know God, but they want to continue how God works in their lives. You desire to know Him in your life and to understand more of His works and character in your life and ministry. You seek to know with certainty and determination God's plan and will for your life. This isn't merely a love for knowledge. Like for example, you pursue further education, obtain two university degrees, two master's degrees, and two PhD degrees, and you won't stop. Or you might study more about politics and technology to gain a better grasp of life and culture. Or delve into political science, law, and the stock market. This is not the complete knowledge referenced in Paul's prayer. This is not the true knowledge of God. True knowledge lies in knowing the truths of God and all His sovereign work. I heard and saw on YouTube a lady who declared rebellion and revolution against the culture of this world to hate and abandon smoking and drinking for life. She said they destroy lives and relationships. What was Paul's prayer? In full knowledge of Him. Now, you want to please Him, love God, desire to show true repentance, and obey His words in holiness and sanctification. Sexual purity and holiness are key to loving God. Run from youthful lust and immorality. Abound in love in full knowledge of God's will! You are declaring a revolution by seeking to know God more.

The second prayer of Paul is for love to abound more and more, **"along with all discernment."** What does all discernment mean? It means being able to understand good and evil and aligning God's will in your life. The Greek word is AISTHESIS, which refers to the ability to distinguish between evil and good, darkness and light, in a good and biblical manner. Heaven and hell. What is the broad road that leads to destruction versus the narrow path that leads to life? This Greek term is related to the English word 'aesthetic', which signifies true and genuine good taste. Having a personal bias towards what is beautiful, good, and pleasing in your eyes and mind. However, this discernment should have one primary goal: to please and honour God (morally, theologically, biblically, and spiritually, and in living a godly life). It is about being a man and a woman who fears God, possessing discernment under the control of the Holy Spirit and aligning with His will (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22). Your perceptions and senses are sharp and clear, embodying

godly discernment and biblical common sense, not nonsense. Your thoughts are captive to the obedience to Christ, recognising that the thoughts and plans of God are higher than your own. You obey and follow Christ, and you run away from evil. When hard-pressed, you run towards God and His holiness.

This is all discernment (having a complete and total commitment to God). Not half-hearted but whole for God. You desire the beauty of God, not the beauty of this world. Discernment is God's gift to all believers. It should be used to build up the church and edify it (purity, holiness, and spiritual service). To have full discernment is to have Christ as Lord and Saviour of your life. To possess the discernment of Christ is to have confidence, joy, hope, love, and faith. If you seek and study God's Word, you will be able to teach and preach with discernment. In Exodus 31 and 35, the Lord spoke of filling people with the Spirit of God, granting them wisdom, discernment, understanding, and all kinds of trade skills. Prayer for your spouse, your children and their families to have complete knowledge of God and discernment. Let's conclude with the outcome and result of a joyful, faithful church. In verses 10 and 11, we will see the results of a loving church.

#### **6) The result of abounding in love church (Philippians 1:10-11)**

**10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and without fault until the day of Christ,**

There are a few things to consider before finding a true Gospel church: First, we need to assess whether the church is exemplary and if it has been thoroughly tested and approved in life and ministry, showing consistency, faithfulness, and having the ability to bear fruit, living a moral, godly life, and consistently pursuing excellence in theology and doctrine.

#### **a) An excellent church (verse 10a)**

The first thing we need to see in a church is a well-tested and approved church. Paul called it an excellent church. Let's read verse 10 so that you may approve of the things that are excellent. What does it mean **"approve of the things that are excellent"**? It refers to a church that is loving, abounding in love, with a genuine knowledge of God, His words, and His will, and a church with love in action. A church that possesses all discernment, whose desire is solely to love God and to please and honour Him. A church that excels in loving God. A church that has compassion for the lost. This excellent church is demonstrated by their application of the full knowledge of God and His Truth (theology) and all discernment (sanctification/holiness). With one mind and one heart, the church aims to please God in everything. Excellence is a hallmark of our identity as Christians; it sets us apart from the world and the culture of this age.

A faithful gospel church, like genuine gold or leather, is tested and proven. It stands firm in its theological and moral commitments. It is approved, examined, and scrutinised by God, as well as by its testimony, abilities, actions, and results. The church is genuine and true, thus becoming an excellent church. Being excellent means the church holds great worth and value: it is respectable, spirit-led, and spirit-filled, loving God with full knowledge and discernment for His sanctification. That was Paul's prayer for the church in Philippi: a tested, approved, and fully discerned church, marked by righteous judgments and actions, is an excellent church. As you serve the church and see people attend your church, they will discern, and based on their knowledge of God, they will affirm



that this church is a well-tested church. An excellent church. A single-minded church that focuses solely on Christ and the absolute Truth of Christ and His word.

What makes the church excellent? The church is able to separate, with the help of God's Spirit, the goats from the true sheep. It can discern, evaluate, and address questions about strong faith versus weak faith, mature faith versus immature faith, good fruit versus bad fruit, goodness versus evil, and light versus darkness. By the way, the approved and excellent church should be constant and never cease to be excellent. It excels more and more. God is pleased by its works in the church and in the community. An excellent church does not get swayed by emotions, circumstances, or bad news, nor does it lead a roller coaster life. It doesn't linger in a marred existence. Instead, it wakes from slumber and continues to pursue excellence in Christ and give honour and glory to God.

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

**Colossians 1:28** says, "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ."

"When John Wesley went away to Oxford, his godly mother, Susanna, wisely wrote in one of her many letters to him: "Whatever weakens your reason, impairs the tenderness of your conscience, obscures your sense of God, or takes off the delight for spiritual things, whatever increases the authority of your body over your mind, that thing is sin." MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2001). Philippians (p. 49). Moody Press.

### **b) A sincere church (verse 10b)**

What is the result when a church is fully tested and excellent theologically and morally? It becomes a sincere church. To be sincere is the hallmark of an approved and thriving church. In this context of Paul's words, to be a sincere church is ongoing sincerity and truthfulness, and marked by no partiality, and it is pure integrity. The Greek word for **sincere** means honest, pure, unmixed, or undefiled, and truthful at heart. Integrity must reside in the heart of the church. Manifesting in both private and public life, free from evil motives, wholly clean, and not deceitful or hypocritical. A sincere individual possesses a complete heart for God and is not half-hearted. It is a pure gold that went through intense sift. As a church, we ought to be a pure, undefiled grain of gold, whether of gold or clay, willing to be sifted to remove all dust, bad particles, or negative influences that need to be thrown out, eradicated, or burned. What are the tools for cultivating a sincere church? The Word of God! It serves as the cutting tool. The pruning and cleaning instruments will assist us in becoming an excellent and sincere church. A well-tested church is properly pruned and cut towards perfection, ultimately for the glory and praise of God.

The Word of God is the primary and only tool to make the church a truly clean and sincere place (Hebrews 4:12). We need to be a sincere church because we don't know when storms will hit. When will the earthquake strike? Or when will the flood and tsunami arrive? Is there a dangerous fire in our lives and within the church? The church must always be ready to face all obstacles and prepared at all times to read and preach the Scriptures and live out and apply the Bible in our lives. If we are not prepared and not pure, we risk breaking and becoming useless for the Master's use. Especially when facing criticism, persecution, and condemnation from the world or from false

Christians within the church, we break down and cease and quit. At the same time, we stumble easily when hurt. Before we live our lives filled with regret (due to actions) and face God's judgment and punishment, let us, as a church, live with sincerity, truthfulness, and integrity, striving for excellence both in the church and in the world. Completely approved and tested by the Word of God. What is the result when a church is fully tested and shows excellence theologically and morally? Thirdly, the church becomes a blameless church.

**c) A blameless church (verse 10c) and without fault until the day of Christ.**

Aside from being excellent and sincere, the church must be blameless. There is no scandal and no record of any wrongdoings such as immorality, corruption, or abuse. Another way to express this is **“without fault.”** The church should not be a stumbling block for growing Christians nor be an offensive church. This means it should not cause others to commit sin. The church is not a hindrance to the growth of the church and the whole Body of Christ. There is no record of moral failure. The essence of Paul's prayer extends to the day of Christ, reiterating what Paul has already mentioned: **“Until the day of Christ.”** Until you see the face of the Lord. From verses 9-11 of Philippians chapter 1. This is important to note because following Christ is a continuous action: loving God and others more, seeking more knowledge of God, and seeking all discernment for sanctification. Being an excellent, sincere, and blameless church is until the day of Christ. This means until we see Jesus Christ face to face with our rewards as good and faithful stewards of God.

**d) A Spirit-filled church (verse 11a)**

**11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

The last characteristic of a loving church is that it bears fruit. A fruitful church produces good deeds and is filled with the Spirit. It is filled with God, His Word, and the Holy Spirit. The church engages in the divine good works of God so the church can bear good works. Doing it all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Now, let us go to verse 11, which speaks of **“having been filled with the fruit of righteousness.”** What does this mean? It means that you have good results or you have good work in your life and in your church. Paul's prayer for the church is to be filled with God's power and led by the Spirit. Seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit and Christ's words. The Spirit empowers the church with the fruit of God's righteousness when a church fully depends on God. What is the fruit of righteousness? This is living in peace with God, leading a holy and sanctified life characterised by love, peace, joy, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. One has sown peace in the church through love and moral excellence, showing sincerity and blamelessness. There is a desire for a full knowledge of God and all discernment from His Word. Living a godly and righteous life marked by faithfulness and fruitfulness. How can we be filled with the fruit of righteousness? By abiding in Jesus Christ alone. Paul recognised that to be filled with the fruit of righteousness, the church should and must abide in Jesus Christ and allow Him to be the Saviour and Lord in the church and especially in their hearts. Additionally, if the church wishes to be approved and filled with the fruit of righteousness, it must give glory and praise to God and Christ. In short, the faithful, joyful and loving (abundant) Gospel church must remain connected to Christ Jesus and give glory and praise to God until the church sees Jesus face to face. SOLI DEO GLORIA!