DEEP RELATIONSHIPS
Text: Philippians 1:1-11

Intro to epistle: Verse 1 -
"Paul" - the human author; In prison in Rome.
"Timothy" - the stenographer
"servants" - Note: their attitude toward Christ & His ministry =
"bondslaves" committed servants.
"saints" - their position "in Christ"

Paul's theme in Philippians: The secret to joy in w world filled with trouble is **right thinking**. In Philippians Paul uses "mind" 10 times, "think" 5 times, "remember" 1 time for a total of 16.

Warren Weirsbe in his commentary suggests the following outline:
Single mind (chapt.1), submissive mind (2), spiritual mind (3), and secure mind (4).

Paul's reasons for writing:
1) exhortation to joyful living through right thinking.
2) appreciation for the gift of love delivered by Epaphroditus. a "thank you" letter.

Intro to message: verses 3-11
Close human relationships are lacking today. They tend to be shallow & superficial. People are lonely, needy & neglected. How many Christians can you name with whom you feel you have deep relationships. (if you can name them on one hand, you are probably normal)
Read verses 3-11

We could look at Paul's deep relationship with the Philippians as evidenced by the fact that he had these believers in his mind (v.3-6), in his heart (v.7-8), and in his prayers (v.9-11), but I think it would be beneficial to look at why Paul's relationship was as intimate as it was with these believers. We need to examine the Philippian believers efforts at building a deep personal relationship with Paul.

PROPOSITION: **YOU CAN DEVELOP DEEP PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS!**
(WITH FELLOW BELIEVERS IN THIS ASSEMBLY)
HOW?

I. BY SHARING THE LOAD OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY (v.3-7)
"sharing" - comes from the word "fellowship" (koinonia) verse 5. The word "fellowship" means many things to many different people. (Yet it is important to note that it is deeper than gathering together for cake & cool-aid after a morning service). The word "fellowship" means to have in common, to share with one another.

note: Paul is not speaking of sharing <u>of</u> the Gospel (salvation) but sharing <u>in</u> (into) it. From the very moment Paul led these people to Christ he experienced an eager willingness on their part to serve in the Gospel ministry. "first day" - ex. Lydia - whose whole household became Christians. She then opened her home for Paul & his fellow missionaries (Silas, Timothy, & Luke).
"until now" - They then sent gifts to meet Paul's material needs. (<u>see Phil.2:29,30; 4:15,16</u>)

<u>such sharing will cause others to</u>:

A. **<u>THANK GOD</u> FOR YOU** (when they remember you) (v.3)

We see some insight into Paul's prayer life. Every time you <u>remember</u> someone <u>pray for them</u>. This shows that Paul had a continual, moment by moment walk & talk with God.

Paul's prayers of thanksgiving were prompted by <u>pleasant memories</u>.
Memories tend to pass away. Think of your childhood memories - your relationships - friends you thought you would never forget - you may even fink it hard to remember their names. How quickly we forget. <u>Meaningful</u> memories will last!

What do people remember about you?

B. **<u>REJOICE</u> BECAUSE OF YOU** (when they pray for you) (v.4-5)

Paul's memories for the Philippians were <u>positive</u>. Paul rejoiced in the <u>partnership</u> (fellowship, sharing, comradery, companionship) he had with these believers. They were his friends; on his team; They lovingly supported him.
(Note: to give to (share with) a man of God is to give to the gospel ministry; They shared with Paul (Phil. 4:15-16) and in so doing shared in the gospel ministry.
therefore his prayers for them were <u>happy experiences</u>.

Can you say "I am the kind of Christian that brings <u>joy</u> to my Pastor's mind when he thinks of me?"

*Paul's <u>motivation</u> to pray was related to the <u>quality</u> of the human relationships he had with them.
*The more significant the relationship the more exciting the prayer experience is.
*Meaningful, exciting prayer must grow out of deep human relationships with other believers.

such sharing will cause others to:

C. BE CONFIDENT OF GOD'S WORKING IN YOU (v.6)

They shared continually "from first day until now" (v.5), and now in verse 6 Paul is convinced that they will continue to until Christ returns.

With some people who make professions of faith it is hard to tell (by the absence of fruit in their life) if they were ever truly saved. ***All true believers will not just "believe" the Gospel, they will share in the Gospel. They will partake of the Gospel ministry.

Paul however, sensed a reality in their lives.
He could pray with an attitude of joy because he had a confidence that God was working in their lives.

the phrase: "good work" includes both:
1) Salvation - God's work for them (in their hearts).
2) Service - God's work through them (from their hearts

God finishes everything He starts.
It is God who works in and through believers (cp.2:13) God is at work completing or maturing the good work He begins in believers.

When we permit God to perform His "good work" in us, then we grow in our love for one another.

D. BE COMFORTED BY THE ENCOURAGEMENT YOU GIVE (v.7)

Though Paul was physically far away from them, he sensed a oneness that went beyond any explanation.

Whether in chains [bound to a roman guard or prison cell], or in defending the Gospel [preaching the gospel in the midst of opposition], Paul sensed the Philippians standing right beside him sharing his burdens.

He is saying: "In my bonds you are a comfort to my heart...in my defense you are a comfort to my heart..." Paul was convinced that God would continue to perform His "good work" in their lives because they were really being used by God by sharing in the grace Paul was receiving. Their love and concern was part of the grace needed to keep Paul going despite bonds etc.

The loving burden bearing of a Christian brother is a real encouragement to a person (fellow believer) when he is going through rough circumstances. It's great to know that someone cares!

YOU CAN DEVELOP DEEP PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS:

II. BY GROWING IN YOUR LOVE FOR FELLOW BELIEVERS (v.8-11)

A. GROWTH IS NEEDED IN LEARNING HOW TO LOVE (v.8-9a)

("knowledge" = a knowledge of God & His love)
"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (Jn.13:34,35).

1. PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF HIS COMPASSIONATE LOVE (v.8)
Though Paul having a oneness with them, though a great distance away, it was no substitute for a face to face relationship. Paul was human. He was lonely & his heart yearned to see them. This is a natural response in a love relationship. (ex. My 3 weeks apart from Terri & my 2 girls in Israel and my desire to see them again)

"bowels" = the inner parts; (the heart, liver, & lungs) the seat of feeling; compassion.

This was the same compassion that Christ has, and gives.

"God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us" (Rom.5:5).

love is the "spiritual lubrication" that keeps the machinery of human relationships running smoothly (without friction)

B. GROWTH IS NEEDED IN LEARNING WHAT TO LOVE (v.9b)

"Judgement" = insight, perception, discernment. A deep insight, good judgment in making proper decisions.

1. SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT IN LOVING (v.10a)
"approve...excellent"
to discern the mind of God and love like Christ (cp.v8)
Biblical love is not blind! It is discerning.

The heart (loving) and mind (thinking) work together so that we have discerning love & a loving discernment. Wiersbe p.26.

2. PURE MOTIVES IN LOVING (v.10b)
"sincere" - some translate it "tested by sunlight" It describes one who is not afraid to stand in the light, because you have nothing to hide! Your love is genuine. No false motives. Cp.2:3 "let nothing be done through strife or vain glory..."

a. Motivated by Jesus Christ (the source of love) (v.11a)

b. Motivated for God's glory & praise (the purpose for loving) (v.11b)

CONCLUSION:

How diligent are you about cultivating & maintaining relationships wit other Christians?

Do you wait for others to take the initiative? - and then complain that no one really cares about you?

Close human relationships do not just happen. They must be carefully cultivated & maintained. (ex. The Philippians worked hard at expressing their love & concern for Paul. They kept communication lines open. Paul in turn did the same. (cp. Gene Getz p.34)

What is it that is keeping you from building better relationships with your spouse, children, parents, fiends, or brother or sister in Christ? Is it selfishness? Wrong priorities? Do you refuse to take the time & effort?

Your can develop deep personal relationships by sharing the load of the Gospel ministry and by growing in your love for fellow believers.