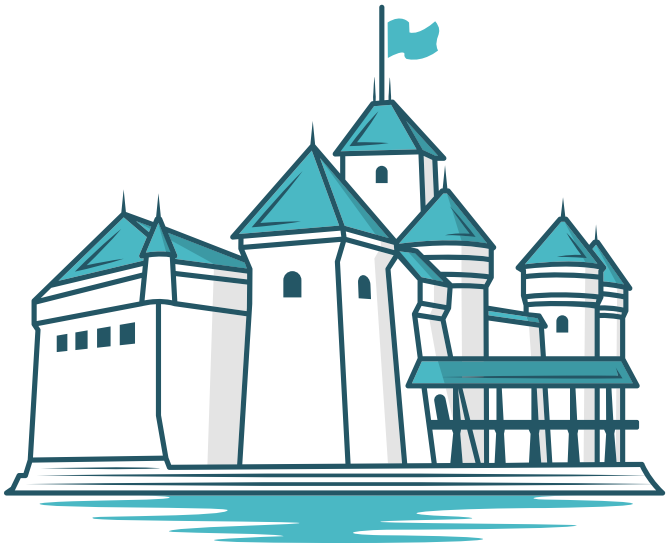

REFORMED PAVILION

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For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5

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I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.

—Philippians 1:3–5

Fellowship in the Gospel

The apostle Paul had witnessed such a gracious wonder of God in the church in Philippi that his heart could not contain the resulting thanksgiving and joy that welled up in him. Every time he thought of the saints there, he could not help but spontaneously thank God for them. Every time he prayed for them, he nearly burst with joy at what God had done. For God had worked something so powerful and wonderful and gracious among his people that no mere human heart could hold it. And now the Holy Ghost, who had flooded the apostle's heart with thanksgiving and joy at the work of God, caused that flood to overflow Paul's heart onto the page. By the inspiration of the Spirit, the apostle recorded for the church of all ages the gracious wonder that had so filled him with joy. That wonderwork of God was this: the Philippians' fellowship in the gospel.

Fellowship in the gospel! What a wonder! What grace! For fellowship in the gospel means that God had made his elect people in Philippi one with Jesus Christ. *Fellowship* means "communion" and "participation." And the one message of the gospel is Jesus Christ. Fellowship in the gospel means that the saints in Philippi were partakers of Christ, were participants in Christ, shared in Christ, and had communion with Christ. It means that God's people were so united to Christ that they comprised one spiritual organism with him—Jesus the head and his people the body, Jesus the vine and his people the branches. And comprising one spiritual organism, Christ and his people could never be separated.

Fellowship in the gospel!

What is more, fellowship in the gospel means that God's people in Philippi shared in all the blessings of salvation that are in Christ. Christ was crucified and raised; they were crucified and raised with him. Christ is righteous; they were righteous in him. Christ lives forevermore; they live forevermore in him. Christ rejoices forever; they might rejoice in the Lord always (Phil. 4:4). In the midst of sin and guilt and corruption and suffering and dying, the saints of Philippi were in Christ and thus had their life and conversation in heaven with him (3:20).

Fellowship in the gospel!

How had this fellowship in Christ been given to the saints? It was the gracious wonderwork of God by the preaching of the gospel. God had sovereignly squeezed Paul out of Galatia—forbidding him to go into Asia and suffering him not to go into Bithynia—and brought him by vision into Macedonia (Acts 16:6–12). There God caused Paul to preach the heavenly gospel in settings and to people that could not possibly result in a church—at a riverside among some women, in a prison to a jailor. And yet what could not possibly come to pass came to pass. God opened the hearts of his people to attend unto the things spoken by Paul (v. 14). God granted faith in Jesus Christ and salvation by him (v. 31). By the preaching of the gospel, God gave to his people what mere man could never give: fellowship in the gospel. From the first day of their hearing, through the subsequent years until Paul wrote his letter to them from his house-arrest in Rome, the saints in Philippi had fellowship in the gospel.

Fellowship in the gospel!

When God joins his people to Jesus Christ by faith, they also become members one of another. Our communion is with Christ and with each other. We become "brethren" (Acts 16:40). We become "like-minded" (Phil. 2:2). We who were at odds are made "of the same mind in the Lord" (4:2). Whether near to each other—as Paul and the Philippians had been on his missionary journeys—or far from each other—as Paul and the Philippians were as he penned his letter—we share a precious unity in the truth of the gospel and blessed fellowship in Christ.

Fellowship in the gospel! Thanks be to God! And may he continue to grant it in his infinite grace.

> I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. (Phil. 1:3–5)

—AL

From the Editor

Welcome to this abbreviated issue of *Reformed Pavilion*. Today is October 31, the day we commemorate Reformation Day. Remnant Reformed Church held a lecture last night on Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross." Preparation for the lecture preempted the preparation of any additional articles for the magazine this week, but we are looking forward to sharing a transcript of the speech with our readers next week, Lord willing.

May the Lord use the little morsel presented this week for our refreshment in the gospel. We are thankful that he continues to give us a little space yet to set forth his truth.

—AL