



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Fellowship in the Gospel of Grace—Philippians 1.3-7

JANUARY 18, 2010

PHILIPPIANS: CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AT THE CAPITOL

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INTRODUCTION

“Come fellowship with us!” Many a church sign has carried this message hoping to entice passers-by to turn in and visit their services. While the offer of fellowship ought to be a strong enticement to anyone, it is unlikely that the average person reading such a message would grasp either the true nature of fellowship or its value.

Fellowship is an idea that will jump out at us at several junctures in this short letter and in these opening verses we arrive at the first such juncture. From Paul’s own words we will find the details needed to flesh out the ambiguous conceptions of fellowship held by so many believers today. In this week’s study—Fellowship in the Gospel of Grace—we will explore how to enjoy fellowship’s felicity, expect fellowship’s future, and establish fellowship’s foundation.

Philippians 1.3-7—I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

I. ENJOY FELLOWSHIP’S FELICITY

Having moved beyond his greeting, Paul delights in the opportunity to share his feelings for the believers at Philippi. It is clear that the fellowship Paul enjoys with these believers is a great source of happiness and contentment to him. The warmth of emotion he expresses is entirely appropriate in light of their partnership in the gospel.

GRATEFUL PRAYERS

These believers responded to Paul’s ministry among them by committing themselves whole-heartedly to the same purpose to which Paul had devoted himself. He cannot have a passing thought of them without bursting forth with gratitude unto God for their dedication to the gospel. To identify himself with their needs and intercede on their behalf before God is not a burden, but a delight.

JOYFUL MEMORIES

Paul encountered bitter persecution for the gospel’s sake upon his arrival in Philippi. But God turned those difficulties to advantage in magnifying the Lord Jesus and both delivered a young woman from spiritual bondage and brought a roman soldier and his family to faith. What a heritage for this young church! These bitter beginnings brought forth a harvest of souls and the memory of it continues to bring Paul joy in the midst of fresh persecution and imprisonment for the sake of the gospel.

APPROPRIATE AFFECTIONS

Mutual affection between people is oftentimes superficial and fickle. Yet, Paul’s affection has been wrought of time together in the trenches, fighting the good fight and binding up one another’s wounds. “...just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart.” It is only appropriate for these believers to find a broad place in Paul’s feelings, given the devotion they share to one another.

II. EXPECT FELLOWSHIP’S FUTURE

Paul’s joy in praying for these believers flows from an overwhelming confidence in God’s ongoing purposes among them. What God started among the Philippians, Paul being both an eyewitness and an involved party, He would be faithful to bring to its completion.

FROM THE FIRST DAY

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS @ LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB OR THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. IN THE MEMBERS’ LOUNGE (ROOM E2.1002)

STAFF: FRIDAYS @ 8:00A.M. IN THE MEMBERS’ LOUNGE (ROOM E2.1002)

Greetings From A Prisoner—Philippians 1.1-2

From his first meeting with Lydia and those gathered at the riverside, to the young woman possessed of a spirit of divination, to the Philippian jailor and his family and into the early days of the first church in Europe, Paul viewed these new believers as his partners in the gospel ministry. “From the first day until now” indicates the sense that this partnership is intact, in no wise weakened by the distance between them or Paul’s imprisonment. No change in temporal circumstances can dissolve the partnership of those bound by the cause of Christ.

UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST

“From the beginning until now” immediately telescopes forward to the future of every believer. God began this work in them, not Paul or any other man. Regardless of the outcome of Paul’s imprisonment, God will take them forward in His glorious plans for them. He will be faithful to see them to the finish line.

Our future hope in Christ is secure in every way. God has saved us, that is, He justified us through the finished work of Christ. God is saving us, that is, He is sanctifying us day by day through His Word and the activity of the Spirit in our lives. And God will save us, that is, our salvation will be complete in the day of Christ when our life in this world gives way to our life in the world to come. It is not dependent upon us, it has been God’s work from the beginning and He can be relied upon to see it through.

III. ESTABLISH FELLOWSHIP’S FOUNDATION

There is a depth and passion expressed in these verses as Paul speaks of the union or common bond he shared with those at Philippi. His words serve not only to expose shallowness in the average believer’s conception of fellowship, but also to provide a biblical basis for the richness of fellowship available only among believers.

SHARED SALVATION

Standing head and shoulders above all other factors that serve to bond us together as believers is our coming to salvation in

Christ. Every believer has come to realize in some way their own sinfulness and been compelled by the Spirit to embrace the grace, mercy, and forgiveness offered in Christ. Every believer has become a new creature in Christ! There is nothing more defining for the Christian than the work of Christ in saving them. This provides the basis for our shared life in Him.

SHARED STRUGGLE

I’ve heard fellowship described as two people on the same side of a struggle. Paul commends these believers for their partnership with him in his chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. Later Paul will remind them that it has been granted to them, not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for His sake, sharing the same conflict that they witnessed when he was persecuted for the gospel in Philippi and now hear he faces in his imprisonment. We strain towards a common goal, we strive against a common foe—this is fellowship at its sweetest!

SHARED STANDING

We share in the gracious provision of God and His ongoing favor in our lives. We enjoy the same standing before God, we are all members of a royal priesthood. We will all reign with Him. We are all seated with Him at the right hand of God. We are all chosen and elect of God, each of us, as believers are partakers of His grace!

CONCLUSION

How do you view your connection to other believers? Do you look forward to time at church for the meaningful ways you will relate to other believers there? Is your relationship with other Christians mutually beneficial from an eternal or spiritual viewpoint?...How about the fellow believers on your staff, among your colleagues and constituents?

May God grant that we may view every believer as our partner in the cause of Christ as He brings His kingdom to bear in our lives and the lives of those around us. May we find great delight in the relationships we have with fellow believers!