

“...walk worthily...” from the Book of Philippians

Scripture Block:	Pp 1:1-11
Theme:	GOD’S EXPECTATION OF FRUITFUL SERVICE
Life verse:	Pp 1:9-11
Today’s passage:	Pp 1:5

Notes

Interpretation

In verse 5 we have the Greek word “koinonia”, typically translated fellowship or partnership. This word carries the connotation of closeness of relationship and was often a distinctive characteristic within the early church. We also have the word “gospel” in vs. 5, which literally means “good news.” The context determines just how broadly to apply the term.

So Paul always has joy on account of the Philippian’s fellowship in the “good news” as they both continue to minister.

Application

Just how is it that we “fellowship” in the gospel? I would like to propose the following as at least a partial listing:

- Prayer
- Financial support
- Developing a missionary mindset
- Pursuing spiritual growth
- Sharing the Gospel
- Suffering for ministry’s sake

Now if we run down the list, we can ask the question, “How are we doing?” We can of course ask this question individually; however, every fellowship should also ask it corporately. As we do, I think we will find it is the last two on which we have the most difficulty “measuring up.” Now since it is a lengthy list, perhaps it is okay to just pick and choose. Or stated another way, is the “sharing the gospel” portion of fellowshiping in the Gospel optional or compulsory? Page through Mt 28:19-f, Jn 15:27, Act 1:8 and 1Pt 3:15. The words “must testify” in Jn 15:27 eliminate the concept of optional activity do they not?

Now there are a variety of reasons why we find it so difficult to share our faith with those around us. I would like to concentrate on just one for a few moments. Often, we have found our community to be non-receptive to the Gospel message. The people with whom we rub elbows likely have material prosperity, are set in their ways or occupied with a variety of other concerns. At some point, we get excited about the truths of Christianity—God’s answer to the need’s of mankind become so clear to us that we venture to reaching out to the lost around us. When we are rebuffed, it is easy to start characterizing those around us as “hard

hearted” or worse. As a result, we retreat from the mandate to share the Gospel and instead focus on enjoying the fellowship of like-minded believers. Although this is very understandable have we not drawn back from truly fellowshiping in the Gospel? Can you picture Steven deciding the Sanhedrin was just unfertile ground and withdrawing to fellowship within the cozy confines of the growing church? I think the following comments by J. B. Stoney are insightful and might help us reconsider what should be the “natural order” of our calling to represent Christ to a lost and dying world.

There are two parts to Christian service: one, the nature and object of the service; the other, the manner in which it is received. The servant of the Lord, because of the nature of the light committed to him on the one hand, and the hardness and willfulness of men’s hearts on the other, enters into both in a supreme degree, and thus has a twofold experience as to his service; one of joy, and the other of exercise and sorrow. In communicating the truth given him, he has, when simply acting from the Lord, the sense of what is perfectly good and true; and if his service ended here, it would be one of unmixed satisfaction, because it is all on God’s side. But when he turns to man’s side, and sees how indifferently the truth has been received and appreciated, he is filled with a sorrow which is only augmented by his sense of the goodness and greatness of what he has communicated. . . . It is nowhere admitted in Scripture that a servant can be merely the herald of the light of God’s grace; that is, that he should only have the joyful side of service. For every real servant, be he evangelist, teacher, or anything else, there must be the side of suffering, exercise and humiliation. . .