

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

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

Comments

I would like to continue our discussion of what it means to “fellowship” in the Gospel, especially as it relates to the expectation of some aspect of personal suffering. I have two points I would like you to consider: one doctrinal and one anecdotal.

If I was to ask you what was missing with respect to Christ’s suffering on the cross, you would be right to quickly and firmly respond, “Nothing!” Perhaps than you can explain Col 1:24 to me—it is truly a challenge.

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.

Study the context, meditate upon the passage—and still you will be left with a difficult interpretation. Since the book of Colossians is not the object of our study, I am simply going to propose one possible explanation. The only thing that is missing from the suffering of Christ, is the suffering associated with the countless thousands who will follow his example through the ages. Our Lord has left us as his ambassador’s, and as we carry forth his message, we are likely to be on the receiving end of the same type of rejection as he suffered (Jn 15:8, 16:1-4). It is in this way that we complete what is lacking (remains to be accomplished) in regards to the sacrifice of our Lord and Savior—and to this we are called.

One final illustration as we close this section. I heard this story recently from one of my favorite apologists, and it is the perfect illustration for the topic at hand. There was a young evangelist in what was once called Yugoslavia named Tarman. During the course of his travels he was attracted to an old and bitter man named Yakov. When Tarman attempted to share the good news of Jesus Christ with Yakov, he was rudely interrupted and told, “I have seen enough religious evil to last a lifetime.” Tarman wisely responded, “If someone stole your clothes and committed a crime, would you be guilty?” Yakov muttered and walked away. Whenever he was in the area, Tarman continued to check on the old man, bring him food, and help with chores. After a period of more than a year, Yakov finally said, “You wear his clothes well. Tell me about your God.” As a point of application, I would say that until we have “worn the clothes” of our Lord’s example for years before those to whom we have the opportunity to minister, we have not yet entered into what it means to “fellowship in the Gospel.”