



Season 8 Podcasts

Your Fellowship in the Gospel

By

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So far in my 8th Season Podcast series I've shared thoughts with you about:

- 8 Rules for Bible Study
- 40 Rules for Ministry
- The Heart of the Gospel
- Defending and Confirming the Gospel

The next aspect I'd like to share with you is the 'Fellowship' that we have in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

“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.” Philippians 1:3-5

The Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Christians in Philippi (located in Eastern Macedonia, Greece in the 1st century AD) while he was imprisoned in Rome. The year of Paul’s writing the letter is estimated to be about 61 AD. That would have been about a decade after starting the church there. Paul wanted to ‘preach the word in Asia,’ but the Holy Spirit would not allow him to do that at the time. Paul arrived in Mysia and attempted to go into Bithynia with Silas and Timothy, ‘but the Spirit did not permit them.’ So, Paul and the others went to Troas where Paul received a vision in the night:

“A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Acts 16:9-10

When Paul, Silas, and Timothy arrived in Philippi they met several women who were praying at the riverside on the Sabbath day. God opened one of women's heart to believe what Paul taught. Her name was Lydia. She and her entire household believed and were baptized.

Paul and Silas walked through Philippi preaching the Gospel of Christ until Paul cast a demon out of a woman who was a fortune-teller. Once the demon left her the woman lost the ability to tell people's fortunes. When her masters 'saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.' The magistrates listened to the men's complaints, then ordered that Paul and Silas be beaten with rods. After that the magistrates had them thrown into prison.

Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns to God from their prison cell. At about midnight a ‘great earthquake’ struck the prison so hard that the prison doors opened and ‘everyone’s chains were loosed.’ The chief jailer had been sleeping, but woke up and saw that the prison doors were open. He thought the prisoners fled, so he drew his sword intending to kill himself. However, Paul cried out with a loud voice – “Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.” The jailer ran in and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. The jailer said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” This was Paul’s answer:

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:31

The jailer did believe and took Paul and Silas to his house where they shared the Gospel of Christ with everyone there. The jailer’s entire family believed and were baptized. Paul and Silas were eventually freed and stayed for a short time at Lydia’s house before leaving Philippi. Paul returned to visit the Christians at Philippi at least twice after that, possibly three times (e.g. Acts 20:1-2, 6; 1 Timothy 1:3).

The reason I share that information with you is to demonstrate just how precious the Christians in Philippi were to him personally. Paul loved all of the Christians in all of the churches, but Philippi stands out to me because of how the Holy Spirit moved him to go there. Paul wisely obeyed the Spirit's guidance and the church in Philippi was born.

Fellowship

A major part of Christianity is ‘fellowship.’ Paul wrote the Philippians that he thanked God ‘upon every remembrance’ of them and how he prayed for them all ‘with joy.’ He then wrote – “for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” The word ‘fellowship’ in the Greek is the noun *koinónia* and means ‘partnership, partner, what is shared in common as the basis of fellowship, community, partaker, companion, joint-participant.’

The meaning of the Greek word helps us understand how deeply Paul was involved in the lives and ministries of the Christians in Philippi. They had shared so many spiritual adventures together. They had learned together. They had ministered together. They had suffered together. They had rejoiced together. That’s the meaning of ‘fellowship’ in a Christian community.

Another reason I shared the story of how the Philippian church was started is because of these words from the Apostle Paul:

“for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Notice that Paul put a beginning time on their ‘fellowship’ in the Gospel – ‘from the first day until now.’ Paul remembered every moment of his long relationship with the people of Philippi. They were so precious to him that he didn’t forget how they started together. From the moment he met Lydia and her family, then the jailer and his family, Paul remembered every moment ‘with joy.’

Christian ‘fellowship’ (*koinónia*) should be ‘joyful and memorable.’ We should never take for granted any of our experiences with each other, including the first day. Every day, every week, every month, every year is special and precious as we ‘partner’ together in the amazing Gospel of Grace. It is a ‘gift’ God has given us. Don’t abuse it. Don’t

misuse it. Don't miss it. Enjoy each and every moment as we serve God together.

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In Christ's Love and Grace,

Mark McGee

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