

The Gospel According to Philippians
Gospel Bonding
Philippians 1:1-8; Acts 16:11-40
Sermon Outline

Introduction: We bond, often powerfully, when we take on projects together. But that bonding tends to fade. What we have in Philippians is a window on a bonding power that is immensely satisfying and that will never fail.

I) What was the bond between Paul and his readers like?

A) Full of joyful affection, even yearning

v. 3: *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always...making my prayer with joy*

v. 7: *...I hold you in my heart*

v. 8: *For God is my witness how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ*

B) The Corinthians versus the Philippians

We must all love each other...But how about liking?

II) How can we experience this bond more fully?

A) Through gospel partnership

v. 3-5: *...because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now*

v. 7B: *...for you are all partakers with me of grace...*

Think of the story of the Philippian church (Acts 16)

- Lydia
- *Acts 16:14: The Lord opened her heart...And she prevailed upon us.*

Many good causes

But nothing surpasses, goes deeper, lasts longer than...

B) Through gospel hope

v. 6: *And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion...*

Paul was not naïve, but he saw people with the eyes of faith

Exercise

III) Where does this bond ultimately come from?

v.8: *I long for you with the affection of Christ*

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) Common cause often builds strong bonds. Recall and share situations in which you have experienced “common cause” bonding. Did the bonding last? If it faded, why did it fade?
- 2) God not only loves his people. He actually likes them. He yearns for them. And sometimes (not always) that “liking,” that affection and yearning, surfaces in the relationship that exists between people in a particular church. This is what we have in Philipians—something that does not seem to have been the case, for example, in Corinth. Perhaps you have experienced similar contrasts in churches and even small groups. Why does this happen?
- 3) Why, according to Phil. 1:5 and 1:7b, was Paul’s affection so strong? What sense does this make to you? Have you seen this cause and effect relationship in your experience?
- 4) Look at Acts 16:11-40, where we see the birth of the Philippian church. Where do we see in that story a partnership in suffering and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel?
- 5) There are a number of ways we can enter into gospel partnerships with other believers. We can arrange to have a party that includes members of our small group and non believing friends that we each bring from school or work. We can agree with a fellow believer to pray every day for a particular friend who does not yet know Christ. Can you think of other ways? Can you make a plan to do something?
- 6) In Phil. 1:6 Paul describes his confidence in the future of his readers. What is he convinced will happen and why is he so sure? How might having such confidence help you grow in love for, and even enjoyment of, fellow believers—especially those whom you don’t like all that much?
- 7) When Paul says in Phil 1:8 that he yearns for his readers “with the affection of Christ” he gives us insight into where, ultimately, his love comes from. Reflect upon the fact that Jesus Christ loves you in the same way—with the same affection and yearning and joy—with which Paul loves the Philippian—only much more fully (look at the actual language that Paul uses and imagine Jesus using it). Do you find this difficult to believe? If so, why? Spend some time talking with Jesus about the quality of his love and affection for you: thank him for it, confess any difficulty you have believing it, ask for help to receive his love.