

LESSON 2: PHILIPPIANS 1:7-26

Paul's Confidence and Affection (cont'd)

1. Paul writes that "it is right for [him] to feel this way about you all" (v. 7). The Greek word translated as "feel" embraces thought, as well as feeling, implying a course of action on which the mind is set. How does this approach by Paul to life in the Church differ from the emotionalism so often sold as the standard for Christian life in America? Is the world watching a Church that has nothing realistic to say about real problems? Also, what might defending and affirming the gospel involve?
2. Paul longs for the Philippians with "the affection of Christ Jesus" (v. 8). What do you think he means by this? Paul ends this section with a prayer for the Philippians. In what should love "abound all the more," and to what end and purpose (v. 9)?

Advancing the Gospel – Through Paul!

1. What is Paul's situation as he writes this letter? How has Paul's imprisonment advanced the gospel (vv. 12-14)? What has been the impact? How irresistible is the advance of the gospel (v. 12-13)? What happens when you dedicate yourself to advancing the gospel? How has the gospel been advanced through you, or does that depend on whether or not you are interested?
2. In verses 15-18, Paul turns to a discussion of motives. For him, what is more important than focusing on the motives of others? Can this principle be applied today? What should we do when we know that the heart of a preacher is given to "rivalry" and "pretense" as opposed to sincerely preaching Christ "in truth"? Does it matter? Read Mark 9:38-41 and discuss.
3. Paul expects to be delivered from prison (vv. 22-27; see also 2:24). Through what two appointed agencies of God will deliverance come (v. 19)? How might these two be related? Is Paul suggesting that the sufficient supply of the Holy Spirit to meet his need depends directly on the prayers of the Philippians, and that failing their prayers, the supply of the Holy Spirit will dry up?

4. On a related note, Paul enjoins his friends to pray for him so that he will grow spiritually through the trials of his imprisonment (v. 19). Do you have an obligation to put another's spiritual growth at the forefront of your prayers, and to take that obligation seriously? How involved then and valued are human beings – you in particular – in the work of God?

5. In the next verses, Paul shares with us his great dilemma. What is his “eager expectation and hope,” even his greatest ambition (v. 20)? What do you think Paul means when he writes of his hope that “Christ will be honored in my body”? Do you desire that all the dimensions of God's greatness will be exhibited in your life? Is there a prayer request in all of this that God would be more than willing to grant if asked?

6. What is Paul's whole purpose in life (v. 21)? What would Paul have to “gain” by his death? Just his heavenly reward? What else will be promoted by his death? What will be promoted by your death?

7. For whose benefit do you live (vv. 22-24): your own, or to fulfill God's will in your life? What is God's will for your life?

8. For what purpose is Paul “convinced” that it is necessary for him to “remain in the flesh” (vv. 24-25)? If God allows him to again visit the Philippians, what will that trip demonstrate? How will they respond to their prayers being answered by his return (v. 26)? How do you respond to God when your prayers are answered?