

Philippians 1:7-11 (NKJV)

7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Remember last week when we looked at this:

Philippians 1:3-4 (ESV)

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy,
We emphasized this status of joy. And that joy is one of the themes in Paul's letter.

In verse 6 Paul broke into a little theology, explaining that everything he thinks and hopes is based upon what **God promises to do**.

Now he returns to his deep heartfelt expression of love and appreciation to those who are **bringing him** joy.

So we learn a bit more about the kind of thinking that **produced** this kind of joy.

Paul talks about the "**why**" of the tenor of his letter.

7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because

So Paul is saying, essentially, I am obligated here to have this mindset toward you.

The Greek word for "right" here means a moral and spiritual rightness. It is not **right** in that a certain answer is the **correct** answer and another one is **incorrect**. It is more like a right in this example- that it is **right** to pay back the money you owe someone. There is a moral rightness to it. A rightness that requires us to adapt our lives to.

Paul is going to tell us **why** he feels this obligation later in the sentence. He will tell us that he is obligated **BECAUSE**.

Now where it says "**think this of you**" the word for think is interesting.

The word for "think" is translated several different ways.

NKJV, KJV, Youngs literal translation, and Holmans all translate the word as **THINK**.

ESV and NIV translates it as **feel**.

ASV says **like minded**.

Why the differences?

The Greek-English Lexicon defines the Greek word this way:

To direct one's mind to a thing, to seek or strive for to hold some opinion, judge, think, concerning one

Gordon Fee, who is a Greek scholar that I can understand says this:

The Greek word refers neither to "thinking" in general, nor "reasoning" as such, nor is it used for a specific act of thought; rather, it has to do with having or developing a certain "mindset," including attitudes and dispositions.¹

So what Paul is saying that I am obligated by a sense of rightness to have this **mindset** or **attitude** that I have toward you. It is right for me to have this **way of looking** at you. That seems like an odd way of putting this. Paul's **attitude** toward these people has **compelling reason** behind it. And he is soon to lay out **more of the reasons** he has for this mindset he has toward his friends in Philippi.

Now we may tend to think that **logical** reasons lead to **unfeeling** conclusions. There are a lot of people who are critical of preaching about theological concepts because they think those truths are inferior to those things that **cause people** to have **strong feelings**. But that is not how Paul saw it. Paul's **reason** drove him to **deep feelings**. Paul's theology shaped more than just his information knowledge base. It deepened the strength of his love and **emotion** for those he loved. He saw no conflict in talking about the fact that God will complete His good work in you on the day of Christ and in the same flow of thought talk about his **deep longing** for his loved ones.

So Paul is compelled morally to have this mindset toward the Philippians and following are the reasons that are so compelling.

7b because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

I have you in my heart...

¹ Gordon D. Fee, [*Paul's Letter to the Philippians*](#), The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 89.

We always must define terms because this is not how **we** might use the word **heart**. For us the heart is the **center of emotions**. For the Greeks the **bowels** were the center of emotions. So Paul was compelled to have the loving mindset, not because he was so sentimentally overpowered by emotion. No the emotion he is about to describe has its source elsewhere. When Paul says I have you in my heart, he is talking about people whom he has solidly in the **core of his life**. That is what the **heart** is in scripture.

The heart is the **consolidation** of all we think and the **source** of all we think. It is essentially the core of who we are and where we decide from. It is not the center of **emotions** as we might use the word. It is more the center of **being**. And those people were in Paul's core being. They were significant people in his life.

Then he goes on to explain why they are in his heart.

inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Paul points out a few things about the Philippians mutual relationship with Paul that **call for** these people to be **in his heart** and ultimately for his reason to be filled with **such joy**.

The Philippians all are **partakers with me of grace**.

And the three things he mentions in which they are partakers are:

1 In my chains

2 In the defense of the gospel

3 In the confirmation of the gospel.

Now what does it mean to be partakers with Paul. A partaker is someone who is a **joint partner**. If you and I went into a business tomorrow we would be partakers of that business.

So these people are in some way tied in with Paul. It is much like how brother Pawson described fellowship or Koinonia.

So let's look at the three things described to figure out how the Philippians are **partakers**, how they are **in partnership** with Paul.

1 In my chains

How are the Philippians **in partnership** with Paul in Paul's chains. There are a couple of possibilities I can think of and neither would do harm to the text. The Philippians may be in partnership with Paul in his chains because they are suffering **the same sorts** of persecution and they are standing up to it just like Paul. So like Paul is persecuted by suffering chains, they may be persecuted and suffering similar things.

That could be it but I prefer the second idea. I think they are in partnership with Paul in his chains because they are **joining in with Paul to reduce the**

effects of his chains. Paul has been limited against his will and the Philippians are stepping into his situation, becoming a **partner** in this situation, and reducing his sufferings and limitations as much as they can.

I think we have seen a lot of this sort of thing as people in our church have suffered from sickness or accidents or even pregnancy and others have stepped in and provided meals and help around the house. That is the kind of partnership that Paul may have been talking about. And it is such a refreshing example of true fellowship. It says, while I would not have to provide for you, I will because I love you.

2 In the defense of the gospel

The words used here for **defense** and **confirmation** are interesting words. They are both legal terms.

Apologia is translated here as defense. This is the same word we get the words Apologetics, and Apology from. They are statements intended to defend something.

While those who placed Paul on trial were trying him, Paul's concern was not so much to defend **his actions**. What got Paul in trouble was not Paul's lack of concern for Roman law. What has him in chains is **his proclamation of the gospel**. So when Paul is laying out his defense in a court of law he will ultimately be **defending the gospel**. He will be explaining the truth of the gospel and its validity.

The Philippians were sharing in that by their support of Paul. They were standing by the gospel in their hometown. They were holding to the gospel. They were proclaiming the gospel, even in the face of great cost.

And they were **providing for Paul** as he was in the position of defending the gospel in the heart of Rome.

3 In the confirmation of the gospel.

To **confirm** something is to give someone **confidence** in it. Often churches have confirmations for their elders or pastors. This is to give the church **confidence** that the person has been closely examined and meets the criteria of the office.

Well Paul was giving **confirmation** of the gospel. He had examined it closely and held it up to great scrutiny, making sure it stood up to the whole Old Testament. Paul could grant a **solid confirmation** of the gospel.

And the Philippians were in partnership with Paul in that regard. They were guarding the gospel in **their church** and they were supporting Paul's legal defense **in Rome**. They had skin in the game.

So Paul says, as a result of these things, Paul is obligated to have a place in his heart for them. It is the least he could do to have this loving and appreciative mindset toward them.

I would like to point out something here.

What were the Philippians **getting out of this**?

These people are taking money they could have used for themselves, and they take that money and they send it to a guy who is in a different country. He is a person who is not giving them anything at all at the present.

He is not visiting them much. He is probably not writing them personal letters to find out how each one is doing. He will send them fellow ministers as he is able. But it is clear he is not currently able to respond to any requests these people have made on him. Everything they are doing are acts of benevolent giving.

Why did these people do what they did? **What** was their motivation?

It is very clear. They loved Christ. And they came to this Christ whom they loved **through the gospel**. And Paul was the person who delivered the gospel to them. So they were committed, as a result, to both Paul and the gospel.

This is what fellowship is supposed to look like. These are to be the motivations of church participants.

We love **Christ**. We love the **gospel** that **brought us to Christ**. So we come together to **support that ministry of the gospel**, both to **believers**, which is called discipleship, and to **non believers**, that is called evangelism.

We may have **valid concerns** that the work of the church is not conveying the gospel as it should, or the running of the church is not according to the scriptural directive. Those concerns should be addressed with the leadership. And if the leadership will not submit to scripture, it may be time to find a new place to fellowship.

But when we begin to evaluate the church by **how well it services my needs**, we are beginning to enter a slippery slope. I know of no place in the New Testament that we are encouraged to evaluate the fellowship of Christians based on the **benefits** we receive.

These Philippians serve as excellent examples of followers who **love Christ**, **love the gospel**, and will go to great lengths of sacrifice to see it flourish. When those are the attitudes of the members of a church, that church will flourish. When we begin evaluating on other non biblical criteria, there is going to be chaos and conflict and division.

⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Paul has been talking about the joy he has as he thinks about the Philippians, these partakers of grace with Paul. He has been sharing with them the place that they have in his heart.

Now **who would really know** if what Paul is saying is true?

Those close to Paul could testify about what Paul has said and done. But who would know what is in Paul's heart?

Only God would know that.

So Paul calls upon **God** as the **witness** to testify to Paul's telling the truth about his heart. Paul is essentially saying I am bringing God into this. I can assure you that I am not lying because God would tell you the same thing I am telling you. He is watching and He is seeing that what I am telling you is true. Could we be so confident in everything that **we** say? Could we say, "If God showed up right now He would tell you exactly the same thing I am telling you about my **actions** or about my **motives** for an action."

With each other we can get away with murder. In our marriages and relationships with brothers and sisters, we can make up motives for what we did. We can believe our own theories about why we **think we would have done** what we did. We can give ourselves the benefit of the doubt about why we did what we did or said what we said. We can do that without the work of introspection and self analysis. We can say all kinds of things to throw people off the trail. That is the default of flesh, to detract blame. But when we tell the real truth about ourselves, when we tell about our hearts, when we examine our lives and we tell the honest truth, when we tell about what we were thinking when we did this or that, we could be confident like Paul was confident in calling God as His witness.

In your daily walk, in your conversations with your spouse or kids or friends, would **you** be comfortable to call God as your witness? How about where we tell half the truth? How about when we change the topic to avoid telling the truth? How about when we change to focus to the other person's failures? Here is an application we can make this week. As we are talking, ask the question, could I call God as my witness. Everything we say should be able to be held to this scrutiny. That is real honesty.

how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Who have you longed for? And how?

I remember when Carla and I were dating how I longed to be with her in the months between when we could see each other. Those were times of longing. But that is probably not the kind of longing Paul is speaking of. It is probably not **just being with them** that was the focus.

I remember other times with our kids or Christian friends. The longing is a **mixed longing**. It certainly involves longing **to be with them**. But it longs also **for their benefit**. It longs for their **growth**. It longs for their being built up in Christ. This is included in almost every epistle Paul writes. He breaks into prayer that they be **built up in the knowledge of Christ**. He prays for their growth.

We all have longed for people with affection. But there is an added element when we long for them with the **affection of Christ**. That kind of affection is looking out for the good of the beloved. Isn't that always the kind of affection we see from Christ. While it may be a mixed thing. Certainly scripture shows that Christ looks forward to **being with us**.... Which seems almost impossible. But more than that, Christ's affection always **benefits the beloved**. The affection of Christ desires and drives us to benefit to the beloved.

Now the word for affection here essentially means **bowels**. Like I said earlier, we would use the word heart. But the Greeks did not. It was bowels. Not very glamorous. But evidently they were more likely to identify the feelings closer to where they might literally **affect us**. We talk about a gut blow reaction. Or something we feel in our guts. That is more like the Greeks would describe it.

Now isn't it interesting that Paul talks about his **deep feelings**. Paul's theology never did anything to **temper** his extreme emotion. The truths and the experiences were congruent in Paul. In fact it is the solid foundation of **truth** that drove Paul to such **emotional extremes**. They are completely **consistent** with truth. Truth, when properly understood and applied, drives a person to deep emotion. A person who knows theology and views it as cold and dry has not considered the implications of what he believes. Theology, when properly understood, makes the soul sing. The truths of Christ and the gospel are like that. The best hymns are built on the best theology. And this comradery that Paul had with the Philippians, Paul clearly trusted. He never gave any indication that he mistrusted their motives. He did not **guard himself** against them. He did not need to because he knew they only had one reason to help him. They loved Jesus. And when the motivation for an action is **love for Jesus**, there can be a deep trust that can develop among people.

It is important that we ask ourselves, **why do we come to this church?** Why do we support **the ministries** of this church? How do we **evaluate** this church? Is it based on what **Christ wants** or what **I want**?

I do not want to limit the application we make of this text this week. We might look at what kind of desire we have for those in our body, and for our Christian friends. We might want to run that through the sieve of what Paul felt and thought. We might want to see if our experience is like Paul's, or if it is different, why is it different?

We may want to ask, what is right for us to think and feel toward our brothers and sisters? Are we fulfilling our obligation to them based on their commitment to us?

There may be other applications as well. But a very clear one to me is applying where and when I would call God as my witness, and where I definitely would not call God as my witness. Being confident to call God as our witness with everything we reveal about ourselves is the goal.