

Philippians 1:7, 8

One in Grace and Struggle

The community of Christ ...

I. Deep Filial Affection

- A. God Knows
- B. I Love You

II. Union in Grace

- A. Transcending Bond
- B. Deep Connection

III. Fellows In the Gospel Ministry

- A. In Prison
- B. In Defense

... coordinated in love.

Children, Listen ...

1. How did Paul feel about the people of the church? How do you know that?
2. What was the most important thing they had in common?
3. Do you think the fact that they did church work together helped them to be close? Why?
4. Paul was in prison for preaching the Gospel. Is that anything to be ashamed of?
5. Paul writes a lot about the Gospel. What is the Gospel again?

Blest Be the Tie

The thing that bound Paul closely to the people of the Philippian church was the grace that they shared through faith in Jesus Christ. Fellowship in the Lord strengthened that bond, and their unified labors in the Gospel strengthened it further. Their ministry together and their ministry to him while he was in prison made that bond stronger still. Paul's affection for many of the believers in his life was so strong that, when he expresses it, it can feel a little awkward for those of a more staid disposition. What is more striking than his loving words is the fact that it is so genuine, he is unafraid to call God as his witness!

Believers in a local church like ours share that same bond of faith. What will strengthen that is real fellowship, real connectedness. Aloofness will never accomplish what Paul is describing. Further, partnership in the work of the Gospel will build that bond of fellowship between us as we labor together to spread the word and do acts of mercy. How ready are we to say that we "thank" God for each other, hold each other in our hearts, and that we have such affection for each other that we yearn for each other's company? How willing are we to call God as a witness the bent of our hearts toward one another?! It all may seem a bit over the top – but it sounds like the grace of God at work. May that kind of grace abound in our fellowship at Covenant.