

Galatians and Philippians

Letter from Prison

Interpreting the Text:

1. As is clear in so much of his writing Paul encourages the Philippians to be faithful in part because he believes that Christ will come again soon. How does Paul's urgency about this second-coming show up in this first chapter? How might this be influenced by his current imprisonment? Most of us do not live with Paul's confidence that the end of the age is coming, but are there ways in which we can still be instructed by his urgency?
2. This letter is regarded as authentically Pauline by most scholars of the New Testament. As you read Philippians, what are some patterns that you can see from Paul's other writings? How might you use Philippians as the 'baseline' when you read other epistles going forward?
3. Paul seems to be remarkably optimistic from his imprisonment. Do you imagine this is a reflection of his reality, or an attempt to console the recipients of this letter? Why might Paul have written this letter from prison in the first place?

Applying the Text:

1. Paul lists the 'fruits of the spirit' as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (5:22-23). How do you see these gifts in your own communities? Are some of these gifts more available to you than others?
2. Paul's arguments about the relationship of Faith and the Law has often affected the relationship between Christians and Jews. If you were explaining Galatians to a Jewish friend, what would you say?