

Women's Bible Study May 3, 2023

Philippians 1:15-18

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Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.

In our last lesson from Philippians, we learned that some people were emboldened to preach the gospel because of Paul's imprisonment. This was cause for rejoicing by Paul and he used the fact of these preachers to encourage the Philippians who may have been scared or discouraged because their beloved leader was in prison. He then goes on to let the Philippians know that although this is a wonderful thing, he has become aware that some of the preachers are proclaiming Christ out of impure motives. There were some that were preaching out of selfish ambition and desire to cause Paul distress.

The normal response of people (us) is to want to hurt those who hurt them and want to get back at them. At the very least we would normally (before knowing Christ) want to let everyone know what the person did to us so all our friends could sympathize with us and talk about the offender behind their back. It is wonderful to see that Paul did not dwell on those people at all. Instead, he points out that Christ is being proclaimed and he will rejoice! That response could only happen through the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul never took his eye off his goal.

Philippians 3:14

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

The verses state that the gospel was being preached by some from envy and strife. Envy in the original Greek is *phthonos* which means ill-will which comes out as jealousy or spite. Strife is *eris* which means to quarrel by contention, debate, strife, or variance.

We deal with people day in and day out. There are some who have the best motives in their dealings with us and there are some who do not. Paul was never fooled into believing that everyone had his best interests at heart. How do we deal with people who have doubtful motives? We need to look at the example of Jesus. Jesus knew the hearts and motives of every person that he encountered. He is God and even though he was 100% human he never lost his deity. How did Jesus treat people? Did he ever stop loving people even though he knew their motives? No! He never stopped loving people.

John 3:16-17

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.

God the Father and God the Son have the same goals and loves. Jesus also loved the world. The whole world. He did what only he could to save the world. Even though he knew that most of the world would reject him he still loved the world.

Romans 5:8-10

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

One major difference between Jesus and us is that we don't know people's hearts. We can be so quick to judge another's motives. Why do we think we know that a person is doing something to hurt us or is angry at us when we really have no idea? We are told not to judge others. This is not saying that we are not qualified to see sin and know that it is sin, but for us to think we know another's motives is not Biblical. We can be so wrapped up in another person's actions and motives that it takes our eyes off the goal. What is the goal? To always bring glory to God in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

How can we keep our eyes on the goal instead of on the actions of others?

Maybe Paul was more aware of the motives of the ones who were preaching out of envy and strife than we are. We don't know how God was working in that situation. But even though Paul knew what was going on it did not cause him distress. In fact, he was happy about the fact that Jesus was being proclaimed. It seems like Paul should have been praying that those people would be stopped and maybe punished but that is not the case. Paul was aware that no matter what was happening and how it might hurt him God was still in control. God allows these types of situations because of his commitment to bring to completion what he started in his children. Difficult situations cause us to learn to trust God.

The people who were doing this preaching out of envy and strife were most likely the Judaizers who seemed to be his most consistent critics. These were people who believed that it was necessary to continue to keep the Jewish law to obtain salvation. Paul stood staunchly on the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone. There had been a meeting in Jerusalem on the same subject. The conclusion was that it was not necessary to keep the law to receive salvation.

Acts 15:10-11

Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.

In verse 16 and 17 your version may have verse 17 first. The New American Standard Version has verse 16 as the ones who preach the gospel out of love. The ones who are proclaiming Christ out of selfish ambition are thinking they are causing distress to Paul. They were foiled in their hope to hurt Paul though because all Paul did was rejoice! What an awesome response to circumstances.

When you have the single mind, you look on your critics as another opportunity for the furtherance of the gospel. Like a faithful soldier, Paul was "set (appointed) for the defence of the gospel". He was able to rejoice, not in the selfishness of his

critics, but in the fact that Christ was being preached! There was no envy in Paul's heart. It mattered not that some were for him, and some were against him. All that mattered was the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ!
Warren Wiersbe, *Be Joyful*.

The only way Paul could do this kind of rejoicing was because he had his sights set so fully on his Lord. We see in verse 18 that he states that he will rejoice because Christ is proclaimed even if he is proclaimed with false motives. I am convinced that in our lives it is only possible to rejoice in difficult circumstances if we are fully focused on glorifying Christ.

Psalm 1:2-3

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does, he prospers.

Psalm 18:1-3

I love thee, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.

Psalm 19:8

The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalm 33:1

Sing for joy in the LORD, O you righteous ones; praise is becoming to the upright.

Psalm 42:1

As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants for Thee, O God.

Psalm 84:1-2

How lovely are Thy dwelling places, O LORD of hosts! My soul longed and even yearned for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

Psalm 100

Shout joyfully to the LORD, all the earth. Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful singing. Know that the LORD Himself is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His name. For the LORD is good; His lovingkindness is everlasting, and His faithfulness to all generations.

Psalm 103:1-5

Bless the LORD, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget none of His benefits; who pardons all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from the pit; who crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion; who satisfies your years with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle.

We can freely worship our Lord because we are freed from the burden of having to earn our salvation and from the burden of having to control events. We can fully trust God to only do what is good in our lives. He is all powerful. There is nothing too hard for God. We can be joyful, like little children who know their parents love them and take care of all the details of life. Children can run and laugh and scream on the playground and in the backyard because they don't have to worry about getting dinner on the table or figure out how to pay the gas and electricity bills. We have limits on what our bodies can do since we have reached adulthood, but we can be joyful like that. Our God takes care of us.

Psalm 9:10

And those who know your name will put their trust in you, for you, O LORD, have not forsaken those who seek you.

Psalm 25:2

O my God, in you I trust, do not let me be ashamed; do not let my enemies exult over me.

Psalm 33:21

For our heart rejoices in Him because we trust in his holy name.

Psalm 40:3

He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God; many will see and fear and will trust in the LORD.

Psalm 56:4

In God, whose word I praise, in God I have put my trust; I shall not be afraid. What can mere man do to me?

Psalm 139:1-6

O LORD, You have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down, and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O LORD, you know it all. You have enclosed me behind and before, and laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.

Scripture is clear that God loves us intimately even though he knows us completely. This pure and unconditional love frees us to live in a way of childlike abandon. We don't need to worry as if we are in charge of all the details. Our Father takes care of that for us. We can, like Paul, not let circumstances affect our peace and joy.

What are you allowing to take your eyes off the goal?

- Health?
- Family?
- Money?
- Circumstances?
- Friends?

“Almost Home” (pre-chorus and chorus) by Mercy Me

But don't forget what lies ahead

Almost home, brother, it won't be long
Soon all your burdens will be gone
With all your strength, sister, run wild, run free
Hold up your head, keep pressing on,
We are almost home