

Good Results From Bad Circumstances
Philippians 1:12-26
Part 4

We have begun to examine Phil. 1:12-26, which briefly outlines for us various circumstances in Paul's life. The underlying principle of this section of Scripture is that human circumstances lie in God's hands and that God will use those circumstances to advance the gospel. How do we see this demonstrated in Paul's life?

The first circumstance in Paul's life that God used to advance the gospel were his chains. We saw this in **VV. 12-14**. But this is not the only circumstance in Paul's life that God used as a tool to advance the gospel. He also used Paul's Christian opponents who were preaching Christ out of impure motives. We saw this in **VV. 15-17**. What was Paul's response to this? Let us read **V. 18**, **"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."** This response was wonderful.

But this response by Paul raises questions. Last week we asked the question, "If Paul was able to rejoice regardless of the motives, do motives even matter when we preach Christ? And we concluded, of course they matter! But now we want to go on to another question that is raised by this passage. Paul was rejoicing that Christ was being proclaimed, whether in pretense or in truth. Does this mean that we are to rejoice anytime Christ is proclaimed?

And the answer would have to be, yes! But this answer needs to be qualified. We are to rejoice anytime Christ is proclaimed correctly, or in other words, when the true gospel is proclaimed correctly. This requires us to be very familiar with the gospel. This requires us to be very discerning. And because of this I would like this weekend to begin to answer the following question:

What are the essential elements of the gospel?

There are two essential elements. First of all, the person of Christ is an essential element of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-3). Let us read **1 Cor. 15:1-3**, **"Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, (2) by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. (3) For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins."**

It was not just anybody dying for our sins, but who? Christ. This is significant. Why? Because Christ, as He is revealed in the Scripture, is the only one who in fact can atone for sins. And it is the Christ of the Scriptures we must believe in if we are going to be saved and not some corrupted, perverted Christ created by the overactive imagination of deluded men. What are the basic facts about the person of Christ revealed in the Scriptures, which as an expression of our faith, cannot be rejected?

We must, as an expression of our faith, not reject the humanity of Christ (John 1:14, 1 Tim. 3:16,

1 John 4:2). Do the Scriptures teach that Christ was human? The answer is, absolutely. Early in church history this was disputed by adherents of Gnosticism, docetism, and appollinarianism but today no one seriously questions the biblical basis for the humanity of Jesus Christ. But why did Christ have to be 100% human? Why did Christ have to be just like us? The one who would atone for our sins had to be 100% human in order to serve as an effective substitute (Rom. 5:12-15). It was Adam who got us into our mess. And it had to be someone like Adam who would get us out of our mess. Listen to **Romans 5:12-15**, **“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned - (13) for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. (14) Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. (15) But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one (the one man Adam) the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one (What?) Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.”** What do we learn about the person of Christ from the Scriptures that make Him the only one who is able to atone for sins? First of all, Christ was 100% human. And if He were not, He could not have offered Himself up on the cross as a voluntary atoning sacrificial substitute for mankind.

If we consciously reject the humanity of Christ, we are rejecting the gospel because we are failing to exercise faith in Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures (1 John 4:1-3).

If there is any doubt concerning the truthfulness of what I have just shared, all we have to do is go to **1 John 4:1-2**, **“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. (2) By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.”** Why was John encouraging his readers to apply this test to those who were representing themselves as prophets? Apparently there were those who were representing themselves as prophets who were teaching that Christ was not a real man and his humanity and suffering were imaginary.

Some Christians today might not think that is a big deal. But let me ask you this question, “was it a big deal to the Apostle John?” And the answer is, “Yes!” Look at **1 John 4:3**, **“and every spirit that does not confess Jesus (or in other words “does not confess that Jesus has come in the flesh”) is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.”** John viewed these individuals who were rejecting the humanity of Christ not as brothers in Christ but as enemies. They were enemies because they were, in John’s mind, preaching a different gospel. They were preaching a different gospel because they were preaching a different Christ. They were preaching a different Christ because they were denying His humanity.

Faith in the person of Christ is an essential element of the gospel because if Christ were not a man His death would not have opened the door to heaven through which the world could enter by faith. And this means we must not reject the humanity of Christ. And it also means that we as an expression of our faith cannot reject the deity of Christ. We cannot reject the fact that Christ is the one and only true God (John 1:1). Is Jesus Christ God? Of course! The Scriptures are clear on

this point. What does **John 1:1** tell us? **“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”** And then later in John 1:14 it tells us that the Word became flesh. But why did Christ have to be 100% divine? The one who would atone for our sins had to be 100% divine so that his offering as our substitute would be acceptable and infinitely valuable (1 Pet. 1:18-19). The sacrifice on the cross for the sins of man did not just simply have to be 100% human; it had to be 100% morally perfect. The person offered had to be without sin. God required that all the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament that men brought to atone for their sins were to be without blemish. All of these sacrifices were simply a picture of the future lamb that God would provide when He offered up His Son. But this sacrifice also had to have infinite worth, so that the death of this one sacrifice would not simply atone for the sins of one man but rather all the sins that have ever been committed for all time. The only man that could present himself in this way would have to be a God-Man. It would have to be a man who, though 100% human, would also be 100% God. God is both without sin and also has infinite worth because He is holy. He is holy ethically because He is without moral defect. And He is holy positionally because He is absolutely distinct from all His creatures, and is exalted above them in infinite majesty. Therefore not only would His offering for our sin be acceptable but it would be infinitely valuable.

Listen to **1 Pet. 1:17-19**, **“And if you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; (18) knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, (19) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.”** Was Christ’s sacrifice acceptable? Yes. Was Christ’s sacrifice infinitely valuable? Yes! Why was His sacrifice acceptable and infinitely valuable? It was acceptable because it was without blemish or spot and it was infinitely valuable because Christ, being 100% God, was perfectly holy not only ethically but also positionally.

There are two essential elements of the gospel. The first essential element is the person of Christ. What are the basic facts about the person of Christ revealed in the Scriptures which we must not reject? We must, as an expression of our faith, not reject that Christ is 100% human. And we must also, as an expression of our faith, not reject the fact that Christ is 100% divine (John 1:1). If we reject these facts, we are not placing our faith in Christ as He is revealed in the Scriptures and if we do not place our faith in Christ as He is revealed, we are rejecting Christ. If we reject Christ, we are rejecting the gospel, because the person of Christ is an essential element of the gospel.

Do we have to rejoice anytime Christ is proclaimed? The answer is “yes,” if Christ is proclaimed correctly. And the answer is “no,” if Christ is proclaimed incorrectly. Let us consider a few religious groups or religious movements who are not preaching Christ correctly and have therefore corrupted the true gospel.

Jehovah Witnesses teach that Jesus is a mere angel. The first being Jehovah-God created in the universe. The Watchtower magazine in May 15, 1969 said, “There is scriptural evidence for concluding that Michael was the name of Jesus Christ before he left heaven and after his return.”

According to the December 15, 1984 Watchtower, “Michael the great prince is none other than Jesus Christ Himself.” Do the Jehovah Witnesses believe in Christ? Yes. But they do not believe in the Christ of the Bible. The Jehovah Witnesses have rejected the fact that Christ is 100% divine, the one and only true God (“Watchtower” May 15, 1969; “Watchtower” December 15, 1984) and therefore we have no cause for rejoicing when they proclaim their so-called Christ because their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible. Now let us consider the Mormons and consider the Christ that they are proclaiming.

According to official Mormon teaching, Jesus Christ was “begotten” as the first spirit-child of the Father (ELOHIM) and one of his unnamed wives (often referred to as “Heavenly Mother”). Jesus, as a spirit-son, then progressed in the spirit world until He became a god. Christ, by obedience and devotion to the truth attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked Him as a god. This information came from a book by Bruce McConkie entitled “Mormon Doctrine.” Mormon doctrine also teaches that the Heavenly Father (ELOHIM) had many spirit children. But Jesus was allegedly the first and highest of their spirit children. The church’s official Gospel Principles manual tells us, “The first spirit born to our heavenly parents was Jesus Christ.” The Doctrine and Covenants of the Mormon Church affirms that “Christ the Firstborn, was the mightiest of all the spirit children of the Father,” James Talmage adds that “among the spirit-children of ELOHIM, the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors.” Mormons commonly refer to Jesus as “our elder brother.”

Of course, this ultimately means that Jesus Christ is not unique. The only difference between Jesus and us is that Jesus was the firstborn of Elohim’s children, whereas we, in our alleged pre-existence, were “born” later. It appears then that the important distinction between Jesus (Jehovah) and God’s other premortal offspring is merely one of degree, not of kind.

Mormons have rejected the fact that Christ is the one and only true God (“Doctrine and Covenants”). Therefore we have no cause for rejoicing when they proclaim Christ because their Christ is not the Christ of the Bible. They are preaching another gospel. Are there any other groups or movements that might be guilty of the same thing? I am sure there are, but there is one particular religious movement that I would like us to draw our attention toward and that is what is commonly called “the faith movement” or the “health, wealth, and prosperity movement.”

This movement is not monolithic in the sense that there is a single organizational structure with a recognized leadership and a published doctrinal statement, but I do believe that their teachings concerning Christ are particularly dangerous. They are dangerous because though they will mouth the words that Christ is 100% divine, the one and only true God, they will at the same time make statements that are totally contradictory. Let me give you a list of a few men who are a part of this movement and some of the things that they have said and see why I and others are very concerned about the so-called gospel that they are preaching. These quotes have been collected by a man named Hank Hanegraaff, President of the Christian Research Institute. He reports that Kenneth Copeland has said, “Satan conquered Jesus on the cross.” Morris Cerullo has said, “You’re not looking at Morris Cerullo - you’re looking at God. You’re looking at Jesus.” Benny Hinn has said, “Never, ever, ever go to the Lord and say, ‘“If it be thy will.’ Don’t allow such faith-destroying words to be spoken from your mouth.” Fred Price has said, “God has

to be given permission to work in this earth realm on behalf of man. Yes! You are in control! So, if man has control, who no longer has it? God.” Kenneth E. Hagin said, “Man was created on terms of equality with God, and he could stand in God’s presence without any consciousness of inferiority.”

Many leaders within the “faith movement” will acknowledge Christ to be God, but what they mean by God and what the Scriptures mean by God are two totally different things. Yes, they may give lip-service to the fact that Christ is 100% divine, but they will at the same time deny the God of the Scriptures as they present Christ as their errand boy who is obligated to respond to their beck and call. This is not the God of the Scriptures. If any of you are listening to any of these men or men that are given to similar messages, you should immediately stop listening to them.

Many leaders in the faith movement say that Christ is 100% divine, the one and only true God, but their teachings rob Him of His position as the sovereign ruler of the universe and render him simply a slave. They have in their teachings redefined the God of the Scriptures and rendered their profession of faith in the deity of Christ meaningless. When we come to Jesus for salvation, we must not think that He will be kneeling in humble submission to our will, rather we will be kneeling in humble submission to His will. What did Jesus say to those who wanted to be His disciples? If any man desires health, wealth, and prosperity, come to me and I am obligated to give you whatever you want. You are in control. No, what did he say, “If any man desires to come after me let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.”

CONCLUSION

We are to rejoice anytime Christ is proclaimed correctly. For the gospel to be proclaimed correctly, it involves a correct understanding of the person of Christ. Never should a gospel presentation in any way deny or undermine the biblical truth that Christ is 100% human and 100% divine. If it does then we have no reason to rejoice when that so-called gospel is preached.