

Philippians Chapter 1 Continued

Verses 15-17

Contention here means “selfish ambition”.

Some of those sharing the gospel were doing so with the proper motive, but other believers were preaching for the wrong reasons.

The right motivation is “love”.

Love for God, for Paul and love for unbelievers.

Improper motives are “envy, strife” (verse 15), and selfish ambition.

Some egotistical Christians were jealous of the apostle and rejoice over his imprisonment, for it gave them opportunity to be in the limelight.

“Supposing to add affliction to my bonds”:

They hoped that when Paul learned of their being the center of attention, his chains would become particularly galling to him.

Philippians 1:15 "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:"

We find the very same thing that we have in our society today.

Many, who profess to know Christ, bring a different message than the others who profess to know Christ.

As long as what they are preaching is doctrinally sound, we should not worry about this.

Jesus said, those that are not against us are for us.

I would rather teach that God loves you and get you to heaven, than to preach threatening you out of hell.

This is just personal preference.

The attitude of Paul’s detractors, who really did preach the gospel, was jealous of his apostolic power, authority, success and immense giftedness.

“Strife”:

This connotes contention, rivalry and conflict, which resulted when Paul's critics began discrediting him.

On the other hand, there are teachings now which border on blasphemy such as teaching that Jesus suffered in hell for our sin.

This is a blatant untruth and takes away from the victory of Jesus on the cross.

This is something we cannot tolerate.

I believe this is what Paul is speaking of here.

Paul is saying, be sure the doctrine they are bringing is of God.

"Good will":

This speaks of satisfaction and contentment, the attitude that Paul's supporters had for him personally and for his ministry.

Philippians 1:16 "The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:"

"Contention":

This "contention", means selfish ambition.

It seems that these were Judaizers who were causing problems in the church.

They did not agree with the good news of the gospel that Paul had brought.

These were those who were interested only in self advancement, or who ruthlessly sought to get ahead at any cost.

Paul's detractors used his incarceration as an opportunity to promote their own prestige by accusing Paul of being so sinful that Lord had chastened him by imprisonment.

In the process of causing problems in the church, they are causing Paul extra problems.

Philippians 1:17 "But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel."

Paul's supporters were motivated by genuine affection for him and confidence in his virtue.

"Set":

The meaning here is “appointed”, which is a Greek word that describes a soldier’s being placed on duty.

Paul was in prison because he was destined to be there by God’s will, so as to be in a strategic position to proclaim the gospel.

Paul will defend the gospel, even at the cost of his own life.

Paul is teaching the love of God.

The gospel is good news, not bad news.

It seems so many of these other teachers were trying to put them back under the law.

They really had not shed many of their customs and practices that they had before they came to Jesus Christ.

They were still trying to work their way to heaven, by keeping laws and ordinances.

This was in terrible error, because Jesus either was the perfect sacrifice for all things for all time, or He was not.

You could not accept Him as the fulfillment of all the sacrifices and still sacrifice.

That would be a contradiction.

Philippians 1:18 "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

Paul’s joy was not tied to his circumstances or his critics.

He was glad when the gospel was proclaimed with authority, no matter who received credit.

He endured the unjust accusations without bitterness at his accusers.

Rather, he rejoiced that they preached Christ, even in a pretense of godliness.

Whatever the case was, Jesus is being preached and many are believing.

This could not be all bad.

1 Corinthians 1:21: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

God can turn something bad into something really good.

They are still meeting in church, and they are still speaking of Jesus.

These two things together cause many to be saved.

There is power in the name of Jesus.

Philippians 1:19 "For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,"

Praying for them will bring the truth.

This is not speaking of Paul being saved later (in my opinion).

It is saying, if they are introduced to Christ Jesus and they pray, the Lord will straighten them out as to the truth.

Here salvation is “deliverance”, which is from the basic Greek term for salvation.

But it can also be rendered “well being” or “escape”, which presents four possible interpretations:

1. It refers to Paul’s ultimate salvation;
2. It alludes to his deliverance from threatened execution;
3. He would finally be vindicated by the emperor’s ruling; or
4. Paul is talking about his eventual release from prison.

Whatever Paul’s precise meaning, he was certain he would be freed from his temporary distress.

Paul had supreme confidence in the Spirit.

Those who receive the Holy Spirit will be taught of the Spirit, and that will bring them to absolute truth.

Philippians 1:20 "According to my earnest expectation and [my] hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but [that] with all boldness, as always, [so] now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether [it be] by life, or by death."

“Earnest expectation”:

This Greek word indicates keen anticipation of the future, as when someone stretches his neck to see what lies ahead.

Paul was very confident and excited about Christ’s promise.

Paul not only hopes, but expects them to come to the full knowledge of Christ.

Paul was bold in proclaiming Christ, and it did not matter to him whether he was alive or dead, the message would go forth.

As in many cases, it would probably be more accepted after his death.

Paul would be bold in speaking of Christ, no matter what his circumstances were.

Philippians 1:21 "For to me to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain."

Paul's life was a proclamation for Christ, and his death was a proclamation, as well.

The following Scriptures say it better than I can.

Romans 8:35-39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [shall] tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" "As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter." "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come," "Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Paul speaks of two desirable possibilities, living and dying.

Living is attractive, since it affords possibilities to increase fruit or spiritual gain in all of his apostolic labors.

But because dying is "gain," he is unsure of which of the two he prefers.

Paul's life would glorify the Lord.

His death would glorify Him even more.

Philippians 1:22 " But if I live in the flesh, this [is] the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not."

The word flesh here does not refer to one's fallen humanness but simply to physical life.

Paul knew that the only reason to remain in this world was to bring souls to Christ and build up believers to do the same.

Paul's greatest desire was to be with the Lord in heaven, but he would not be able to bear fruit when he is in heaven.

To bear fruit for Jesus, he would have to endure the hardship in the flesh.

We can read this verse thus: "But should I continue living in the flesh, this will result in fruit (again profit), from my labor; yet which (of the two), I will prefer, I know not."

Philippians 1:23 "For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:"

As in a tug of war, Paul is torn between the two desirable possibilities of living and dying.

"To depart" is a euphemism for dying.

To be with Christ signifies to be forever with Christ.

Of the two options, dying is far better.

Strait meaning hard pressed picturing a traveler on a narrow path, a rock wall on either side allowing him to go only straight ahead.

Paul knew if he died he would have complete, conscious, intimate, unhindered fellowship with his Lord.

As we said, Paul's greatest desire was to be with Jesus in heaven.

The desire of every true Christian is for the Lord Jesus to hurry His coming back for us.

The rewards for Christians are in heaven, not on this earth.

Philippians 1:24 "Nevertheless to abide in the flesh [is] more needful for you."

Paul was needed to teach others of the love of God on this earth.

Even those, who had already received Jesus as their Savior, needed Paul to continue to teach them, so that they would grow into mature Christians.

In this verse the writer turns from his own wishes to his responsibility, from what he wants to do to what he must do.

While he personally yearns to be with the Lord, Paul senses it would be to the advantage of the Philippians for him to remain on earth awhile longer in order to minister to them.

Paul has therefore yielded his personal desire to be with his Lord for the necessity of the building of the church.

Philippians 1:25 "And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;"

The delay of Paul going to heaven and the delay of the return of the Lord is not because God is slack, but because He wants everyone saved, who will be saved.

2 Peter 3:9 "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The furtherance or progress pictures trail blazing so that an army can advance.

Paul wanted to cut a new path for the Philippians to follow to victory; the increasing of their faith would result in the increasing of their joy.

Paul is willing to stay and continue to teach these who he started with.

It is for their benefit he is staying and not for his own benefit.

Philippians 1:26 "That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."

"Abundant In Jesus Christ":

This means confident.

The Greek word order is as follows; "that your confidence of joy may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me."

The point is, as Paul lived on fruitfully, their joy and confidence would overflow because of Christ's working in him, not because of anything he himself did by his own ability.

This could be translated, "That your confidence in Christ may continue to abound because of me, by my coming again to you."

Paul's future ministry to the Philippians should increase their confidence in the Lord.

This may be speaking of Paul coming to them in this letter, rather than in person.

Their rejoicing should be in Jesus and not in Paul.

Philippians 1:27 "Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;"

This is like a loving parent instructing their children on how they are to act.

Paul is reminding them to let everything that comes from their mouth bring glory to the Christ within them.

Believers are to have integrity, i.e., to live consistent with what they believe, teach and preach.

The church was to look and act as though she possessed but “one mind” and then also one way of thinking.

Now to achieve this, the assembly must put away all of their many petty grievances, jealousies and disunity.

The manner in which the Philippians are to stand fast in one spirit is by their striving together for the faith.

That is, by their standing up for the Christian faith.

Like Paul, they too are to expend their lives for the good of the gospel.

But proper conduct which is on their part and unity in the church are essential if they are to benefit the gospel.

“One spirit with one mind”:

This introduces Paul’s theme of unity that continues through (2:4).

His call for genuine unity of heart and mind is based on;

- (1) The necessity of oneness to win the spiritual battle for the faith;
- (2) The love of others in the fellowship;
- (3) Genuine humility and self sacrifice; and
- (4) The example of Jesus Christ who proved that sacrifice produces eternal glory.

Paul also tells them, even though he is not with them in person, to follow his teachings and live in the Spirit.

This would make him proud to have been the one who led them to the Lord.

Paul would like to hear that they are guided by the Spirit of God.

He would also, like to hear that their mind is stayed on Christ.

Fellowship, one of the keys to spiritual growth, occurs when Christians share their walk with God in an atmosphere of love and respect.

Fellowship occurs when everyone communicates in love with other believers, and the whole assembly becomes strengthened as a result.

Sometimes fellowship requires confessing our faults (James 5:16), as we strive to develop a unity of spirit and mind.

Those who work to hinder the fellowship of the brethren practice a sin that is hated by God (Proverbs 6:19).

Philippians 1:28 "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God."

Paul is telling them to not be overwhelmed with fear of those who are against them.

The enemy will say that they are not even following God, although they will still be strong in their salvation.

Notice in the following Scriptures, that only the true Christian understands.

1 Corinthians 1:23-25 "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;" "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

When believers willingly suffer without being terrified, it is a sign that God's enemies will be destroyed and eternally lost.

One of the ways in which the readers' proper conduct benefits the gospel in (verse 27), is mentioned here: not being terrified by their adversaries.

The lack of intimidation is a twofold sign:

- (1) To unbelievers it is evidence of their lost condition;
- (2) To believers it is an assurance of their salvation.

Philippians 1:29 "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;"

The very highest calling for a man is that of suffering for Christ.

How much do you believe?

Do you believe enough that you would be willing to give your life for that belief?

Salvation is a gift of God to man.

The willingness to suffer for this salvation is also, a gift from God to man.

2 Timothy 2:12 "If we suffer, we shall also reign with [him]: if we deny [him], he also will deny us:"

Here the work "given" meaning granted ... to suffer.

The Greek verb translated "granted" is from the noun for grace.

Believers' suffering is a gift of grace which brings power and eternal reward. (1 Peter 4:13).

"For" reinforces the assertion that the proof of the believers' salvation, provided through their courage in persecution, comes from God.

This justification lies in the fact of the Philippians' being divinely granted the dual privilege of believing in Christ and suffering for Him.

Thus, the assurance of their salvation is from God, just as is their suffering for Jesus.

For the latter was the occasion providing the former.

Philippians 1:30 "Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear [to be] in me."

Paul set a good example for those who would follow him.

Paul is saying here, you know how I suffered for the furtherance of the gospel.

Paul is not saying this to get sympathy from them, but that they might look to his problems and know that they too, can live through the persecutions.

"The same conflict":

He says, you are experiencing the problems I had.

Some of the recipients' persecution was of the same nature as they witnessed in Paul when he was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi 10 years earlier, and similar to what they now hear him to be currently experiencing in Rome.

"Ye saw":

This refers to what the Philippians witnessed when Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi (Acts 16:19-40).

They had seen the way he had been persecuted when he was with them, and now they hear that he is in chains in Rome.

Philippians Chapter 1 Continued Questions

1. What was the difference in the way Christ was being preached?
2. What are two messages that are both doctrinally sound that are opposites in manner?
3. What is an example of a doctrine that must be stopped?
4. What was adding to the afflictions of Paul?
5. What does the word "contention" in verse 16, mean?
6. Paul will defend the gospel, even at the _____ of _____ _____.
7. What was the problem with the message the Judaizers were bringing?
8. In verse 18, Paul is pleased about what?
9. What will bring the truth?
10. Believers in Christ are taught by whom?
11. Paul not only hopes, but _____ them to come to the full knowledge of Christ.
12. What was Paul's greatest desire?
13. What would Paul have to do to bear fruit for Jesus?
14. Where are the rewards for Christians?
15. What was Paul needed on the earth for?
16. What should their conversation be as?
17. Who is Paul like in verse 27?
18. What is a token of perdition?
19. How much do you believe?
20. What did Paul suffer for?