

Series: Divine Joy

C.R. 1-7-18

“ A Man With a Single Passion”

Text: Philippians 1: 14-18

Intro: Is it hard for you to believe that not everyone who works in the church, and not everyone who serves the body of Christ does it out of the right heart or with the right motive. Our text today makes it clear that this is an age old problem. From the very beginning of the church there has been jealousy, and questionable motives. Thankfully there were also a group of believers who had the right heart and the right motives, and they wanted to be a help to Paul not a hurt. It is easy to see how Paul could be so powerfully used by God when you study a text like this.

1) Paul's Acute Awareness (v.15-16)

- a. Paul was an extremely wise individual and he was well aware of what was going on, on the outside.
- b. Note the word envy and strife. **Strife means “factious rivalry”**. Of course, envy is jealousy.
- c. The Greek historian Xenophon said, “The envious are those annoyed only at their friends’ successes.”
- d. Paul had come to Rome with a long list of ministerial successes to his credit. He had been used greatly of God.
- e. When he arrived at Rome and news spread of it believe it or not there were some who saw him as a rival, not a partner.
- f. Question: Is this going on today? Envy, Rivalry.
- g. *John Phillips “ It is astonishing how quick we are to run down someone else’s work, especially if it seem to be a little bigger or better than our own. Some people almost choke on any word of praise for another’s ministry – especially if it is being carried on in a different denomination or organization.
- h. Illustration: * John Claypool said in his 1979 Lecture on Preaching “ I can still recall going to state and national convention in our denomination and coming home feeling drained and unclean, because most of the conversation in the hotel rooms and the halls was characterized either by envy of those who were doing well or scarcely concealed delight for those who were doing poorly. For did that not mean that someone was about to fall, and thus create an opening higher up the ladder.
- i. Paul also notes the difference in the two groups as well. Some “not sincerely” carries the idea of a precious metal mixed with a base alloy—these preachers were mixing the pure gold of the of the gospel with the alloy of their jealousy.
- j. The **word “affliction”** alludes to the painful friction of a prisoner’s chains against his ankles and wrists. These preachers were hoping to irritate Paul.

- k. It carried the meaning of stirring up some inward annoyance, some trouble of spirit.
- l. They hoped to rub salt in the wounds of Paul.
- m. Paul also knew that there was a group out there proclaiming the gospel for the soul purpose of helping others
- n. He was aware that their motivation was of love and of the advancement of the Gospel.

2) Paul's Astonishing Attitude (v. 18) **Read the passage from the Message Bible**

- a. Paul had every reason to be down. This type A man was confined to chains.
- b. He had all the gifts and tools, and he understood there were some out there who used their freedom as a means to hurt him.
- c. No doubt he was hurt, and it did make his imprisonment worse, but he chose a different route.
- d. The contentious crowd were not preaching a false gospel or Paul for sure would have addressed that. They were preaching Christ even if their motives were wrong.
- e. *Spurgeon: It is much to be desired that all who preach Christ should preach in a right spirit; but even if they do not let us be glad that Christ is preached anyhow, even though it is only a portion of the gospel that is proclaimed, and there is much mixed with it from which we greatly differ, yet, if Christ is preached, his gospel will win its own way, and work out his great purposes of love and mercy.
- f. God will bless his word as he pleases. He is still sovereign, and the Holy Spirit is still Lord of the Harvest.
- g. We would never have used Balaam, or Jonah after his disobedience, or David after his adultery and murder but God did.
- h. Our attitude affects everything. Paul said I rejoice that at least the Gospel is being preached.

3) Paul's Absolute Aspiration

- a. Paul said he rejoiced because Christ was preached.
- b. He was a man with a single passion: it was the gospel that mattered. He focused his attention on the preaching, not on the preachers.
- c. Question: Is the gospel first and foremost in our lives and in our church? The answer will determine our future. ***We need to do an evaluation of our own kingdom.***
- d. *When the gospel is no longer the main thing, when it becomes assumed, the next generation may be lost.
- e. Yes there are many issues that cry for our attention these days and we need to be alert and involved, but they must not become the main thing.
- f. Paul rejoiced in that Christ was preached.
- g. Don Carson writes: " Paul's example is impressive and clear: Put the advance of the gospel at the center of your aspirations. Our own comfort, our bruised feelings, our reputations, our misunderstood motives—all of these are insignificant in comparison with the advance and splendor of the gospel. As Christians, we are called upon to put the advance of the gospel at the very center of our aspirations.

The Message Philippians 1: 15-18

15 It's true that some here preach Christ because with me out of the way, they think they'll step right into the spotlight. But the others do it with the best heart in the world.

16 One group is motivated by pure love, knowing that I am here defending the Message, wanting to help.

17 The others, now that I'm out of the picture, are merely greedy, hoping to get something out of it for themselves. Their motives are [bad](#). They see me as their competition, and so the worse it goes for me, the better - they think - for them.

18 So how am I to respond? I've decided that I really don't care about their motives, whether mixed, bad, or indifferent. Every time one of them opens his mouth, Christ is proclaimed, so I just cheer them on!