

MOTIVES AND MESSAGES Sunday School- January 6, 2013

Unifying Topic: PROCLAIMING CHRIST

Lesson Text

I. Christ Preached (Philippians 1:15-19)

II. To Live Is Christ (Philippians 1:20-26)

The Main Thought: What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Philippians 1:18, KJV).

Unifying Principle: In a media-driven world, we hear many messages without fully knowing what motivates the "messenger." In what ways does the messenger's motive affect the message? Paul claimed that regardless of the person's intentions, the result was still that "*Christ is proclaimed in every way.*"

Lesson Aim: To introduce students to the centrality of Christ in Paul's thought and to show how important it was to him that the Gospel of Christ be preached.

Life aim: To help students realize, in the words of St. Ambrose, "*Where Christ is, there is life, there is the kingdom.*"

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

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

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

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

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

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.

1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

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

1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

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

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

HISTORY:

Paul and his companions founded the church at Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40). This was the first church established on the European continent. Paul was in a Roman prison at the time he writes this letter to thank the Philippians for their gift and to encourage them in their faith.

1:1-2 Salutation

Paul begins his epistle in a most unusual greeting to the church. Paul mentions Timothy in his greeting, as they are servants of Jesus Christ. He does not refer to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The letter is written to all believers in Christ at Philippi. It seems that they had set up an order in the church of bishops and deacons at this time. However, it's followed with the customary expression of grace and peace.

1:3-11 Thanksgiving and Prayer

It is followed by thanksgiving and prayer. He was not in their presence, just the memory of their time together. And there sitting in prison, he remembers their love, their care, and their support. The church at Philippi had been a source of great joy to Paul by virtue of their fellowship with him in the proclamation of the gospel and being confident that God will complete the work He began in them. Paul prays that their spiritual growth will continue. His prayer for them was that their love abound in knowledge and all discernment; that they approve the things that are excellent; that they be sincere and without offense till Christ returns; and that they be filled with the fruit of righteousness which was made possible by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God.

1:12-14 The Situation in Rome

Paul's circumstances at Rome have actually been for the furtherance of the gospel. Imprisonment has actually created opportunities to spread the gospel. He wanted the Philippians to know this. Even opposition has provided an opportunity for Christ to be preached; for even among the palace guards it is evident his chains are in Christ. Paul turned his prison cell into a gospel chapel. His example has emboldened others to speak without fear. The lesson for us is this: we must never let circumstances get us down— •persecution •accident •loss of loved one •imprisonment •age •rejection •divorce—never let them defeat our testimony and witness for Christ, no matter what they are.

LESSON:

<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sunday-school.html>

Philippians 1:15-19 Christ Is Preached

1:15 *"Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife..."* There were preachers who were true followers of Christ. They were not the Judaizers, the false preachers who sometimes followed and opposed Paul. These were genuine preachers who were ministers in and around the metropolis of Rome. Instead of supporting him, they were speaking out against him, hoping to silence his influence and to get rid of him. Sadly, anything we do religiously can be perverted from God-service to self-service. Envy and strife were low motives for preaching the gospel. On account of their jealousy of Paul, they sought to undermine his influence. "*Strife*" means rivalry, contention, wrangling. These men were motivated by these things. They had the right message, but the wrong motive.

1:15b *"...and some also of good will."* Well, there were those brethren who found pleasure and satisfaction in Paul's work. Therefore, they had the right message and the right motive.

1:16 *"The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds."* The word "*contention*" (*Gr erithria*) means self-seeking, the desire to put one's self forward, selfish ambition, a partisan and factious spirit. Their motives were of rivalry and ambition. Their purpose was to stir up vexation for Paul and to exaggerate his sufferings. Their purpose was to triumph over Paul, not to triumph over pagans. They were concerned about promoting a sect, not saving souls.

1:17 *"But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel."* However, not all preachers throughout Rome opposed Paul. Some were preaching out of love, and they were encouraging their members to show their love for Paul by visiting and supporting him in his ministry of proclaiming Christ. The word set (*Gr keimai*) means appointed, placed, destined. We see in these last two verses two types of preachers.

1. **They differ in their hearts:** in one contention rules, and in the other love reigns.
2. **They differ in spirit:** in one there is envy and strife, in the other good will.
3. **They differ in the source of their strength:** in one there is merely the love of party, in the other there is confidence in the Lord.
4. **They differ in their aim:** in one the aim is to advance a branch of the church; in the other the aim is to advance the cause of Christ.
5. **They differ in conviction:** one aims to add afflictions to Paul; the other know that Paul is set for the defense of the gospel.

1:18 *"What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."* "*Pretense*" means an excuse, a pretext, that which is put forward to hide the true state of things. It has the idea of an ulterior motive. Even if motives or ministry are not what they should be, someone may still find out the message of Christ through that ministry, and come to Him. It is not the preacher who saves us, but Christ. So also today, though we may have doubts about a certain ministry, we can be glad that the name of Christ is being heard. Paul rose above petty jealousy and animosity. The important thing is that Christ is preached! He would do what he could to encourage right motives and valid ministry, but his greatest joy was for people to hear of Christ and be saved. Does the work have to be credited to us or does it have to totally meet our approval before we can take joy in it? Paul lived for Christ and the gospel. In the shadow of the cross Jesus talked about joy (Jh.15:11). Paul rejoiced because Christ was being openly proclaimed; not because of the wrong motive of some, but in spite of the wrong motives. He possessed the assurance of a happy ending—and that is, salvation.

1:19 *"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ..."* Paul is sure God will save and deliver him from their criticism and opposition. He is sure of God's help and deliverance because of two things:

1. First, there was the prayer of those who supported him—both those in Rome and those around the world who were praying for him daily. Paul knew how the Philippians loved him and that he could depend on their intercession of prayer for him. Paul believed prayer made a difference.
2. Second, the supply of the Holy Spirit would empower him to be delivered. There is no way the Roman officers could take the indwelling Holy Spirit from Paul. God's Spirit empowers us to do what we could not do in our own strength. Therefore, Paul knew the reasons and he knew he would be delivered.
 - a. The Holy Spirit was given to be our compassion (Jh.14:16)
 - b. The Holy Spirit was given to counsel us (Jh.14:26)
 - c. The Holy Spirit was given to give courage for witnessing no matter the circumstances (Jh.15:26-27)
 - d. The Holy Spirit was given to put conviction in our lives and ministry (Jh.16:7-8)
 - e. The Holy Spirit was given to share the deep things of God with us (1Corth.2:9-10)
 - f. The Holy Spirit was given to pray and intercede for us and to help us pray (Rom.8:26)

- g. The Holy Spirit was given to bear his fruit in us (Gal.5:22-23)
- h. The Holy Spirit was given to fill us and put a song of joy in our hearts despite circumstances (Eph.5:18-19)
- i. The Holy Spirit was given to give assurance that we are children and heirs of God (Rom.8:16-17)

Talking about obstacles! He was in prison facing a capital crime with his deliverance looking almost hopeless and death was staring him in the face. Paul believed God is so great that he can overrule any circumstances, however painful, to bring about good. If Paul had to go to be executed, he knew the Spirit would enable him to die in the same Spirit in which Jesus accepted the cross. If Paul was to suffer longer in prison and then be released, Paul knew the Spirit would sustain him and give him what he needed to say at his hearing.

Philippians 1:20-26 To Live Is Christ

1:20a *"According to my earnest expectation and my hope ..."* If a man has ever lived a life of commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ, it was Paul. He is confident that no matter what happens, Christ will be magnified. Note the word *"earnest expectation"* (*apokaradokian*). It means to gaze into the distance with the head erect and outstretched just like a watchman on a tower. Paul did not dread his hearing and possible sentence, as most of us would have. He had been told from the time of this conversion that he would suffer for Christ and testify before Gentile rulers (Acts 9:15, 16).

1:20b There will some believers who will suffer loss and there will be some believers who will be ashamed. This is what Paul meant: *"... that in nothing he did not want to be ashamed..."* when it was his time to stand before Christ. He loved Christ with all his heart, for Christ had done so much for him.

1:20c *"...but that with all boldness, as always ..."* - *"Boldness"* means freedom in speaking, fearless, confidence, cheerful courage, and assurance. The absence of fear in speaking boldly was Paul's privilege as a slave of Jesus Christ. Paul's whole purpose in life was to speak out boldly about Christ and to become more like him.

Therefore, his one expectation and hope was for **1:20d** *"...Christ to be magnified in his body, whether it be by life, or by death."* He wanted Christ to be honored both in his life and in his death. If you're not ready to die, then you're not ready to live. Once you know your eternal purpose, then you're free to serve—develop your life to what really counts without fear of dying.

1:21a What exalts Christ, makes us happy!

1. First, *"For to me to live is Christ"* What did he mean by this? He meant at least five things.
 - a. He presented his body as a living sacrifice to Jesus Christ.
 - b. He struggled to yield the parts of his body—every member of his body—to Christ as a tool for righteousness.
 - c. He struggled to control his mind—to control every thought and to focus every thought upon Jesus Christ and the great virtues of life.
 - d. He committed himself to work for love and justice within all of society.
 - e. He gave his life—every moment of it—to reach and minister to as many people as possible during his journey upon earth.
2. This brings us to the second point of Paul. He declares that **1:21b** *"...and to die is gain."* He knew that everything on earth was aging and passing away including man himself. Therefore, Paul reached out for a Savior, a Person who could save him and give him an eternal world that would never age or pass away.

The natural mind wonders and questions how a person in his right mind could ever want to go ahead and die. The reason is simply answered: the genuine believer does not die; he never tastes death. He is transferred into the presence of Christ. Immediately—quicker than the blinking of an eye—the believer is transported into the perfect world of God which is, heaven. The believer is perfected—never again to experience pain, suffering, sin, corruption, infirmity, weakness, deformity, disappointment, fear, loss, or death. The promises of God to the believer are phenomenal; they just explode the human mind. It is for this reason that the believer can declare: *"to die is gain."*

¹If for me to live is Christ, then to die is gain, but...

- If for me to live is money, then to die is to leave it all behind
- If for me to live is fame, then to die is to be forgotten
- If for me to live is pleasure, then to die is to miss all the fun
- If for me to live is ambition, then to die is to become insignificant
- If for me to live is possessions, then to die is to have them all rust and fade away

Alexander MacLaren describes how death can be a gain.

1. We lose everything we don't need – the world, the flesh, and the devil. We lose our trials, troubles, tears and fears.
2. We keep everything that matters – our personality, our identity, and our fruit.

¹ http://www.pontiacbible.org/index.php?/sermons/more/you_win_either_way/
<http://www.pitwm.net//pitwm-sunday-school.html>

3. We gain what we never had before – heaven, rewards, the presence of God, fellowship with other believers.

1:22 *"But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not."* Paul speaks of life in the flesh, his physical body to be the fruit of his labor—souls being saved and lives being changed. 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. The word "wot" or "know" (*Gr gnōrizō*) has two distinctive meanings: transitive, to make known; intransitive, to know, to become acquainted with, and to discover. Paul was in a dilemma concerning which to choose between (life) and (death).

1:23a *"For I am in a strait betwixt two..."*²The word rendered *"I am in a strait"* - means to be pressed on or constrained, as in a crowd; to feel oneself pressed or pent up so as not to know what to do; and it here means that he was in perplexity and doubt, and did not know what to choose.. Paul was hard-pressed. He was hemmed in on both sides.

1:23b There is *"...a desire to depart and be with Christ"* and there is a necessity to abide, a very strong reason for either choice. He is being pulled in both directions. The word "depart" (*anulusai*) has a twofold meaning that speaks to the believer's heart. Paul says that he is caught between two great desires.

- One "desire is to depart" and go on to be with Christ which is far better.
- The other "desire is to live a life of fruitful service" for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Greek word translated "desire" (*epithumia*) is most often used of a sinful lust. But occasionally it expresses a strong unfulfilled desire for something right and good.

1:23c *"Which is far better";* Labor for Christ is sweet, but rest with Christ will be sweeter. Whitfield said, *"I am often weary in the work, but never weary of it."* Paul was ready to go and willing to wait. Life has its attractions; death has its advantages. Paul desires to live and labor, but preferring Christ's purpose.

1:24 *"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."* Paul yielded his personal desire to be with the Lord for the necessity for the building of the church. Paul was an unselfish man.

1:25 *"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."* Paul was convinced that he would "remain" (*meno*) and "continue or come alongside" (*parameno*) --a play on words. He would remain for the purpose of aiding the Philippians' spiritual "progress and joy in the faith." Their faith in Christ would increase, thus leading to an increase in their joy.

1:26 *"That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."* The word "rejoicing" (*Gr kauchēma*) is exultation, that of which one glories or can glory; a matter or ground of glorying; reason for boasting. The word does not mean the act of glorying. The point is this: as Paul lived on fruitfully, their joy and confidence would overflow because of Christ working in him, not because of anything he himself did of his own ability.

SUMMARY:

There were those that preached Christ out of envy and strife, but some found pleasure and satisfaction in Paul's work. Paul had an abasing selfless attitude. He knew that some were preaching to build their own reputations, but he was glad the gospel was being preached, regardless of the motives of these preachers. Many Christians serve for the wrong reasons. God doesn't excuse their motives, but, like Paul, we should be glad if God uses their message, regardless of their motives. Paul continued to rejoice because he knew that the prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit were going to be for his good (1:15-19).

Paul didn't want to ever do anything that would cause him to be ashamed, but he would speak boldly for Christ even in the trial he was going through; for Christ was going to be magnified in life or in his death. It would both be to his gain. Paul's main purpose in living was to glorify Christ and yet he knew that if he was martyred he would also glorify Him through his testimony. His personal desire was to depart and be with the Lord. This he knew would be better for him as it would mean his release from persecutions and other hardships he suffered. However he knew that the Philippians needed him and the Lord had more work for him to do. Paul had confidence that he would remain and continue to work for the progress and joy of the Philippians faith. He wanted to cause their rejoicing to be more abundant in Christ by his coming to them again (1:20-26).

APPLICATION:

The Gospel will get out and reach whomever God intends it for. As you, the messenger speaks, God directs His Word to the appropriate one. Whatever motive there is, God's message still touches and will be understood by the hearer.

² <http://bible.cc/philippians/1-23.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-sunday-school.html>