

## PAUL'S REPORT FROM PRISON, PT. 3; PHIL. 1:15-18a (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

WE ARE CURRENTLY MAKING OUR WAY THROUGH THE SECOND MAJOR SECTION OF Philippians, ~ 1:12-26, ~ which contains Paul's report from prison.

▶▶ As we noted, ~ Paul knew the Philippians were concerned for his welfare since he was their founding apostle, ~ so he provides them with a detailed update on his situation.

▶▶ This a.m., ~ we will study **verses 15-18a**. ~ ~ For context read from verse 14 . . . .

▶▶ As we begin, ~ let's do a fly over to get the big picture.

▷▷ In **verses 15-17**, ~ Paul introduces and describes two groups of people who were proclaiming the gospel but with contrasting motives.

↳↳ The first group was sharing the gospel with impure motives. ~ ~ "envy and rivalry."

↳↳ The second group was sharing the gospel with pure motives. ~ ~ goodwill and love.

▷▷ Did you notice what the two groups had in common? ~ ~ Sharing the gospel. ~ ~ And in **verse 18a**, ~ we see that that's what mattered to Paul.

→→ Paul's focus was on the advancement of the gospel. ~ ~ Regardless of the motives, ~ the gospel advanced ~ and in that Paul rejoiced. ~ ~ Let's unpack this.

### IN VS. 15a, ~ PAUL BEGINS WITH THE GROUP THAT HAS IMPURE MOTIVES . . . .

"SOME" REFERS BACK TO THE PHRASE, ~ "MOST OF THE BROTHERS" IN VS. 14.

▶▶ I.e., ~ "Some of the believers, ~ whose confidence in the Lord grew and as a result were proclaiming the gospel boldly, ~ were boldly preaching Christ because of envy and rivalry."

▶▶ So, ~ Paul's not talking about false teachers or unbelievers. ~ ~ Talking about believers.

▶▶ We also know this by the way Paul treats false teachers . . . . ~ ~ Dogs. ~ ~ Gal. 1:6-9 . . .

▶▶ Genuine believers preaching the genuine gospel. ~ ~ This shows us that even though believers are new creations in Christ, ~ we are not immune to acting out of envy and rivalry.

▷▷ In fact, ~ if you've been doing your homework, ~ you've seen in your reading that Paul warns the Philippians about this very thing. ~ ~ 2:3 . . . . ↯ 1/7

▶▶ I think sometimes we might get the impression that the early church was somehow immune to these things.

▷▷ We think, ~ "O, ~ if only we were like the church in Acts, ~ then we would be perfect and tear up the world for Jesus.

▷▷ Well, ~ the early church did tear up the world for Jesus, ~ but they were far from perfect.

▷▷ Just read [1 Cor.](#) ~ ~ Genuine believers . . . . ~ ~ Divisions . . . . ~ ~ Spiritually immature . . . . ~ ~ Sexual immorality . . . .

↳↳ Chaotic, ~ improper, ~ and did more harm than good.

▶▶ So yes, ~ it is very possible for a genuine believer to act out of envy and rivalry.

PAUL SAYS, ~ "SOME OF THE BELIEVERS INDEED PREACH CHRIST FROM envy and rivalry."

THESE BELIEVERS WERE ENVIOUS OF PAUL, ~ PERHAPS BECAUSE OF HIS STANDING as a leader in the church, ~ or perhaps because of his successful gospel ministry.

▶▶ "envy" means a state of ill will toward someone because of some real or presumed advantage experienced by such a person.

▷▷ When good things happen to others, ~ the envious feel sad. ~ ~ When others experience problems, ~ the jealous feel joy.

↳↳ The ancient Greek historian, ~ Xenophon, ~ said, ~ "The envious are those who are annoyed only at their friends' successes."

▶▶ This is the exact opposite of how believers are to be.

▷▷ In [Rom. 12:15](#), ~ Paul, ~ " Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep."

▷▷ In Paul's analogy between the human body and the church, ~ the body of Christ, ~ in [1 Cor. 12](#), ~ Paul points out in [1 Cor. 12:26](#) the proper way the church is to function.

↳↳ "If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together."

▷▷ And in [1 Pet. 3:8](#), ~ Peter tells us to "be sympathetic" toward our fellow believers.

▷▷ We are to have mutual concern for our fellow believers. 📖 2/7

↪↪ We are to empathize with our brothers and sisters in Christ, ~ to join in their feelings of joy and sorrow as if we were experiencing the feelings ourselves.

↪↪ We should rejoice, ~ with no hint of envy, ~ when someone is honored.

↪↪ When a fellow believer is suffering or grief-stricken, ~ we are to stand with them as if we were suffering or grief-stricken, ~ 77

→→ offering kindness, ~ concern, ~ compassion, ~ and a shoulder to cry on if needed.

(DISPLAY VS. 15a) **ALONG WITH BEING ENVIOUS OF PAUL, ~ THESE BELIEVERS WERE also preaching the gospel out of rivalry.**

▶▶ Rather than viewing themselves as Paul's partners in the gospel ministry, ~ these believers set themselves up as Paul's competitors.

▷▷ Kind of like Apple and Microsoft, ~ Burger King and McDonalds.

▶▶ They were more interested in the expansion of their own reputations and ministries than the spread of the gospel by itself.

▷▷ They proclaimed the right message, ~ but their goal was not so much to lead people to Christ as to boost themselves and their ministries and to build a personal following.

↪↪ More interested in boosting their own "brand name" so to speak than in spreading the gospel. ~~ Much like .....

▶▶ Here at NHCC, ~ we must be more interested in preaching the gospel than in promoting our "brand name."

▷▷ The other gospel believing and preaching churches in the area around us are not our competitors. ~~ They are our partners in the gospel ministry. ~~ Rejoice ~ weep ~ pray.

**IN VERSE 15b, ~ PAUL INTRODUCES US TO THE GROUP THAT HAS PURE MOTIVES.**

**OTHERS WERE MOTIVATED BY GOOD WILL TO PREACH CHRIST.**

▶▶ "others" also refers back to the phrase, ~ "most of the brothers" in verse 14.

▷▷ I.e., ~ "others, ~ whose confidence in the Lord grew and as a result were proclaiming the gospel boldly, ~ were boldly preaching Christ because of good will."

▶▶ This group, ~ to their credit, ~ had a friendly and helpful attitude toward Paul. 11 3/7

▶▶ Paul was in prison, ~ so they stepped into the gap and carried on his work of preaching the gospel.

▶▶ They had no impure motives, ~ no personal agenda.

▷▷ They were more interested in spreading the gospel and glorifying God ~ than in making a name for themselves or spreading their own reputations and ministries.

▷▷ They considered themselves Paul's partners and not his competitors. ~~ Neither were they envious of Paul.

↪↪ May their tribe increase a hundredfold.

### UNFORTUNATELY, ~ SOME BIBLE VERSIONS REVERSE THE ORDER OF VERSES 16-17.

LOOKS LIKE IT WAS BASED ON A MISINTERPRETATION OF THE WAY PAUL structured verses 15-17. ~~ Should be the way the ESV has them.

▶▶ Placing the two statements, ~ [verses 15b and 16](#), ~ about those preaching with pure motives together shows, ~ I would suggest, ~ Paul was placing emphasis on pure motives.

▶▶ Most likely, ~ Paul was emphasizing this to show us that this is the acceptable and proper way of sharing the gospel, ~ i.e., ~ with pure motives.

▷▷ IOW, ~ even though Paul, ~ as we'll see, ~ rejoices that the gospel was being preached regardless of motives, ~~ ↴↴

↪↪ he in no way was signaling that he condones impure motives.

▶▶ As we'll see in [verse 18](#), ~ it was the fact that the gospel was being preached that pleased Paul, ~ not how it was being preached.

### IN ADDITION TO BEING MOTIVATED BY GOOD WILL, ~~ IN VERSE 16a PAUL SAYS the group with pure motives were motivated by love.

"THE LATTER DO IT OUT OF LOVE."

▶▶ They were definitely not motivated by envy or competition.

▶▶ Ok, ~ but love for whom motivated their good will toward Paul?

▷▷ Well, ~ since the other group was trying to cause trouble for Paul as we'll see, ~ both groups actions should be looked at primarily in relation to Paul. ↴↴ 4/7

↪↪ Most likely, ~ then, ~ this group's love is primarily their love for Paul. ~ I.e., ~ first and foremost, ~ it was most likely their love for Paul that motivated them.

▷▷ But it certainly also could have been their love for Jesus and the gospel that motivated them.

▷▷ One more thought here.

↪↪ It also could have been Jesus' love for them that served as a motivation to preach the gospel. ~ It makes sense.

↪↪ When we stop and truly grasp the awesome, ~ undeserved, ~ sacrificial love that Jesus has for us, ~ ↴↴

→→ it makes sense, ~ does it not, ~ that we would want others to know and experience this love?

↪↪ And so Jesus' love for us motivates us to share the gospel.

▶▶ Love for other believers, ~ love for Jesus and the gospel, ~ and Jesus' love for us are acceptable, ~ proper, ~ and the best motivations for proclaiming the good news about Jesus.

▷▷ Envy and rivalry or any other self-serving or self-promoting reasons are not.

↪↪ The former will glorify Jesus. ~ The latter will glorify man.

IN VERSE 16b, ~ PAUL ADDS THE FACT THAT THIS FRIENDLY AND HELPFUL GROUP knew something extremely important.

AND I.E., ~ THAT PAUL WAS APPOINTED TO DEFEND THE GOSPEL.

▶▶ "knowing that I am put here ~ [i.e., ~ in the sense of being divinely appointed] ~ for the defense of the gospel."

▶▶ This group that partnered with Paul rather than compete against him knew that he had been appointed by God to defend the gospel in the heart of the Roman empire.

▷▷ But, ~ we could say that in a much broader sense, ~ they knew Paul was divinely appointed to preach the gospel in general. ~ And once again we see the sovereign hand of God.

▶▶ This knowledge that they had of Paul's divine appointment seems to be a further reason for this group's good will toward Paul. ↴↴ 5/7

▷▷ Namely, ~ they had **a friendly and helpful attitude toward** Paul because they knew that he was appointed to preach and to defend the gospel.

▶▶ Let's think this through.

▷▷ This is how all believers should be toward those who are rightly recognized as called by God to proclaim His word, ~ whether as a preacher, ~ **teacher**, ~ **evangelist**, ~ or **someone who has the gift of exhortation**.

▷▷ Both outside and inside our church. ~ Christ Redeemer Church/Providence . . . .

↪↪ And inside our church . . . .

### IN VERSE 17, ~ PAUL RETURNS TO THE GROUP WITH IMPURE MOTIVES.

"THE FORMER PROCLAIM CHRIST OUT OF SELFISH AMBITION, NOT SINCERELY but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment."

▶▶ Again, ~ they proclaimed the right message, ~ but their goal was not so much to lead people to Christ as to boost themselves and their ministries and to build a personal following.

▷▷ **In brief, ~ motives were impure.**

▶▶ "afflict" here refers to an inward experience of distress, ~ affliction, ~ trouble.

▶▶ They wanted to and thought that they'd give Paul a strong bout of anxiety and make things worse for him in prison. ~ But they thought wrong. ~ Paul wouldn't play their game.

▷▷ As we'll see, ~ Paul's focus wasn't on motives, ~ either pure or impure.

↪↪ His focus was on what is most important. ~ And i.e., ~ the advancement of the gospel.

### IN VERSE 18a, ~ PAUL EXPRESSES HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ISSUE.

"WHAT THEN? ONLY THAT IN EVERY WAY, WHETHER IN PRETENSE OR IN TRUTH, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."

▶▶ Despite people's motives, ~ Paul rejoiced because Christ was being preached.

▶▶ As we alluded to earlier, ~ the object of Paul's joy was the fact that the gospel was being preached, ~ not the how of preaching the gospel. **↵↵ 6/7**

▶▶ The gospel was advancing.

▷▷ People were being rescued from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

↪↪ And because of that, ~ Paul rejoiced.

▶▶ Paul's bottom line: ~~ gospel preached and people were being saved. And that's the most important thing and a reason to rejoice.

▶▶ Two very brief observations here.

▷▷ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ we need to take our cue from Paul.

↪↪ If genuine believers are preaching the genuine gospel, ~ look beyond the how it's being done to what it's accomplishing.

→→ Names are being added to the Lamb's book of life.

▷▷ 2<sup>nd</sup> observation. ~~ These were believers, ~ and though their motives were impure, ~ they were preaching the true gospel.

↪↪ Paul reacted totally differently with false teachers, ~ and so should we.

→→ Dogs. ~~ Accursed.

↪↪ IOW, ~ Paul exposed and did not tolerate false teaching. ~~ And we should do the same.

## CONCLUSION.

AND THAT'S AS FAR AS WE GO TODAY.

▶▶ In preparation for [verses 18b-26](#), ~ I encourage you all to read [Acts 21-28](#), ~ to get the historical background as to why Paul was in prison in Rome; ~~ ¶¶

▷▷ so that you will have a better handle on what Paul is talking about [verses 18b-26](#).

LET'S PRAY . . . . 7/7