

Philippians 1:12–18 (NKJV)

12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, **13** so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; **14** and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. **15** Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: **16** The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; **17** but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. **18** What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

How do you evaluate the events that happen in your life?

Suppose something happens at work that makes you look bad?

Suppose you do something toward a person that you realize you should not have done?

Suppose you know that you need to intervene in someone else's life to talk about something they have done wrong?

We could think of a million situations, but the question is the same. How do you evaluate those events?

There a million ways of looking at things that will **bum us out**. We can regard them based on **the comfort** or **discomfort** they provide us. We can regard them on how they **make us look**. We can regard them on whether we **gain some profit** from them or if they **cost us** something. We can regard them as to whether they provide us **pain** or **pleasure**. We can regard them as to whether they **stroke our ego** or **insult** it. We could all add to this list.

And you know what? Every one of those evaluations could be true and accurate. We might be 100% correct in telling the truth about what we are seeing. And at the same time we can be 100% wrong in **how** we are looking at it.

We need to remember that Paul is **a joy** expert. So we do well to look very closely at how Paul **added things up**. What evaluation did **Paul** use for evaluating the events of his life. What was **his** focus to determine what was something **good** that happened and what was something **bad** that happened.

We already talked about Paul's circumstances. If we were to use any of the evaluations I listed above, Paul would have had every reason to be bummed out. The situation was very uncomfortable. They made him look like a criminal. They

took away much of his potential for pleasure. It looked like they deprived him of doing the work he was called to. I would call that a loss of profit. And he certainly was not receiving anything to boost his income.

So we can see, if Paul applied the same evaluation to his situation that **we might easily use** to evaluate any circumstance **we face**, he would have had lots of reasons not to be joyful about it.

If we get nothing else from this morning's sermon, I hope we leave with this.

When you evaluate your situation from the perspective of that which **best serves God's purposes**, you can find reason for joy in **any situation**.

Maybe the reasons we find ourselves so bummed out about so many things is because we refuse to see them from priorities **outside of our experience**. Maybe there are times when nothing is more important to us than our selfish desires.

We are going to see something **very uncommon** about how Paul evaluated his experiences and his circumstances. He did not use any of the selfish criteria I mentioned earlier. He used something that was completely **outside of himself** to evaluate his life events.

His question was ultimately this.

What effect did my circumstances have on God's kingdom?

What effect did my experiences have on spreading the gospel?

Do you see how supernatural Paul's way of seeing things was? When you see someone looking at life like this, you know you are looking at a miracle. You know you are looking at a Christian.

Look at what you are bummed out about. Look at why.

There are natural sorrows that are normal and good to be bummed out about.

When someone dies, or someone suffers loss, or someone falls away from the faith, and on and on. Sure, those are things that hurt and cause pain. And that is all fine in its place.

But what are circumstances where our way of **looking at something** causes continual fretting or anxiety or sadness?

Can you see how if we were to choose to evaluate it from a **standard outside of ourselves**, it may free us of the negative effects?

How many times have you found that a personal failure on your part has actually been used by God for **something good** in you or in someone else?

How many times have you found that something **you suffered** provided opportunities for future ministry?

How many times have you seen that circumstances you perceived as **tragic** actually redirected your life into **something good**?

How many times would simply evaluating our circumstances using a **different standard** remove our dilemma? How many times in our lives do we just need to see something from a **spiritual perspective**?

When we are told by Christ to **seek first the Kingdom of God** and all these things will be added to you, this is part of the process. When we **seek first His Kingdom**, when we seek first those things above, we begin to **evaluate** our lives from **that perspective**. If the kingdom is first in our lives, evaluating things from a kingdom perspective determines how we see a thing.

I hope we are getting this.

Maybe this illustration will help.

I have gone through a lot of relationships before I reached Carla. When many of those relationships ended, I was a hurt little puppy. Each seemed like the end of the world. I measured those experiences by all kinds of standards like I mentioned earlier. The circumstance caused me pain. It was uncomfortable. It made me look bad. I sometimes felt wronged. And on and on. And as long as I kept my perspective small, I felt miserable.

But there was another perspective that I would catch hold of from time to time. It was a **bigger** perspective. Had I seen it completely from this perspective **right from the start**, it would have saved me from a lot of hurt. God was making me more and more useful for the Kingdom, and he was preparing a person for me as a partner that would **increase my effectiveness**. Had I been able to see my life primarily through **that perspective**, what peace and joy I could have had. Every loss was a win when seen through that outside perspective, that heavenly perspective.

There are so many things in our lives just like this. Sometimes we fall into our **wrong way** of evaluating. Sometimes we simply will not **surrender** our wrong way of evaluating things. But we need to learn from our joy teacher Paul this morning.

Ok now, how well did Paul really apply this?

We need to view this realistically from the life of Paul. We need to use our imaginations a little to do this.

Think about Paul's life.

He is first and foremost a missionary to the gentiles.

Now what do we know about fleshly motives? We are all born **experts** at **fleshly motives**. So we shouldn't find this hard.

If I have gone into all **kinds of territories** for the gospel and have paid **all kinds of prices** for the gospel, how would I want to be treated when I go to a new area?

Especially how would I want to be treated if I am being treated unfairly by the government and am suffering for the gospel that I am carrying?

Well, wouldn't it be natural to want to be **respected**? And wouldn't we want to be **looked up to** as the person who has done this ministry for so long? Wouldn't we want nothing said or done that would **diminish our importance**? Shouldn't we be treated with **great respect**? Wouldn't we want every believer to be **loyal** to us? And wouldn't we be **miffed** if anyone ended up being regarded more highly than we were? Wouldn't we want everything said about us to be good in Christian circles?

Also wouldn't we want people to step it up in their **provisions for us**, so we do not have to be more uncomfortable than necessary?

OK, with that in mind, let's look at how Paul responds.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife... 16 They... preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

18 Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

We are going to jump around our text some this morning so you may need to pay close attention to where we are.

Look how Paul is being treated here.

We might ask, how can these preachers be preaching Christ from **envy and strife**? We are going to look at the words for envy and strife a little later. But we see that these preachers aren't as much trying to **get what Paul has** but they are trying to **create trouble for Paul**.

What would that look like?

Suppose you have a preacher who is in Rome before Paul gets there. And suppose that preacher views himself too highly.

We need to keep in mind here that we have no reason from the text to think that these preachers are **not preaching the gospel**. In fact the context leads us to believe that the gospel is being **well presented**. So this is not a false teacher. He is a true teacher. He might be a hireling who is just doing it for money. Or he might be doing it for status. But he is preaching **the true gospel**.

So Paul comes into town. Now this local preacher responds **in the flesh**. Paul's preaching of the gospel, or his reputation for doing so, hits Rome. So this preacher begins showing that he is every bit as good a minister as Paul is. He uses the apostle Paul's popularity to step in. He is probably demeaning Paul while he preaches the gospel. Maybe he makes fun of some of Paul's weaknesses.

What we know for sure is that what **inspires him to take these extra efforts** in preaching are not the motives that Paul would have. He is wanting something **for himself at Paul's expense**. He is clearly wanting to hurt Paul. So more than likely, while this preacher is presenting the true gospel, he is saying very bad things about Paul.

Now what would you expect would happen when **Paul** hears about this? If you were in Paul's shoes, how would you respond? Would we not have immediate and severe indignation?

Normally what breaks out are ministry wars. How would you respond if being unfairly criticized by another ministry? Wouldn't you be concerned about **clearing your name**? Wouldn't you feel the need to **right that wrong**? Why? Well it would probably be because we are using a lower evaluation of our circumstances. And we would be truthful in that evaluation. We might think- "I am being treated wrongly. Lies are being told about me. This minister is not all that he seems to be. People need warned about what is going on here. I am the one who is the expert here. I am the one that should be listened to and I should hold more respect in this crowd. Look at the price I have paid for the gospel, compared to this Podunk preacher".

Had Paul used a different evaluation, a lower evaluation, he may have responded exactly like we would be prone to do.

But that is not at all Paul's reaction. Now if he knew someone in that church he may, from **pure motives**, have passed on some instructions to protect those people. There may need to be other things that need to be done. But Paul will not display any of the selfish motives that might **drive** things like that. No. How does Paul viscerally react. He is saying **YES!** This is great!

Wait a minute. This guy is saying horrible things about you Paul. How can you respond this way?

He can, because Paul has a different way of seeing. He is seeing this from the priority of **what is good for Christ**, not **what is good for Paul**. What people say about Paul or think about Paul means little to Paul. The only thing that matters is whether the good news about the person of Christ gets presented to everyone. Everything else is a distant second importance.

Wow. Can you imagine being so selfless that even when people are gossiping about you or slandering you that, if they are presenting the gospel you are saying **YES**, this is good.

I wonder if maybe Paul is hoping this example may sink into Euodia and Syntyche. These women are not getting along. And while I am sure they each have what

they regard to be smart reasons, they are not holding to the **higher evaluation**. There is flesh in their evaluation process that needs to change. And it appears they need **outside help** to resolve their issues. Maybe someone needs to come in with a different evaluation standard.

Before we move on, I think it best we finalize our look at the problem-causing ministers. We can learn some very good lessons about things ministers should never do.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife... 16 They... preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

Preaching Christ here is the only **good thing** these guys do. It is the only thing they are doing right. But at least they are doing **that** right. There are a whole lot of false teachers who are **not** preaching the full gospel. So these Paul haters could be in a worse spot.

Most of what is wrong about these preachers has to do with **motives**.

We touched on envy and strife.

This envy was really a deadly motive.

The words for envy and strife were not simply, a Greek word meaning- the desire to have what another person possesses without necessarily bearing a grudge against him because of it.

Rather, the concern was more to deprive the other person of the desired thing than to gain it.

Do you see the difference. One seeks to gain something for **one's self** and the other seeks to cause the other person **harm**, to take something away from a person because they have the thing. This kind is the causing harm kind. There is nothing accidental in what these preachers are doing. They want Paul hurt. They want him defamed. They want him knocked down a notch.

Then they preach from selfish ambition.

Selfish Ambition- 'a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means'

We have such good examples of this horrible trait in the news every day that we hardly need to imagine what it means. This is exactly the kind of trait that should not be tolerated in any position holder in the church. This is the **worst of the world** invading the church. When there are any kind of politics in the church we have departed what church is supposed to be. And what I mean as **politics** is the jockeying for status in the church. It is trying to get seats of power for personal gain. It is trying to use the **world's methods** to **become** someone in the church. Church business meetings and their election of officers should look nothing like

the world's. Our leaders are to be servants, willing to give up **rights** that the **rest of the church has** in order to **lay down their lives** for the good of those they serve. Their organization skills and business skills are not nearly as important as their servanthood skills and motivation.

16 not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

A little more is revealed about Paul's enemies. They are not sincere. They are not downplaying Paul because they honestly believe Paul is somehow bad. Oh, they might **say** that is their motive. But Paul knows it is not. They know the truth about Paul but they are not going to **promote** the truth. Telling the truth would **help** Paul and they want to **hurt** Paul.

They want to make Paul suffer even more when he is imprisoned. They know that Paul can do little in his defense since he cannot leave the house. So they are taking advantage of their opportunity. They are kicking Paul while he is down. But either way, whether people present the gospel for good motives or bad, being for Paul or being against Paul, the gospel is **preached** and Paul is rejoicing now and will continue to rejoice, no matter what they say about Paul.

Do you see how Paul's perspective lifted him above the mire of the political schemes of these bad motivated supposed fellow ministers? Would not this be helpful in placing us **above** many of the situations we are tempted to get **mired down in**?

Now let's quickly look at the rest of our text.

12 But I want you to know, brethren,

Clearly Paul is telling the Philippians something that they did not know. If we were the Philippians it would be natural to think that Paul being imprisoned would be **awful** for the spreading of the gospel. We would think that the chains would **restrict** Paul from doing his calling.

But look at how Paul sees it.

And remember, he is seeing his situation as if he is outside of it, above it. And he is evaluating it from a higher perspective.

He goes on to say

that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

I wonder if this was a surprise to Paul as much as it would be a surprise to the Philippians. It would not be surprising if there is some **amazement** by Paul as he tells his friends about this.

You know what? This worked out **really well** for the gospel. I could not see at first how this could possibly be a good thing. I had my own questions posed to God. God how can this be good? How can you use this situation? But God shows off that He is God here. Paul reports that this is working out really well for spreading the gospel.

Now how is that happening?

First we see what is happening **outside** the church. The gospel is spreading there. **13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;**

Remember that Paul is chained to 3 people per day 8 hours per day. And Paul is living out all those things that he has preached to his churches regarding how they were to live. So he is exhibiting his Christian character all day. And then he is having Christian conversations with brothers and sisters on and off. It would be impossible for these men not to hear the gospel and to see the gospel's effects on people.

So when they would go home or back to the barracks there would be **talk about work**. And these guards would be telling their story. They were probably chained to some very **unseemly** sorts. But duty with Paul would have been very different. They would have been saying, this man isn't the kind of man who would have broken any laws. Watching him is a piece of cake. In fact, it is a waste of time as a soldier. But what an interesting guy. He talks about this Jesus who Paul says rose from the dead. And watching Paul, you are tempted to believe it. He is different than all my other prisoners. He is imprisoned, not so much because of what he **has done**. He is locked up because of what **he believes**. And what he believes is that this Jesus Christ can save people for eternity.

That is the result of Paul's ministry. And he is preaching the gospel to people who may not have been reached by any other Christians. These guys would have been **hard to get the gospel to**. But some of these guys will infiltrate the houses of power. By reaching **them** he is reaching the Roman **seats of power**.

So that is outside of the church.

Now what might you think would happen to those **inside** the church when they see Paul locked up for the sake of the gospel? Would you not think that might make people **more careful** about sharing the gospel? After all, **they** don't want to get locked up do they?

Well it turns out that they aren't responding that way.

14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Have you ever considered how frustrating it must be to be the devil? He carefully works his work and lays these plans. And then God uses what the **devil views** as accomplishments to accomplish exactly the **opposite** of what the devil intends. Onlookers have seen that Paul was not guilty of any crime against the state. And the result of his imprisonment is his **great confidence in God** to use it for good. So the Christian people are seeing that this is not something to be avoided. There is **no shame** in going to jail for the gospel. If it is good enough for Paul, it is good enough for them. Something that previously could have kept them **from** preaching the gospel is no longer a fear to them.

They have no temptation of thinking that going to jail for the sake of the gospel is in any way bad. They need not fear what the world might think of it. They no longer need to be concerned with any of the things they might have thought that it is **wise not to share the gospel** if you might be punished for it. Paul's example and the results of his example have strengthened the Christian's resolve. And as a result they are sharing the gospel. And not only are they sharing it but they are no longer afraid of the results.

Maybe they are now evaluating things based on Paul's **higher standard**. Maybe this fixation on **things above** is catching on. They are beginning to see what this **pursuit of God** really means. They are no longer afraid of the things they were afraid of before. That is usually what happens when people become more fully devoted to Christ and to following His will.

16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

Verse 16 tells us how Paul's enemies preach the gospel. Verse 17 tells us how his friends present the gospel. They love Paul and they love God. They are not like the insincere troublemakers. These people recognize Paul's rightful position and they show him the respect he deserves. He is **doing** this ministry because God has **appointed him** for this ministry. And these people will preach the accurate truth about the gospel and will be glad to include their **loving opinion** of Paul as well. What a blessing that would be in the face of those who are actively slandering him.

What this might be saying, too, is that these friends understand that Paul's imprisonment is placing him in a **position of defending himself by defending the gospel**. God has placed him in this position because God wants this gospel

declared in circles where it would not normally reach. Paul's imprisonment is not in any way a **slam** of Paul's character. It is actually an **endorsement** of it.

So today we have seen Paul's objective spiritual way of evaluating his circumstances. We have much to learn from him.

We also saw his response to those who were **competing** with Paul when they should have been **working together** with Paul. We see their very **fleshly** motives, motives we should **never copy** in any of our service to the Lord.

We also saw the inspiration that Paul's life became to those who love the Lord and love Paul. These are very much **character traits** we should copy and ascribe to.

I just wanted to close with this story. It is an excellent example of how Christians in ministry should regard each other.

John Wesley was a staunch Armenian. His doctrine contained seeds of a perfectionism that can be reached while in this flesh. The Methodist and Wesleyan denominations are offshoots of his ministry.

George Whitefield's was much more of a Sovereign Grace theology with reformed roots. So John and George were no where close on their theological bases.

Many ministers would allow that to **cause division** in their fellowship or their ministries. They would attack the theology and the minister in such a way to make their own ministry appear better than their opponents. That is a common thing to happen with differences in theology that are this great.

The rest of this is a quote:

Both Wesley and Whitefield were very successful, preaching to thousands of people and seeing multitudes come to Christ. It is reported that somebody asked Wesley if he expected to see Whitefield in heaven, and the evangelist replied, "No, I do not."

"Then you do not think Whitefield is a converted man?"

"Of course he is a converted man!" Wesley said. "But I do not expect to see him in heaven—because he will be so close to the throne of God and I so far away that I will not be able to see him!" Though he differed with his brother in some matters, Wesley did not have any envy in his heart, nor did he seek to oppose Whitefield's ministry.

What a wonderful example for us to follow in our efforts to support all true ministry of all true ministers.

I think one very good application from what we looked at today would be for us, if facing something that would commonly cause us to spiral downward, to ask- how

might this affect the kingdom of God? How might this affect the Gospel? How might God use this thing for the good of those involved and the good of those looking on?