

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18
JOY IN SHARING THE GOSPEL!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 1 as we continue our in-depth study of this letter that Paul wrote to the church in Philippi.

Remember that this letter is known as the *Epistle of Joy* because that is the focus of Paul's life, the joy in the Lord that emanated from his life.

Keep in mind that Paul is under house arrest in Rome awaiting his case before Ceaser Nero. We might not think it was so bad, but he was chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. He had no freedom!

Well, that is not really true because Paul's freedom was in Christ and that is how he lived out his faith, filled with the joy of the Lord.

This morning, in the verses we will be looking at here in Philippians chapter 1, we will focus on – ***JOY IN SHARING THE GOSPEL!***

I know, you are thinking, ***“What are you talking about Pastor Joe? Paul is in prison, under house arrest, so how is he going to share the Gospel? How will he be able to do that?”***

Yes, with men these things seem impossible, and they are. But with God, nothing is impossible! (Matthew 19:26)

You see, I don't care where you are at, what you are doing, who is around you, your life is a living testimony to the God you say you love and serve!

Let me show you what I mean. We are told,

Christopher Ash relates how he once read of a dispute in Britain between the Foreign Office and the Treasury. The argument was about which British Ambassadors would be provided with a Rolls Royce for their official duties in a foreign capital.

The Treasury unsurprisingly wanted these wonderful cars restricted to a few: perhaps Washington, Moscow and Paris.

The Foreign Office argued for many more, and I love their reasoning.

Most people in a foreign capital have never been to Britain, they said. But when they see this magnificent car gliding through their streets with the Union flag on the bonnet, they will say to themselves, ***‘I have not been to Britain, I don’t know much about Britain. But if they make cars like that there, and in those days we did, then Britain must be a wonderful place.’***

In the same way, unchurched men and women should see how we Christians behave and say to themselves: ***‘I have never seen God but if he can make believers love other people and love one another like this, then He must be a good God.’***

- Christopher Ash, adapted from Married for God, p. 96

What are people seeing in our lives when they look at us? Do you see how important this is?

That is why we are focusing on joy as we go through this letter because, again, it emanated from the life of Paul and that joy was caught by those around him. And not only Christians caught that joy that Paul had, those who came to saving faith found that joy of the Lord as well!

I have broken down the verses we will be looking at this morning into the following main points. They are,

GOD IS WORKING – PHILIPPIANS 1:12-14

DIFFERENT APPROACHES – PHILIPPIANS 1:15-17

CORRECT PERSPECTIVE – PHILIPPIANS 1:18

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Philippians chapter 1, beginning in verse 12 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study His Word and look at this topic – ***JOY IN SHARING THE GOSPEL!***

PHILIPPIANS 1

VERSES 12-14

Our focus here is – ***GOD IS WORKING!***

Keep in mind that back in Philippi this is what they are thinking about the situation that Paul was in. For Paul, it began with his illegal arrest in the Temple in Jerusalem.

He remained under arrest there in Caesarea for two whole years before he appealed to bring his case to Rome, before Ceasar Nero! (Acts 21:17-28:31)

What happened in Jerusalem that made the Jewish people so upset that they almost killed Paul?

Warren Wiersbe puts it like this. He wrote,

The Jews thought he had desecrated their temple by bringing in Gentiles, and the Romans thought he was an Egyptian renegade who was on their “*most-wanted*” list.

Paul became the focal point of both political and religious plotting and remained a prisoner in Caesarea for two years.

When he finally appealed to Caesar (which was the privilege of every Roman citizen), he was sent to Rome.

En route, the ship was wrecked!

The account of that storm and Paul’s courage and faith is one of the most dramatic in the Bible (Acts 27).

After three months of waiting on the Island of Malta, Paul finally embarked for Rome and the trial he had requested before Caesar.

- Warren Wiersbe

When the Philippians heard all that was going on with Paul and now under house arrest, I think they were wondering where God was at in all of this.

Again, in Philippi they knew how God delivered him from the Philippian jail after he was arrested. It was a miracle of God, there was no other explanation.

But now where was God in all of this?

Have you ever felt that way as you are going through a difficult situation?

I am sure you have.

And you may have wondered where God was when you were going through all this!

The answer is simple. God was and is with you, He will never leave you or forsake you! That is a promise from God and God does not go back on His promises! (Hebrews 13:5, Numbers 23:19)

The Philippians may have been wondering this, but not Paul. He was focused on the Lord and because of his love for Jesus he was willing to share the Gospel message no matter what situation he found himself in.

Was this an ideal situation for Paul?

Absolutely not!

Again, he is under house arrest!

And yet he had great joy because this joy was not based upon the circumstances that he was facing, but it was based in the Lord!

Let me ask you this.

How can we maintain our joy? How can we keep the things we face in life from robbing us of our joy?

Four simple words – ***THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD!***

What do I mean by that?

I mean that God is in control, and He not only knows what is happening here and now in my life, in your life, but He knows all that we will face in life, and He is in control!

Can it be hard?

It absolutely can be hard; and it can be so overwhelming that we don't know what to do.

But, if God is in control, and He is, then whatever you are facing see it as an opportunity to be a witness for Christ. That was where Paul was and that is where we need to be. I believe the Holy Spirit is speaking to us on this issue.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

One of the surest measures of a Christian's spiritual maturity is what it takes to rob him of his Spirit-bestowed joy.

Paul's maturity is evident in the present text as he makes it clear that difficult, unpleasant, painful, even life-threatening circumstances did not rob him of joy but rather caused it to increase.

Although it is a gift from God to every believer and administered by the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22), joy is not always constant and full (cf. 1 John 1:4).

The only certain cause for loss of joy in a believer's life is sin, which corrupts his fellowship with the Lord, who is the source of joy.

Such sinful attitudes as dissatisfaction, bitterness, sullenness, doubt, fear, and negativism cause joy to be forfeited. Consequently, the only way to restore lost joy is to repent and return to proper worship of and obedience to God.

Anything other than sin - no matter how difficult, painful, or disappointing - need not take away the believer's joy.

Yet even minor things can do so if believers react sinfully to them.

A change for the worse in health, job, finances, personal relationships, or other important areas of life can easily cause believers to question the Lord, His sovereign wisdom, and His gracious provision.

When that happens, joy is one of the first casualties.

Believers are especially vulnerable when such things happen suddenly, taking them off guard. Their response is often one of anger, doubt, distrust, fear, self-pity, ingratitude, or complaining.

In such cases, events that are not sinful in themselves lead to sinful responses that steal joy.

- John MacArthur, Philippians 1:12

Again, listen to what Paul said here in Philippians 1:12, **“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.”**

In other words, Paul being in prison, did not stop the work of God. It continued on as Paul shared the Gospel message with those who came by, even the soldiers who were with him, chained to him!

In fact, Paul sees this as a great blessing in that it spread the Gospel even more!

Here in Philippians 1:12, this word **“furtherance”** is *PROKOPE*, (prok-op-ay’) in the Greek and it speaks of advancement, progress like that of an army or expedition.

It also referred ***“to a group of woodcutters clearing the way through a dense forest for an advancing army.”***

Think about what is going on here. Paul saw this jail time, as I have said, as an opportunity to bring the Gospel to a group of people who might otherwise never have heard it!

Is that how we look at situations that we are faced with, opportunities that God can use to bring the Gospel message to someone who might not have had an opportunity to hear it? We should!

But for the Philippians, they may have been a little discouraged to hear what Paul was going through. Because of that, I believe, Paul lists two ways to prove his point to the Philippians that – ***GOD IS WORKING!***

Here are those two reasons.

First of all, Paul tells us that the “**whole palace guard**” has taken notice of Paul and his faith.

You see, Paul, being a prisoner, was chained to a Roman soldier and these chains were about 18 inches long, but he was never alone.

Every six hours a new soldier would replace the old one and so, in two years’ time, Paul had a large captive audience to witness to. They could not run away, they were guarding Paul and because of the witness of Paul and the love of God, many of the Imperial Guards of Rome were saved!

But can you imagine how these soldiers felt the first few times that they were with Paul, what they might have said!

It could have gone something like this. ***“I got Paul again! Does anyone want to trade with me? Come on guys, I need a break. The whole time he speaks nothing but Jesus this and Jesus that! He prays for everyone, even me! Doesn’t anyone want to trade with me?”***

And I think that the love that Paul had for the Lord and for these soldiers shined through and eventually their hard hearts broke, and they came to saving faith.

And after they were saved, they probably wanted to guard Paul and hear more about Jesus!

F. B. Meyer makes these comments on Paul and his witness. He wrote,

At times the hired room would be thronged with people, to whom the Apostle spoke words of life; and after they withdrew the sentry would sit beside him, filled with many questionings as to the meaning of the words which this strange prisoner spoke.

At other times, when all had gone, and especially at night, when the moonlight shone on the distant slopes of Soracte, soldier and Apostle would be left to talk, and in those dark, lonely hours the Apostle would tell soldier after soldier the story of his own proud career in early life, of his opposition to Christ, and his ultimate conversion, and would make it clear that he was there as a prisoner, not for any crime, not because he had raised rebellion or revolt, but because he believed that Him whom the Roman soldiers had crucified, under Pilate, was the Son of God and the Saviour of men.

As these tidings spread, and the soldiers talked them over with one another, the whole guard would become influenced in sympathy with the meek and gentle Apostle, who always showed himself so kindly to the men as they shared, however involuntarily, his imprisonment.

How absolutely consistent the Apostle must have been! If there had been the least divergence, day or night, from the high standard which he upheld, his soldier-companion would have caught it, and passed it on to others.

The fact that so many became earnest Christians, and that the Word of Jesus was known far and wide throughout the praetorian guard, indicates how absolutely consistent the Apostle's life was.

- F. B. Meyer, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, pp. 36-37

Not only that, but Paul encouraged the other believers in Rome by his example. You see, Paul, being under house arrest, could have visitors, and as the brethren came and saw Paul, saw people getting saved, even the soldiers guarding Paul, they were strengthened in the faith, they were bold in their witness because they saw that nothing could stop the Gospel message from going forward, not even chains!

Think about what those that were in Rome, these Christians who were probably also facing persecution for their faith, were encouraged by what they saw in Paul.

What did they see?

They saw that in the midst of this difficult trial, Paul had such joy!

In the midst of all this, they saw the hand of God upon the life of Paul, that no matter what, no matter how difficult things could get, God would take care of him.

And they saw that even in the most trying situations, God can use Paul and us, even when imprisoned like Paul was!

What does that mean to us?

Instead of complaining about the situation we find ourselves in, look at Paul's example, be encouraged by it, for God is not chained nor is the Gospel message.

Rejoice in what God is doing even if you don't understand the situation that you are in, for there are no accidents with God, He has a plan, He has a purpose for what we are going through!

Let me give you this example to encourage you.

Many of you have heard this story but it does bear repeating. I am sure most if not all of you have heard of John Bunyan, the author of Pilgrim's Progress,

John Bunyan's preaching was so popular and powerful, and so unacceptable to leaders in the seventeenth-century Church of England, that he was jailed in order to silence him.

Refusing to be silent, he began to preach in the jail courtyard. He not only had a large audience of prisoners, but also hundreds of the citizens of Bedford and the surrounding area would come to the prison daily and stand outside to hear him expound Scripture.

He was silenced verbally by being placed deep inside the jail and forbidden to preach at all.

Yet in that silence, he spoke loudest of all and to more people than he could have imagined. It was during that time that he wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the great Christian classic that has ministered the gospel to tens of millions throughout the world.

For several centuries, it was the most widely read and translated book in the world after the Bible.

Bunyan's opponents were able to stop his preaching for a few years, but they were not able to stop his ministry.

Instead, they provided opportunity for it to be extended from deep within a jail in the small town of Bedford to the ends of the earth.

- John MacArthur

That is our God, He takes what seems like a disaster, like no fruit can be borne from it, and He brings forth much fruit. Never forget that!

Think about the apostle John, where did he write the book of Revelation?

On the island of Patmos, as a prisoner.

Extra-biblical sources tell us that Domitian tried to boil John in oil, but the guy wouldn't die, so he was sent to the island of Patmos, a penal colony.

He was exiled to die on this rocky, barren, volcanic island located in the Aegean Sea about 32 miles from Ephesus and 40 miles from Miletus.

This small, isolated volcanic island was only ten miles long and six miles wide.

It is here, in this barren penal colony, that the Lord gave to John the Revelation of Jesus Christ! And I guess sometimes God needs to get us alone so He can speak to us clearly and what the Lord showed John must have blown his mind!

After Domitian died in A.D. 96, Nerva replaced Domitian and John was freed and allowed to return to Ephesus where he lived out the remainder of his life and ministry and was buried there in Ephesus.

It is easy to get discouraged and lose that joy because of what we are focusing on.

I remember many years ago, I was working in the open-heart unit of a hospital and there was not much fruit born. I rarely was able to share about our Lord. And to be honest, I was discouraged.

One day I was getting a patient back from heart surgery and they did not go to recovery, they came straight to us in the Cardio-Vascular Intensive Care Unit or the CVICU.

And when they come back there are usually two and sometimes three nurses getting the patient settled, all the lines set up, and there are many.

And this one nurse was helping me get my patient settled, he was not awake, he was on a breathing machine, and he had an Intra-aortic ballon pump in which just helps the heart to function better for a time.

As we finished getting these settled, which took some time, all of a sudden, this RN begins to ask me questions about the Lord and faith and the like.

After about 15 minutes of talking to him or so, he looked at me and he said, ***“Joe, it looks like you are preaching from a podium the way you have your hands on that ballon pump!”***

As I looked, he was right. My hands were on both sides of this machine, holding onto the handles like I was in the pulpit!

All I could do was thank the Lord for giving me an opportunity to share with him and he was right, it was like I was standing behind a podium preaching!

Don't worry, my eyes were also on all the monitors that the patient was hooked up to as well as the patient.

But God is always there, and He is working in His time. We just need to be patient and wait on Him.

For Paul, he not only knew this, but he wanted the Philippians to understand this as well – **GOD IS WORKING!**

Now it is not always easy, especially with people, other Christians. And we will see that as we read on – ***DIFFICULT APPROACHES!***

VERSES 15-17

As Paul was in prison there were those that were glad, they wanted to surpass Paul in the work. And with him out of the picture, they had it made. It was a selfish ambition, they were exalting self, it was for show in a sense on their part.

Some preached out of envy or jealousy, as I have said.

Others out of strife or they had something against Paul and were fighting against the work that Paul had done.

On the other end were those who preached the Gospel out of love, not looking to make themselves look good but to build up the Kingdom of God.

For those who were working against Paul, you need to understand the message they preached was not a false gospel, it was their motives that were wrong.

And let me say this. Competition in the church today is a problem.

“Lord, why is that church so big when they are not teaching like we are here!”

That is a huge one.

And I love when people come up and ask, ***“How big is your church?”***

That one always troubled me because I didn’t know how to answer that.

I know, you are thinking, ***“That is a pretty simple question Pastor Joe, so what was the problem?”***

The problem was, and I think the Lord gave me the answer, ***“Our church is the size that God wants it!”***

But we are in competition amongst churches and that should not be.

Do you know why?

It is really very simple. We are on the same team, you might say. We are working for the same Lord. We are building up His Kingdom not ours! We need to remember that.

We are not fighting against each other but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this age, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness! Remember that.

A. W. Tozer put it like this in regard to the attitude of competition that seems to be very common amongst those who are in ministry. This is what he wrote,

Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of Thy servants.

They have congregations larger than mine. So be it. I rejoice in their success.

They have greater gifts. Very well.

That is not in their power nor in mine. I am humbly grateful for their greater gifts and my smaller ones. I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such modest gifts as I possess.

I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel one or another in Thy holy work. I herewith make a blanket disavowal of all intrinsic worth. I am but an unprofitable servant. I gladly go to the foot of the cross and own myself the least of Thy people.

If I err in my self- judgment and actually underestimate myself, I do not want to know it.

I purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed it is my own if it is Thine own, for what is Thine is mine, and while one plants and another waters it is Thou alone that giveth the increase

- A. W. Tozer, *The Price of Neglect*, pp. 104-105

That is important for us to understand. Today we see all kinds of fights over silly things and when it comes to doctrine, we really don't care!

Paul cared about the truths of God found in the Word of God and would not accept that. But their motives were different, and we will see why that didn't bother Paul as we finish up this morning.

Sadly, church feuds are not uncommon, especially among factions in the congregation.

I don't know if you heard about this dispute, but it is interesting to say the least.

It was a feud between the pastor and the choir director. And it was not good because it did not only affect them, but the whole congregation was affected by this feud!

One week, the preacher preached on commitment, and how you should dedicate yourselves to service.

The director then led the choir in singing, ***"I Shall Not Be Moved."***

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on giving and tithing and how we should gladly give to the work of the Lord.

The choir director then led the song, *“Jesus Paid It All.”*

The next Sunday, the preacher preached on gossiping and how we should watch our tongues.

The hymn was *“I Love to Tell the Story.”*

The preacher became disgusted over the situation, and the next Sunday he told the congregation he was considering resigning and asked for their prayers as he waited on the answer.

The choir then got up and sang *“Oh, Why Not Tonight.”*

When the preacher resigned the next week, he told the church that Jesus had led him there and Jesus was taking him away.

The choir then sang, *“What a Friend We Have in Jesus.”*

Don't get any ideas!!!!

But it is sad what people fight over in the church, the disputes that they have over the silliest of things. I actually had one person mad at me because I did not park in the same parking space at Walmart as I usually did and thus, I was avoiding that person!

The reality was, if that person would have asked me, I would have told that person that I still park in the same parking space or area as I have always done but the difference was that I did not go to Walmart as much as I did before when this person saw me in that parking space.

But do you see how we can get upset and mad at someone for the silliest of things and yet, when it comes to doctrine, people don't seem to care what they watch, what they read, who they listen to!

I thought we were brothers and sisters in Christ.

We are and thus, what is the problem?

We have lost sight of what Jesus prayed to the Father the night before He was crucified.

What was He praying about?

He was praying that we would be one, united together as He and the Father are one.

Maybe you don't believe this is that important.

Let me say this. It is! If Jesus took the time to pray the night before He went to the cross of Calvary to pay the penalty for our sin, and the focus of His prayer was our unity with each other, then I think it is very important!

I will just share with you what Jesus prayed and let the Holy Spirit speak to you regarding this.

In John 17:20-26 we see that Jesus prayed, **“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me. And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.”**

That is what Jesus prayed for, that our friendship with each other would be like Jesus and God the Father as I have said.

What is a friend?

Listen to how the Dictionary defines the word “*friend*.” It goes like this, “*One attached to another by respect or affection. Acquaintance. One who is not hostile. One who supports or favors something.*”

That is a good definition but for Christians, it is far richer, far deeper! You see, our friendship is based in Christ and these differences we have over non-essential things should not divide us, but many times it does.

And again, it seems to be for the silliest of things and the world looks at us and they just don’t understand how we can say we love God when we can’t even love each other!

Let me share with you some of the silly things that people in church fought over. When you hear these things, you may not even believe that they can be real, but sadly, they are.

And again, what is the world seeing in us?

Not the Lord when we act like this, that is for sure.

Listen to these disputes.

And, I do have to say that they may be a little unusual, but they happened, and they are downright absurd to me, and I hope they are to you as well.

- ***Argument over the appropriate length of the worship pastor’s beard.*** (I think I saw a verse in Scripture that indicated it is to be no more than 1.5 inches longer than the pastor’s beard.)
- ***Fight over whether or not to build a children’s playground or to use the land for a cemetery.*** (I’m dying to know the resolution of this one.)

- ***A deacon accusing another deacon of sending an anonymous letter, and deciding to settle the matter in the parking lot.*** (The church could have sold tickets to this Smackdown event and raised a lot of money.)
- ***A church argument and vote to decide if a clock in the worship center should be removed.*** (As a pastor, clocks are not necessary. Do you really think I am watching how long the sermon is?)
- ***A fight over which picture of Jesus to put in the foyer.*** (I just want to know who took the pictures.)
- ***A dispute in the church because the Lord's Supper had cran/grape juice instead of grape juice.*** (Of course it should be grape juice. It's right there in Hezekiah 4:11.)
- ***Arguments over what type of green beans the church should serve.*** (I could have resolved this conflict quickly: none.)
- ***Two different churches reported fights over the type of coffee. In one of the churches, they moved from Folgers to a stronger Starbucks brand. In the other church, they simply moved to a stronger blend. Members left the church in the latter example.*** (Perhaps they started a new church: The Right Blend Fellowship.)
- ***An argument on whether the church should allow deviled eggs at the church meal.*** (Only if it's balanced with angel food cake for dessert).
- ***An argument over who has the authority to buy postage stamps for the church.*** (The members were licking their wounds over this issue.)
- ***A disagreement over using the term "potluck" instead of "pot blessing".*** (I get it! The concept of luck contradicts the theology of a sovereign God. This issue is very serious. Good luck trying to resolve it. Just a little sarcasm on my part there.)
- ***Some church members left the church because one church member hid the vacuum cleaner from them. It resulted in a major fight and split.*** (Thus, the Second Hoover Church was born.)
- ***An argument over whether to have gluten-free communion bread or not.*** (I thought gluteny was a sin. Sorry about that one!)
- ***An argument over whether the fake, dusty plants should be removed from the podium.*** (Just give them a little water. They should be fine.)

As silly as these issues are, they are real and look at the fights that actually took place over them. How crazy is it and do you really think these things are so important?

Really, when you get to heaven are you going to ask Jesus, ***“Jesus, I was right about the worship leaders’ length of his beard, right!”***

Are you kidding me.

And yes, we laugh at that, but the reality is, these things have happened, and many more absurd things are happening even now!

The bottom line is this. These things become a really great distraction from the Great Commission. And we will see that in a minute, what we really are to be focused upon.

Let me share this story with you and it will lead us to our last point – ***CORRECT PERSPECTIVE!***

In his book, ***“Great Church Fights,”*** Leslie B. Flynn tells of two unmarried sisters, who lived together, but because of an unresolved disagreement over an insignificant issue, they stopped speaking to each other - one of the inescapable results of refusing to forget.

Since they were either unable or unwilling to move out of their small house, they continued to use the same rooms, eat at the same table, use the same appliances, and sleep in the same room - all separately without one word.

A chalk line divided the sleeping area into two halves, separating doorways as well as the fireplace. Each would come and go, cook and eat, sew and read without ever stepping over into her sister’s territory.

Through the black of the night, each could hear the deep breathing of the other, but because both were unwilling to take the first step toward forgiving and forgetting the silly offense, they coexisted for years in grinding silence.

- Chuck Swindoll, *The Finishing Touch*, p. 316

How sad that truly is and may this not happen in our own lives.

Paul understood that there were some – ***DIFFERENT APPROACHES*** to the ministry between him and those there in Philippi.

Some were more interested in themselves, promoting themselves, trying to be bigger and better than Paul, and others had a heart just to serve. ***DIFFERENT APPROACHES*** and yet, they were working for the same cause, ***CHRIST!***

Thus, as with Paul, we must have a ***CORRECT PERSPECTIVE!***

VERSES 18

Here was a man that was so focused upon God and the work of God that he did not let these distractions sway him from the work that he was to do.

And yes, he had every right to be mad at those who were putting him down, who were trying to make themselves better than Paul, more popular maybe than Paul, but he did not do that!

He was focused on the work.

And again, and this is important, it wasn't that these men were presenting a false Gospel. If they were Paul would have confronted them on this issue as we have seen in our studies back in I Timothy and II Timothy as well as many of the other letters that Paul has written.

Remember what Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6-9, **“I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.”**

Listen to how The Amplified Bible puts these verses, **“I am surprised and astonished that you are so quickly turning renegade and deserting Him Who invited and called you by the grace (unmerited favor) of Christ (the Messiah) [and that you are transferring your allegiance] to a different [even an opposition] gospel. Not that there is [or could be] any other [genuine Gospel], but there are [obviously] some who are troubling and disturbing and bewildering you [with a different kind of teaching which they offer as a gospel] and want to pervert and distort the Gospel of Christ (the Messiah) [into something which it absolutely is not]. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to and different from that which we preached to you, let him be accursed (anathema, devoted to destruction, doomed to eternal punishment)! As we said before, so I now say again: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel different from or contrary to that which you received [from us], let him be accursed (anathema, devoted to destruction, doomed to eternal punishment)!”**

As you can see, Paul is amazed, he is astounded, he is bewildered that they have turned away from the true Gospel of Jesus Christ, and embracing a false gospel, a false Jesus!

You see, by doing this they were turning away from Jesus!

And please understand that Paul didn't marvel that false teachers were teaching a false gospel, that is just what they do. No, he marveled that the Galatians, who he had personally taught the truth, were turning so quickly from that truth and buying into these lies.

And the problem here was with these Judaizers who came in and recognized Jesus as the Messiah. They spoke of His sacrificial death. They not only believed on the Gospel message, but they tried to improve upon it by mixing the Law with Grace and adding anything to Grace only destroys it, as I have said.

Paul tells us in Romans 11:6, and this is from The Amplified Bible, **“But if it is by grace (His unmerited favor and graciousness), it is no longer conditioned on works or anything men have done. Otherwise, grace would no longer be grace [it would be meaningless].”**

I don't think that could be any clearer, and yet, when the deceivers come, they deceive the people!

And the reason they are deceived is because they ignore what the Word of God has to say and they listen to the words of men!

One writer gives to us this insight into these destructive, these dangerous teachings. He tells us, *“The most destructive dangers to the church have never been atheism, pagan religions, or cults that openly deny Scripture, but rather supposedly Christian movements that accept so much biblical truth that their unscriptural doctrines seem relatively insignificant and harmless. But a single drop of poison in a large container can make all the water lethal. And a single false idea that in any way undercuts God's grace poisons the whole system of belief.”* (John MacArthur)

So Paul had no problem confronting false teachers and their false doctrine as well as confronting those who were believing these lies.

Remember that Paul's concern here was not with the content of the Gospel being preached, it was being preached correctly.

The problem was the motives of those who were preaching it.

Let me paraphrase what Paul is saying here.

“If you are going around and preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the true and only Gospel, then I really don't care what your motives are. That is not for me to judge. If they are good, praise God. If they are bad, then God will deal with that. But, if you are preaching a false Gospel, I really don't care how good your motives are, you must stop preaching that garbage because good motives don't excuse a false message!”

And yes, we should serve the Lord with pure motives, Paul is not ignoring that issue, but he is leaving that in the hands of God for only God truly knows the motives of our heart!

Proverbs 16:2 says, **“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, But the Lord weighs the spirits.”**

In other words, God will look at the motives of our hearts, why we are doing what we are doing for Him!

In Matthew 6:1 Jesus said, **“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.”**

Please understand that Jesus is not saying that if we serve Him with impure motives that we will lose our salvation. Not at all.

What He is saying is that we can lose our rewards for service if our heart is not right, our motives are not right in our service to Him!

And lastly, in I Corinthians 4:5 we are told about judging the motives of people in their service, why they are doing what they are doing. Paul wrote, **“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God.”**

The Amplified Bible puts it like this, **“So do not make any hasty or premature judgments before the time when the Lord comes [again], for He will both bring to light the secret things that are [now hidden] in darkness and disclose and expose the [secret] aims (motives and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his [due] commendation from God.”**

And that was Paul, he is letting God deal with their motives because he cared about the Gospel message going forward with right motives or not so nice motives!

God would deal with that, they were believers, they were preaching the Gospel message, and for Paul that was the bigger picture, and it should be for us also.

You see, Paul’s imprisonment couldn’t stop the spreading of the Gospel, and neither could wrong motives on some of the believers and thus, Paul rejoiced!

What a lesson for us to learn. And that joy in situations like that can only come as we focus our lives back on the Lord!

Here is a man that is filled with the joy of the Lord, and nothing was going to take that away from him.

Not this imprisonment, not what others are saying of him, for he is focused on the Lord!

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Paul's example of selfless humility shows that the worse circumstances are, the greater joy can be.

When the seemingly secure things in life begin to collapse, when suffering and sorrow increase, believers should be drawn into ever-deeper fellowship with the Lord.

It is then that they will most fully experience the enduring joy the apostle knew so well.

This joy is far greater and more satisfying than any fleeting circumstantial happiness.

And this unmixed joy comes not because of circumstances but in spite of them and through them.

- John MacArthur, Philippians 1:15-18

In other words, as Paul said in Colossians 3:2, "**Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.**"

Or as The Amplified Bible puts it, "**Let heaven fill your thoughts; don't spend your time worrying about things down here.**"

How important that is for us to not only understand but to put it into practice.

Fill your mind with the things of God and the heart of joy that God has given to you will be manifested in your life and you will be more interested in others than yourself. Your focus will be in getting the Gospel message out to people because, as this story shows us, every person is important.

We are told,

A businessman and his wife were busy to the point of exhaustion. They were committed to each other, their family, their church, their work, and their friends.

Needing a break, they escaped for a few days of relaxation at an oceanfront hotel.

One night a violent storm lashed the beach and sent massive breakers thundering against the shore. The man lay in his bed listening and thinking about his own stormy life of never-ending demands and pressures.

The wind finally died down and shortly before daybreak the man slipped out of bed and took a walk along the beach to see what damage had been done.

As he strolled, he saw that the beach was covered with starfish that had been thrown ashore and helplessly stranded by the great waves.

Once the morning sun burned through the clouds, the starfish would dry out and die.

Suddenly the man saw an interesting sight. A young boy who had also noticed the plight of the starfish was picking them up, one at a time, and flinging them back into the ocean.

“Why are you doing that?” the man asked the lad as he got close enough to be heard.

“Can’t you see that one person will never make a difference - you’ll never be able to get all those starfish back into the water. There are just too many.”

“Yes, that’s true,” the boy sighed as he bent over and picked up another and tossed it back into the water.

Then as he watched it sink, he looked at the man, and smiled, and said, *“But it sure made a difference to that one.”*

Let’s keep that focus in our lives, Jesus, Others and then You! And do you know what we get from that as we take the first letter of each of those words? We get – **JOY!**

Paul had such a – ***JOY IN SHARING THE GOSPEL!***

How did he accomplish that?

Paul understood and we need to understand that – ***GOD IS WORKING!***

Not only that but God works through many people, some with good motives and some with not so good motives. Thus, we must keep in mind that there are – ***DIFFERENT APPROACHES*** to bringing forth the Gospel message!

And lastly, we need to have a – ***CORRECT PERSPECTIVE!***

We need to understand that our focus needs to be the Lord and bringing the Good News, the Gospel message to a lost and dying world.

You want ***JOY*** in your life then focus on Jesus, Others and then You!