



# PHILIPPIANS

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## **Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:**

Philippians 1:15

Paul now introduces two clauses which he will expand upon in the verses ahead. However, at the same time, they are based on what he has just said concerning the "furtherance of the gospel." His chains had caused others to speak boldly and confidently in the Lord. Of these, he names two separate groups. The first actually forms a paradox – "Some preach Christ from envy and strife." In Christ, there should be no such envy or strife, and yet this was the motivation behind their preaching.

Who he is speaking of here is plainly evident from his comments elsewhere, both in Philippians and in his other epistles, and even in the book of Acts. It is the sect known as the "Judaizers." They were envious in two ways. First, they were envious of Paul. He was a champion among the Gentiles, he was tireless in his proclamation of Christ, he was a chosen apostle even though he had once persecuted the church, and he preached freedom from the bondage of the law. Secondly, they were envious of the freedom which he possessed and which he preached.

They loved the bondage of the Law of Moses because it implied that they had in some way merited a right standing before God. If they "did" things in order to please God, then they felt that made them "better" than the heathens who Paul explained were justified by mere faith in the finished work of Christ. But the stupidity of their argument is evident in the fact that they – while adhering to the Law of Moses – had to then observe the Day of Atonement.

This was a day given for the purpose of granting mercy on those who had failed to meet the demands of the law. If they needed this day for being made right with God, then it nullified the very premise they held to – that they were able to boast in who they were as Jews who observed the Law of Moses. This is because the Law of Moses only condemned them. It could not save them. The badge of circumcision which they bore didn't nullify their need for justification; it highlighted it.

These Judaizers were not just envious though. Their message was also one of strife. They were contentious and argumentative. And this is fully evident in Paul's writings elsewhere. The book of Galatians, in particular, highlights their strife. However, they are also mentioned later in this epistle –

“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!” Philippians 3:2

The meaning of these words will be explained when we arrive there, but he is specifically speaking of the Judaizers. This angry, contentious, and jealous group was an infection within the body. Unfortunately, they remain until this day. The Hebrew Roots movement, and other groups of Judaizers are still out there, tearing people away from the freedom which is found in Jesus Christ. They reinsert the law, and they bring upon themselves and those they teach only bondage and condemnation, not freedom and salvation.

There are many other classes of envious people out there as well. We need to be careful to ensure that those who preach do so with a full adherence to the word of God, in context, and with the foundational message that man is saved by Christ alone, by faith alone, and through grace alone. Those who so preach do so “from goodwill.” The word translated as such indicates that which is good and beneficial to others. HELPS Word Studies further defines it by saying, “God's good pleasure requires something is done through His work of inbirthing faith.”

Life application: Pay attention to the teachings, various videos, and sermons you watch. Are the words you hear based on adherence to God's word, free from adherence to the law, and based solely on the grace of Jesus Christ? If not, then get away from there! Let there be no hint of envy or strife in your life and doctrine. Instead, do all to the glory of God.

**The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;** Philippians 1:16

Based on which Greek text is used for the Bible translation, the order of verses 16 & 17 is reversed from more modern translations. This change to the new translations is generally accepted as correct, and thus the words of Paul form a sort of chiasm as he reverses the thought of the preceding verse. Either way though, the intent is unchanged.

He begins the thought with words which speak of those who “preach Christ even from envy and strife.” Expanding on that, he says that they “preach from selfish ambition.” Their intent is to divide the body into factions and then place themselves as the head of the faction they lead. This was exactly what is seen in the Judaizers who formed against Paul in other places, both in Acts and in his epistles.

Their desire was to not allow Christ to be the Head, but themselves. There was no sincerity in their devotion to the Lord, and their intent against Paul was “to add affliction to” his chains. When understanding one of the premises of the book of Acts, it is not hard to know how they intended to do this.

Acts is, at least in part, intended to show that Christianity grew out of the Jewish faith and religious practice. By doing this, it was considered as a legitimate religion within the Roman Empire. Therefore, it could be practiced without hindrance or fear of reprisal. Time and again Luke records leaders within the Roman government aligning the faith of Paul under the greater umbrella of Judaism. One of many examples is found in Acts 18 –

““When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 saying, “This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.”

14 And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, “If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you. 15 But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters.” 16 And he drove them from the judgment seat.”” Acts 18:12-16

In their attempt to find Paul’s beliefs not in accord with the Law of Moses, it would then mean that he was practicing a religion unsanctioned by Rome. If this were so, then he would be counted as an offender worthy of punishment or even death. Time and again though, the Roman authorities found Paul’s religious expression as merely a subset of biblical Judaism, and it in fact is.

The Law of Moses pointed to its own termination accompanied by the introduction of a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31). As this is so, then it is a valid expression of the religion of the Jews. In fact, it is the only valid expression authorized by the now obsolete Law of Moses. However, having misunderstood this, they clung to the Law of Moses as a means to an end. They attempted to have Paul maligned and harmed by their selfish ambition.



Life application: Though we are not normally in chains for our faith today, we who hold to the grace which is found in Jesus Christ actually face the same type of abuse as Paul did. Those in the Hebrew Roots Movement, and other aberrant sects which cling to the Law of Moses as still binding, do so out of selfish ambition and without sincerity. They malign those who believe that we are saved apart from deeds of the law, and they outrageously attack those willing to stand on salvation by grace alone and by faith alone through the work of Christ alone. Watch out for such dogs and mutilators of the flesh.

**...but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.**

Philippians 1:17

As noted in the previous verse, based on which Greek text is used, the order of verses 16 & 17 is reversed from more modern translations. This change to the new translations is generally accepted as correct, and thus the words of Paul form a sort of chiasm as he reverses the thought of the preceding verse. Either way though, he had just noted the two types of attitude towards the proclamation of the gospel –

“Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:”

Now, he speaks of those whose attitude towards this message was from goodwill. He says that this attitude was “out of love.” They genuinely felt love towards this message and wanted it furthered because of this attitude of goodwill. They had become confident in the Lord, declaring the gospel without fear because of this. They had seen that Paul had been put in prison “for the defense of the gospel” and it emboldened them.

The word translated as “appointed” is keimai. It is a word which means “to place” or “to lie down.” However, it also indicates “destined” or “specially appointed.” He was appointed, or set there for the very purpose of defending the gospel. His bonds were no mistake, but were serving the purpose of gospel defense. Those with loving hearts saw this and grasped it. They were emboldened by his example to act in like manner.

Life application: Paul was acting as an ambassador for Christ, and yet he was imprisoned for his efforts. In seeing this, there were some who understood that his condition was exactly as was intended for him. The Lord had placed him in this position so that the gospel could be defended. The words are recorded for us to consider. If we run into a difficult situation because we have proclaimed Christ, we should look at it as an opportunity to continue our proclamation, not withhold it. It is our duty as Christians to be bold in the face of such things. In doing so, we may very well embolden others and bring about a great harvest of change.

**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.** Philippians 1:18

Care needs to be exercised when contemplating Paul's words here. He was always concerned about proper doctrine. If someone gave an incorrect presentation of Christ, he would correct them. If someone gave heretical views of Christ, he would openly rebuke and condemn their proclamation. To him, proper doctrine was of the very highest importance. It is for this very reason that he wrote most of his epistles.

What he is speaking about here is the character of the person who proclaimed Christ. This is why he first asks, "What then?" He has just noted the difference in character between different heralds of the message. Some proclaimed it sincerely, and some out of selfish motives. To him, it didn't matter what the motive of the person was as long as the message was Christ.

Today as then, and as in all times since then, there are countless people who preach because they know that they can profit off of those they preach to. There are those who preach Jesus because they love the adoration that comes with the job. There are those who preach because it keeps them from some other physical labor that they might loathe... whatever.

On the other side of the coin are those who preach "in truth." They truly love the gospel message, and the benefits from proclaiming it are a secondary matter to them. The heart, full of love for Christ, is their motivation. And so Paul says, "Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached." As long as they preach Jesus, the message is being proclaimed. The Lord will deal with the motives behind the preaching, but at least the message is getting out. For this he says, "...and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

If there are people in a church with a pastor who is a great orator and a sound theologian, but who doesn't really care about the message at all, who is harmed? Only the pastor. Those in the church are being fed, and they are unaware of the hypocritical heart of their leader, but God is. He will sort out the motives behind each person's actions, and He will reward them accordingly.

Life application: If a person is teaching or preaching bad or false doctrine, we cannot rejoice in this. Instead, it must be called out. But if a person is preaching Jesus out of pretense, and yet their message is in accord with the Bible, let it go. We are not the discerners of the heart, and we may be wrong in our evaluation of the person. Stick to the facts; stick to doctrine; and hold fast to that which is in line with the Bible.