

What Motivates People to Preach the Gospel?

The International Sunday School Lesson for Sunday, August 1, 2010
Philippians 1:18-29

“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice” (Philippians 1:18—NASB-U).

“What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice” (Philippians 1:18—NRSV).

“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).

The Apostle Paul faced opposition both inside and outside the visible church, just as some leaders, preachers, and teachers experience today. The visible church consists of those in the church that people see. The invisible church consists of those who truly believe; and only God can see true believers, for He sees into our hearts. Opposition from those in the church particularly hurt Paul, but in spite of what happened to him personally, he wanted the good news of Jesus Christ shared with as many as possible, for “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

Even though some preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in order to hurt Paul (and not primarily to lead people to salvation), Paul rejoiced that some were hearing the truth and coming to faith through their teaching. Those who preached the gospel from unholy motives preached the truth and not a different gospel; otherwise, Paul would have condemned them, as he did those who preached a false gospel to the Galatians, writing, “if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!” (Galatians 1:8). Those who preached to hurt Paul knew the true gospel, but, sadly, they refused to receive the life transforming grace of Jesus Christ into their lives. If they had let Christ change them, they would have loved Paul for doing the work of an evangelist, and they would have rejoiced over those coming to salvation through his labors. — Copyright 2010 L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

Questions for Further Thought

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1. What motives might people have today for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? What would you consider false motives? What would you consider true motives? Why is it difficult to discover people's motives?
2. How can true believers in Christ today exalt Christ with their bodies, as Paul prayed and worked to do with his body?
3. How did Paul feel about living or dying? Do you feel as Paul did about living or dying? Give reasons for your answers.
4. What is “progress and joy in faith”? How can that be promoted in your Bible study group, Sunday school class, or church?
5. How can we overcome our opponents when they seek to intimidate us? What can we remind ourselves if opposition and persecution happen to us as we are teaching the truth about Jesus Christ?