



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Forebearance or Frustration—Philippians 1.15-18

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PHILIPPIANS: CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AT THE CAPITOL

Don Garner / PO Box 302703, Austin, TX 78703 / don.garner@capitolcom.org www.capitolcom.org

INTRODUCTION

Are there people in your life whom you know would delight in your demise?...those who would likely jump at the opportunity to ding your reputation ...those who have taken it as their mission to bring you down a few pegs?

Fact is we are all likely to have people like this in our lives from time to time. Perhaps for you, that time is right now. How you respond to these antagonists will go a long way in determining the degree of effectiveness and peace of mind you experience in life. Your responses will be determined by your perspective on how their potentially frustrating opposition relates to God's work in you and through you.

In this week's study, entitled Forbearance vs. Frustration, we'll consider the options we are faced with in how to deal with those whose envy drives them to compete with us or bring us down—either to become frustrated and retaliate or to be forbearing and patient in our attitudes.

Philippians 1.15-18—Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains, but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 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.

I. EGOS, SELFISHNESS, AND PROVOCATION (15-17)

Some, as Paul states, have taken up the preaching of the gospel with greater fervor spurred on by ego, selfishness, and a desire to provoke him.

EGO

Who are these preachers? Could any believer, much less, any church leader, be motivated by jealousy and rivalry? At first blush, when thinking of the matter ideally or theoretically, we think not. But when we begin to take our own experiences into account, we must admit that, though it is a sad reality, indeed we see it all around us. At times, even followers of Jesus Christ allow their egos to spur a party spirit.

All too often, we see rivalry among professing Christians, prominent church leaders, between ministries or denominations. Sadly, many churches or ministries were born of such rivalry. Often, this all too familiar problem rises to the surface between professing Christians in the political arena.

SELFISHNESS

Paul uses a term in verse 16 that was used by Aristotle to describe the self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means. The electioneering or intriguing for office designated by this term was as common then as it is now. Deriving from a party or fractious spirit this is the attitude of those who seek to procure office through manipulation and questionable tactics.

Sound familiar? It was this jealousy that energized Paul's rivals to heightened activity in the preaching of the gospel. These antagonists hoped to displace Paul while he was in chains or at least provoke him to distress.

PROVOCATION

Wasn't it enough of a provocation for Paul to be in chains for the preaching of the gospel? Yet, these antagonists believed they could intensify Paul's frustration by using the curtailment of his ministry as an opportunity to promote their own. Driven on by less than honorable motivations, these church leaders, threatened by Paul's spiritual standing among the believers, hoped that their fervor in preaching the gospel would be like rubbing salt in the wound of Paul's confinement.

BIBLE STUDIES (MEALS PROVIDED)

LEGISLATORS ONLY: WEDNESDAY @ LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB (11:30A.M. OR UPON ADJOURNMENT, WHICHEVER IS EARLIER) OR THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

CAPITOL COMMUNITY (ALL ARE WELCOME): FRIDAYS @ 8:00A.M. IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE (E2.1002)

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II. FORBEARANCE OR FRUSTRATION (18)

“What then?” asks Paul. How will I choose to respond to the egos that feel threatened by me and respond by trying to provoke me? Will I become a frustrated and fret and fume? Or will I be forbearing?

FLESHLY FRUSTRATION

Your ‘knee-jerk’ reaction is to retaliate against those who, because of petty jealousy and a contentious spirit, have set out to damage your reputation only to enhance their own. The bitter knock-down, drag-out wars between personalities, leaders, organizations, and nations throughout history bear sad testimony to the unhappy outcomes when provocation is met with retaliation and the fight is on.

The downward pull of the flesh when you are provoked by an adversary can be overwhelming. Yet resist you must. For the frustration produced by giving in to such temptation is a more destructive force than you realize.

To surrender to this temptation is to abandon all peace of mind. Bitterness, anger, hatred, and fear are but a few of the destructive emotions that will occupy your every thought. Sound judgment will escape you as you become increasingly irrational in your quest to keep pace with your rival in inflicting as much damage to them as they are to you.

Thankfully, there is hope...

FRUITFUL FORBEARANCE

Our one hope in such instances is the work of God’s Holy Spirit in our heart. The leadership of the Spirit in your life will inspire you to take a noble course. The nature of God will form your perspective and direct your responses.

Paul models such a response for us in his comments and the attitude they reflect. His only concern is that Christ is preached. Whatever he may find disagreeable in the motivations of his adversaries is only background noise to be

tuned out. As long as the chord of the gospel is being sounded forth he finds abundant cause for joy.

Paul’s forbearance toward his antagonists leaves him free to celebrate the fruitfulness of the gospel. He is bearing abundant fruit in the proclamation of the gospel among the palace guard and those jealous of his continued influence among the believers there have stepped up their efforts in proclaiming Christ. Paul beams with enthusiasm over such developments.

Remember that the controlling passion of Paul’s life is the advance of the gospel. In 2 Timothy 2.8-9, Paul here also writes of his imprisonment and the advance of the gospel—“...according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains, though the word of God is not chained.” From Paul’s perspective, how could he feel anything but joy? Joy is the ‘knee-jerk’ reaction of his forbearing spirit.

CONCLUSION

So when faced with the antagonism of a rival, are you ready to allow God to produce forbearance in your attitudes rather than frustration? Like Paul, will you say “And in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice!” Paul was able to delight in God’s work being accomplished through him and even through those who meant to trouble him. Can you do the same?

The friendship of John Wesley and George Whitfield, the two great English evangelists is well documented, as is their conflict in their latter years over doctrinal differences. Both preached to enormous crowds and were used of God to bring thousands to faith.

It is said that someone once asked Wesley if he thought he would see Whitfield in heaven. “No, I do not.” he replied. “Do you not think Whitfield is a converted man?” he was asked. “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!” That is forbearance.