

Pioneers Wanted - Part 2

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- [0 : 0 0] We all have them. What do we do with them? Some are productive, some are semi-constructive, and some are downright depressing and annoying.
- Do you know what I'm talking about? I think you do. They're our critics. They look at our lives and they're critical of us, the things that we do, maybe critical of our success, and so on.
- You know, they may have different motives. Some are jealous. Some may be resentful of our success or our popularity. But the bottom line, our critics can either be a burden or they can be a catalyst.
- They can either pull us down or draw us closer to the Lord and help us to see that God is actually doing and accomplishing things in spite of those that are being negative.
- We can either dwell on their negativity or we can have a positive attitude and thank God for what he's doing in our lives and not let those critics hold us down.
- [1 : 1 1] If you remember, the Apostle Paul wanted to go to Rome as a preacher, but instead he went in chains. And to many, that would have been a failure.
- But Paul, with his single-mindedness and his desire to spread the gospel all throughout the known world, viewed this inconvenience of what he was going through as a positive.
- And he said not only did it not hamper the spread of the gospel, it actually worked to spread the gospel even further than he had expected.
- And it's all in our attitude, is it not? Paul could have either sulked in his situation, being chained to a Roman guard, or he could have looked at the positive and seen how God was using him in the lives of those that he had put him around.
- We remember a couple of weeks ago where, or last week, Paul's chains could have held him down. But he looked at those chains, he looked at his imprisonment as an opportunity that God gave him, even though he was not where he wanted to be.
- [2 : 3 0] He was where God had placed him, and he had given him contact with the lost. And his chains, his imprisonment, had emboldened the rest of the believers to share their faith, and so therefore the gospel would be spreading even further.
- He was chained to a Roman guard 24 hours a day. He got to speak to Roman authorities. The government was having to study the doctrines of the Christian faith in order to be able to properly rule on Paul's case.
- I mean, how much better can you get than that? All the way up the ladder, they were looking into this, what they considered a sect of the Jews, or this new religion, and what did it mean, and what was it all about?
- Paul had contact with people whom he would not have had the opportunity to contact had this not been the situation.
- So we learned last week that our chains may not be as dramatic. Our hard times may not be as difficult as the Apostle Paul, but there's no reason why God cannot use us in whatever situation we find ourselves in.

[3 : 50] And rather than sulking and having a negative attitude about God didn't do what we wanted him to do, but rather have the attitude of, God, you've placed me here for a reason, or you have brought these things into my life for a reason.

How do you want to use them to spread the gospel? And that's how we can look at whatever situation we're in. We concluded last week with the next steps of learning how to rejoice at what God is doing in our lives instead of complaining about what God did not do, and then being willing to let God use our hard times to further the gospel.

This week, we move on from Paul's chains to Paul's critics in verses 15 through verse 18 of the book of Philippians. We begin with verse number 15 as we read, Some indeed preach Christ 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.

So what then? Only that in every way. What was Paul's attitude toward his critics? How did Paul look at those that were putting him down, those that were wanting to put him in an even worse situation, who were jealous of Paul's ability to preach the gospel, were envious of Paul's accomplishments and who he was?

[5 : 38] Paul said, So what? Only that in every way, whether in pretense, whether with the wrong motives, or whether in truth, Christ is preached.

He said, It really doesn't matter. And it doesn't matter what their motives are. Even though they're not good motives, even though they may be bad people, as long as Christ is preached, that's what matters.

And we're so prone to look at those that we disagree with. We look at those that we think are doing things unbiblically, but yet they're preaching the gospel and they're preaching Christ.

And our attitude should be, Don't put them down. Don't call them names. Just be excited that Christ is being preached. Now, we may not agree on everything. We may not do some things together.

But if we have the attitude Paul had, whether in pretense or truth, whether they're doing it for the right reason or not, he says, I glory in the fact that even people are just naming the name of Jesus Christ.

[6 : 45] And it's causing people to think about who Jesus is and what he has done for them. He says, Christ is preached, and in this I rejoice. In spite of his critics, in spite of Christ being preached out of the wrong motives, instead of Christ being preached in order to make Paul's situation worse, he said, I'm single-minded.

The only thing that matters to me is the gospel being preached and Jesus Christ being glorified. And so he says, I rejoice. Yes, and will rejoice.

Will continue to rejoice. The people who were emboldened to speak God's word were in two camps. There were two kinds. There were those who were doing it out of envy and rivalry, and there were those that were doing it out of goodwill.

Those that were doing it out of love. They loved God, and they wanted to do it for him. They also loved the apostle Paul. We could look at it, taking it from both ways.

If we look in Scripture, we look at the construction of the Greek. There are some commentators who say it was out of love for Paul. Some say it was out of love for Christ.

[7 : 58] It's probably both. There were those who were doing it for the right reasons and with the right motives. So, first thing that we see that Paul brings out is our first main point.

Some serve with selfish motives. Some do things for the wrong reasons. Some will preach. There are those who are in pulpits this morning who are preaching for the wrong reason.

I remember back when I was in Bible college and in preaching class. He said, now, men, he said, some of you are called.

He said, all of you are called. Some of you are God-called. And some of you are mama-called. He said, those of you who are God-called will do it for the right reason.

And there are those who flame out. There are those who don't last because they're doing it for the wrong reason, not because they're called by God to do it and empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish it.

[9 : 08] So, some do serve out of the wrong reason, whether it's preach or whether it's take out the garbage. Whatever it is, if we're not serving with the right motives, we're serving with selfish motives.

He said in verse 15, some indeed preach Christ from envy and strife. Some were opposing Paul. Some did it out of goodwill.

You know, it's hard to believe that anyone would oppose Paul. Paul had the right attitude. Paul had the right motive. Paul had seen Christ. Paul was called as an apostle.

But there were believers in Rome who were doing just that. Churches were divided. Some preached Christ sincerely, wanting to see people saved.

Some preached Christ insincerely, wanting to make things more difficult for the apostle Paul, wanting him to hurt even more to prove maybe that they were better than the apostle Paul or better preachers than Paul or more called than Paul.

[10 : 14] The latter group wanted to do it out of selfish motives and for their own purposes. Maybe they belonged to the legalistic wing of the church who opposed Paul's ministry to the Gentiles or wanted the emphasis to be on the law rather than on grace, the way Paul was preaching.

He says that envy, and we know that envy and strife go together pretty much in Scripture. When we see envy, we see strife, much the way love and unity go together.

When there's envy, there will be strife. But when there's love, there will be unity. Now, Paul will mention envy and strife quite a few times in his letters because apparently this was something that was going on in the churches.

There must have been quite a few who were preaching the gospel in that way, envious of Paul, jealous because they maybe didn't see the results that Paul had.

But this we need to understand. Motives are critical. The reason why we do things are important.

[11 : 27] Motives are critical. An elderly man was walking on the beach one day and he found a magic lamp. He picked it up. He opened up the lamp and a genie appeared.

And the genie said, because you have released me from this lamp, I will grant you a wish.

The man thought about it for a moment and he said, my brother and I had a fight nearly 30 years ago and he hasn't spoken to me since.

I wish that he would finally forgive me. There was a thunder clap and the genie declared, your wish has been granted.

You know, the genie went on. He said, most men would have asked for wealth or fame, but you only wanted the love of your brother.

[12 : 26] Is it because you are old and dying? Oh no. He said, it's my brother. That's old and dying and he's worth about 60 million.

Our motives. Why do we want to do things or why do we do the things that we do? Motives are critical. And Paul used an interesting term.

You'll get that joke in a minute, by the way. Paul used an interesting term in verse number 16 and in verse number 15 rather.

He says, some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife. The word strife there or contention in verse number 15 means to canvass for office to get people to support you.

It's exactly the word that Paul used. He said, they do it just like someone canvassing for office to get them to support you.

[13 : 36] Have any of you ever heard of this going on in a church? God forbid that would ever go on in a church, right? That people would do things. People would call. People would go visit and would canvass around the church members.

Well, are you for it or are you against it? Are you for him or are you against him? And people will canvass just to get people to support them. That's called strife.

That's the word. That's the English word that is translated as strife. Paul's aim was to glorify Christ and to get people to follow Christ.

Paul's critics, on the other hand, their aim was to get people to support them. And instead of going around and saying, have you trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior?

They were going around, are you for Paul? Are you for us? And so they were going out and politicking. They were going out. They were preaching Christ. But their motive was to gain a following.

[14 : 40] Their motive was for people to support them rather than support Paul. I'm sure they knew that if they would have been preaching another gospel like Paul had warned the churches about, that the people wouldn't have listened to them.

Because we already know that the Philippian church were very fond of Paul. And Paul said, you know, your faith and your works are well known.

And so they would have probably been able to spot someone who was preaching another gospel like Paul said. But instead they preached the gospel, but they did it for the wrong reasons. Paul's critics were jealous.

They were quarrelsome. They were envious of Paul's success. You know what one of the solutions for envy is? If we as a church realize, if we as individuals within the church realize that we all have a gift.

We all have a gift to use within the body. But the reality is, some will not have some of the showy gifts like another person may have.

[15 : 47] They may not have the gift of teaching. You may not have the gift of other things that would be a little bit more showy.

A gift of speaking. A gift of exhortation. Maybe yours is mercy or service. And you think that, well, if only I had that gift, then I could really serve God.

And I could reach a whole lot of people. That's envy. That is when we're jealous of someone's gift. You remember Paul told the Corinthians that the gifts were to be exercised in what?

In love. Exercised in love. He says, if you will exercise your gift in love, you won't envy someone else. Love doesn't envy.

Love does not parade itself. Love is not puffed up. You know, envy says, I don't think much of you. Pride says, what do you think of me?

[16 : 51] You see the difference? They're both poor motives. They're both wrong motives. Envy says, I don't think much of you. I think a whole lot much more of myself. Pride says, what do you think of me?

And we're doing it with the wrong motives. That's the difference between envy and pride. And the believers warned against both of them. We're to be careful that we don't serve God with either of these motives.

Paul put it very bluntly when he wrote in 1 Corinthians chapter 4. He says, for who makes you differ from one another? And what do you have that you did not receive?

Now, if you did indeed receive it, Paul says, why do you boast as if you had not received it? He says, everything we do for the Lord, we did it because the Holy Spirit gave us the ability to do it, if we're doing it for Him.

He says, so why then you boast like you're all that and more? He says, we got it from God. So when we exercise our spiritual gift, God gets the glory.

[18 : 03] It is not we. It is not us who gets the glory. And then some, not only do some serve out of selfish motives, but he says, some serve with the proper motives.

Some serve out of goodwill. Some serve selfishly. Some serve with selfish motives. Look at me. Look at how good I am.

I'm jealous of your success and I want to be successful too. Those things do, are not part of, or should not be part of the body of Christ. But some serve properly, serve with the right motives.

Verse 17, but the latter, out of love. He says, those that serve out of goodwill, we saw in verse 16, he says, they do it out of love.

What did Paul say about exercising our spiritual gifts? Do it in love. If we don't have love, we're going to be like a what? If that thing were on, I could go, I could go over there and clang a, clang a symbol, just make it go jang, jang, jang, jang.

[19 : 11] And it doesn't make any sense. Now, when Nathan plays it, when Nathan plays it, it goes with the music and it provides the foundation and it makes sense.

But if we just go and clang a gong or clash a symbol like a child beating a pot, you know, it just kind of gets, it hurts the ears and it gets annoying because it's not really music.

And so Paul said, that's kind of the way it is when we do something selfishly, when we do something with the wrong motive. It's not pretty. It doesn't feel good.

It doesn't feel right. But when we do it with the proper motive, when we serve others not expecting to receive anything in return, when we exhort or rebuke someone and we do it for the proper reason and we do it because we want God to get the honor and the glory and not we ourselves, then it is good, it's honorable, and God receives the glory for it.

So those who preached out of goodwill did so in love, knowing that Paul was in chains because of his defense of the gospel. By the way, the word defense here is the word apologia from where we get the English word apologetics.

[20 : 35] So someone who practices apologetics, that is someone who defends a particular thing. So when we say someone is doing apologetics when it comes to Scripture or Christianity, it's someone who is using reason to defend the Scripture, using reason and Scripture to defend the existence of God.

And so he says, Paul has been set in defense of the gospel. He was appointed for sharing Christ.

He was appointed for helping people to understand that Jesus Christ died on the cross in their place and died for them. Also used in verse number seven where he says, just as it is right for me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart in as much as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Paul's whole purpose was defending the gospel and sharing it with a lost world. Those who were preaching Christ out of goodwill did it with the right intention.

So what was Paul's take on all of this? Those who did it wrongly, those who did it properly. Well, this is main point number three.

[22 : 02] To Paul, even his critics helped advance the gospel. That was Paul's attitude. Some do it right, some do it wrong. But he says, I'm going to rejoice and continue, I rejoice and will continue to rejoice because no matter what, those who do it out of envy and strife or those who do it out of goodwill, Christ is preached.

So to Paul, even his critics were getting the gospel out. Even those who were against him were getting the gospel to those who needed to hear it.

Because the point is, no matter how good we are, and even if we do it for the right reason and out of goodwill, it's not us who save people.

It's the Holy Spirit's job. So whether we're doing it right or whether we're doing it wrongly, if somebody uses the Word of God, doesn't matter who it is, God will use His Word through His Holy Spirit and His Word will not return unto Him without accomplishing its purpose.

So whether it's a child, whether it's someone who is wanting to get back at us for some reason, but they use a verse out of the Bible, God can still use it no matter who delivers it.

[23 : 33] And so Paul says, Christ is preached. And that's what matters. What then? Only that, in verse 18 says, only that, in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached.

And in this, I rejoice and, yes, will rejoice. When you have a single mind, you look on your critics as another opportunity for God to do His thing.

Yes, they may be saying something. Now, one of the things, just a little side note, we have to at least think about what our critics are saying because there may be a seed of truth in what they're saying.

If not, go on. If there is, God, if there is any wicked way in me, then we repent, we confess it, we repent, and we go on.

But otherwise, we look at our critics and let God do His thing. Like a faithful soldier, Paul said, he was set or appointed for the defense of the gospel.

[24 : 36] And he was able to rejoice not in the selfishness of his critics, but in the fact that Christ was being preached. That's what he was rejoicing in.

There was no envy in Paul's heart. Paul said, so what? They're getting a lot of accolades. Maybe they're getting a lot more money than I am. Maybe they're getting a whole lot more bigger following than maybe following me or maybe they've got more converts than I have as long as they're converts to Christ and not converts to them.

So it mattered not that some were for him and some were against him. All that mattered was the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Now it's a matter of historical record that the two great English evangelists, John Wesley and George Whitefield, disagreed on doctrinal matters.

When people would hear them, they knew that they differed on certain scriptural issues, certain scriptural doctrines. But both were very successful preaching to thousands all across England and multitudes were coming to Christ through the preaching of both Wesley and Whitefield.

It's reported that somebody asked Wesley if he expected to see Whitefield in heaven. And the evangelist replied, no, I do not. Then do you think that Whitefield is not a converted man?

[26 : 11] He said, of course, he's a converted man, but I do not expect to see him in heaven because he will be so close to the throne and I so far away that I will not be able to see him.

So what was Wesley's attitude? He was the same attitude, he had the same attitude Paul had. I am the least of the apostles. I don't deserve to be doing what I'm doing.

As a matter of fact, every time I try to do right, I do wrong. Every time I try not to sin, I sin. Romans chapter 7. So Wesley's attitude was, I may not agree with Whitefield, but as long as Whitefield's preaching Christ, he was putting Whitefield above himself.

That's not pride. That's unity. They were there for the same purpose and the same reason, preaching Christ. They might have disagreed on certain doctrinal matters, but as long as he was preaching Christ, that was all that was important to him.

Wesley didn't have any envy in his heart, nor did he seek to oppose Whitefield's ministry. So Paul shared in the advance, the pioneer advance of the gospel.

[27 : 22] He wanted to go to Rome, but he ended up going in a way that he hadn't expected. So he was pioneering a new method of ministry. First prison ministry the apostle Paul had from the inside.

But he had a third tool that he also used, and we'll get into that next week. So for this week, first, these are our takeaways, our next steps.

First, let's check our motives and see if it's the proper motives for whatever we do. Check our motives. Am I doing this for Christ?

Am I doing it to get recognition? Am I doing it for whatever? And then second, don't let your critics get in your head and bring you down.

Trust God to accomplish his will in your life. Don't let them get in your head, get you depressed, get you second-guessing, doubting yourself, doubting your calling, doubting your ability.

[28 : 24] Just let God do his thing and rejoice for what God's doing. Let's pray. Father, this morning as we've come together to hear of you, we ask, Lord God, that you would be able to bless us.

We pray, Father, that you would be able to use the gifts that you have given to us as part of the body and help us, dear Lord, to be able to work together, even as we're going to hear this evening as we begin to look in our Bible study tonight about we are all bricks, we're all building blocks in the church.

We make up the body of Christ as followers of Christ. So, Father, we pray this morning that you would send us upon our way with your blessing. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen.