

## Philippians 1:12-18

### Vs. 12-13

It takes having a longer perspective to arrive at some positive understanding of God's reversals in our lives. The maturing believer is one who learns to spot and to interpret the reversals in life as part of God's curriculum to both grow in our trust and influence others to walk with Christ as well. In discovering that, God often moves us forward, in reverse.

### Vs. 14-15

Paul's imprisonment in Rome has created division and accusations among some believers in the church in Rome. The Apostle Paul demonstrates the proper response to accusations, misinterpretations, and to a factious comments about his character.

#### The First Response is to Openly Identify the Problem

The Greek word for envy "phthonos" refers to not only wanting what someone else has, but actually wishing that person harm, or wishing they did not have the object desired.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day complained and bellowed that Jesus had upset their traditions, that He'd threatened to destroy the temple and that He'd blasphemed God. Mark's gospel reveals the true motive of the religious leaders. "*Pilate perceived that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy.*" (**Mark 15:10**) This is the same word [envy] Paul uses here.

Paul attributes to this factious camp another devastating characteristic. Not only are they envious of Paul but, he adds in verse 15, they are preaching with "rivalry."

This Greek word rivalry "*eritheia*" relates to political maneuvering. It refers to a self-seeking pursuit of political office by unfair means.

The church leaders at Rome are willing to go to any length to keep their churches from any sense of loyalty to the Apostle Paul. In **2 Timothy 1**, Paul writes to Timothy near the end of his imprisonment in Rome these surprisingly sad words, "*You are aware that all who are in Asia turned away from me. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains, but when he arrived in Rome he searched for me earnestly and found me.*" (**2 Timothy 1:16-17**) Paul comes to the last few lines of his letter to Timothy where he writes just before he's executed, "... *everyone deserted me.*" (**2 Timothy 4:16**)

### Vs. 17

Paul uses the Greek word "apologia"; it is where we get our word "apologetics" which means to provide an answer. The verb "*appointed*" means to be destined for a specific place.

#### The Second Response to Attacks is to Reveal the Motive

Their motive isn't love for Paul, but envy and strife. Paul writes at the end of verse 16, "*to add affliction to my chains.*" In other words, Paul was saying "you want to affect me in my imprisonment." Literally, "you want to make my bonds more galling to me . . . even more painful." Their underlying motive was to make Paul's life miserable.

The Roman believers underlying motive of wanting Paul to suffer in prison was based on their belief that Paul's chains were his own doing and God would never allow His chief ambassador to languish for years in prison unless something was wrong with Paul himself.

- Envious preachers in Rome claiming that Paul's imprisonment was the Lord's punishment for some secret sin, just like Job's so called friends accused Job of secret sin
- Others may have thought that the Lord kept Paul in prison because of his inadequate and misleading preaching of God's word

## Philippians 1:12-18

- Some may have thought that Paul was old-fashioned and that a more relevant approach was needed to reach the sophisticated people of Rome. Some church leaders believe that today.
- Others may have argued that if Paul had been completely uncompromising and true to the faith he would have been martyred. So he evidently made a deal with the Romans to protect his life and secure favorable treatment.
- Still others may have maintained that Paul was in prison because he lacked the victorious faith that would have gained his release. He was obviously failing to tap into the Holy Spirit's power. Again, that is preached by the prosperity TV preachers of our day.
- Others would have claimed that the very fact that they were free to preach and Paul's was in prison was proof that God was finished with Paul and was now going to use them instead.

### The Third Response to Attacks is to Resist Revenge

Verse 18 begins with the words "What then?" This can be interpreted, "So what?" or even better "What does it matter?"

For those who lead in a church, the question is not:

- Will you ever hear criticism?
- Will you ever feel the sting of being misunderstood, or purposefully misunderstood?
- Will you ever feel the pain of lonely perseverance?
- Will you ever be the subject of wrongful accusations or false allegations?

The question is, what will you do when it happens?

### The Fourth Response to Attacks is to Wisely Refocus on the Appropriate Priority

It is vitally important to refocus on the appropriate priority, otherwise the conflict will continue its path and inflame again. Later Paul accentuates the importance of refocusing on the appropriate priority in chapter 3 verses 13-14, "...*forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead,*<sup>14</sup> *I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*" What is there to gain by focusing on the past? Focusing on the past is the reason some people cannot move ahead with their spiritual and emotional growth. Being "stuck" in the past can have negative influence on our decisions and behaviors in the future.

The Holy Spirit through Paul gives us a wonderful method for getting unstuck from the past, and it is so simple, "*forgetting those things which are behind...*" It really is that simple. The problem is we make it complicated simply because emotionally, we don't want to release the past and we work up complicated rationalizations, justifications, and excuses for not releasing the past. So the simple answer of "... *forgetting those things that are behind*" doesn't seem difficult.

### The Fifth Response to Attacks is to Intentionally Shape our Attitude on Biblical Principles

**Vs. 18** – The verb "will" is called a "*volitive*" verb, which means this is a decision of the volition, or a decision of the will. The verb is also future tense, which means Paul is saying that this is his decision, not just for the moment while he's writing this letter, but this is his decision he will take in to the future. Paul is effectively fighting this battle on his knees. That is where we should fight battles that are thrown at us.

J. Oswald Sanders wrote in his classic work entitled *Spiritual Leadership*, "*The crowd at large does not usually recognize a leader until he is gone; and then they build a monument for him with the stones they threw at him when he was alive.*"

Paul taught us as the proper responses to attacks.

- Identify the problem
- Clarify the motive
- Resist revenge and refuse to retaliate
- Refocus on the priority
- Intentionally shape our attitude on Biblical principles