
Church in Campbell Weekly News

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LIFE-STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

MESSAGE FOUR

THE DIFFERENT PREACHINGS OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:15-21

In 1:7-11 Paul uses a number of important terms. He speaks of “the defense of the gospel,” “the confirmation of the gospel,” “full knowledge,” “all discernment,” “proving by testing,” and “the fruit of righteousness.” In verse 8 he even refers to the “inward parts of Christ Jesus.” The key to understanding these verses and all the terms and expressions they contain is the experience of Christ. The experience of Christ is the master key which opens the door to the book of Philippians. It is proper to say that the defense of the gospel, the confirmation of the gospel, knowledge, discernment, proving by testing, purity, and the fruit of righteousness are all Christ Himself. Yes, even the defense of the gospel is Christ. If we do not have Christ, there is no way for us to defend the gospel. We can defend it only by Christ, not by eloquence. It is possible to preach the gospel and even to mention Christ quite often without having the reality of Christ in our speaking. In such a preaching of the gospel, there is no ministry of Christ to others. The way to defend the gospel is to minister Christ. Christ is also the genuine confirmation of the gospel, for He is the centrality, the focal point, of the gospel. Apart from Him, there is no confirmation of the gospel.

True knowledge and discernment are also Christ Himself. If we experience Christ day by day, we shall be filled with knowledge and discernment. We shall discern matters not by our natural cleverness, but by the Christ who lives within us. Our experience of Christ will make us wise and tactful. The indwelling Christ is our perceptive power. Although I was a true seeker after the Lord when I was young, I did not know that Christ could be my discernment, my tact, and my perception. But through the years I have come to see that He is the very ability by which I can see into the nature of things. The indwelling Christ is my perception.

In reading the book of Philippians, we need to remember that the experience of Christ is the subject and main emphasis of this book. The controlling factor enabling us to understand Philippians is the experience of Christ. Every aspect of the book is governed by this subject. This is the reason we say that the experience of Christ is the master key which opens the book of Philippians to us. If we apply this key to every verse and phrase in the book, we shall see that Paul’s concern here is nothing other than the experience of Christ.

For example, in suffering for the gospel we may enjoy grace. To enjoy grace is to experience Christ. In Philippians 3 Paul speaks not of grace, but of the power of Christ’s resurrection. However, the power of resurrection in chapter three is the very grace in chapter one. Furthermore, to enter into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings is to suffer for the gospel. This indicates that even in suffering for the sake of the gospel, we need to experience Christ. Although Paul uses many different terms in this book, his subject is one—the experience of Christ. Therefore, if we wish to understand Philippians, we need to read it in light of the fact that its subject is the experience of Christ.

In this message we shall consider the different ways of preaching Christ. According to 1:15-17, some preach Christ out of envy and strife, announcing Him out of rivalry, whereas others preach Christ out of love, with a pure motive. In this matter, today’s situation is the same as that faced by Paul in the first century. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, there were different ways of preaching Christ. The same is true today.

I. PREACHING CHRIST OUT OF AN IMPURE MOTIVE

In 1:15 Paul says, “Some indeed preach Christ even because of envy and strife.” The word *some* here refers to those Christians who were opposing Paul and his ministry (2 Cor. 10:7; 11:22-23). Even at Paul’s time there were some who preached the gospel from envy of Paul’s influence and in strife with him. As the Greek word rendered *strife* indicates, they preached Christ because of faction and partisanship. In 1:17 Paul goes on to say that these “announce Christ out of rivalry, not purely, thinking to raise up affliction in my bonds.” The Greek word for *rivalry* denotes “self-seeking, selfish ambition, faction.” In Greek the word *affliction* means “pressure.” Those who announced Christ out of rivalry endeavored to make Paul’s bonds press him more heavily by depreciating him and his ministry while he was laid aside outwardly from his preaching.

Paul’s affliction in bonds was not mainly due to his preaching of the gospel, but to his defense of the gospel. The Judaizers mixed the gospel with the law and circumcision, but Paul defended the gospel. This caused the riot which put him into bonds (Acts 21:27-36).

II. PREACHING CHRIST OUT OF A PURE MOTIVE

In 1:15 Paul says that some also preached Christ out of good will. These were the ones who had fellowship, participation, in the preaching of the gospel with Paul and worked together with him for the defense of the gospel, preaching Christ out of love.

It is commonly thought among Christians that as long as we all believe in Christ as the Savior, worship the same God, teach the Bible, and preach the gospel, everything is all right. Although all Christians believe in the same Lord Jesus, worship the same God, teach the same Bible, and preach the gospel, they may have different ways of preaching Christ. It is very clear from Paul's word in 1:15-17 that even in the first century there were different ways of preaching Christ. Both Paul and the Judaistic believers preached Christ, but in their preaching of Him they were very different.

Because there are different ways of preaching Christ, we need knowledge and discernment. This was the reason Paul prayed for the Philippians that their "love may abound yet more and more in full knowledge and all discernment" (1:9). We need discernment concerning the different preachings of Christ. Christians all over the world are preaching Christ. However, we should not think that simply because all are preaching the same Christ, everything is fine. We need to realize that there are different ways of preaching Christ and discern between them. Hence, we are burdened in this message to cover the matter of the different ways of preaching Christ.

Concerning the gospel, Paul uses in Philippians several significant terms: "fellowship unto the gospel" (1:5), "the defense and confirmation of the gospel" (1:7), "the advancement of the gospel" (1:12), "the faith of the gospel" (1:27). We all need to have a clear understanding of these aspects of the gospel and not take them for granted. Whenever we read these expressions in Philippians, there should be a deep response within us.

Christians often speak of preaching the gospel; however, seldom do we hear believers talk of having fellowship in the gospel or unto the gospel. Even we ourselves are not very familiar with this term or accustomed to using it. The term "fellowship unto the gospel" may seem like an utterance in a foreign language. This indicates that we are still under the influence of our religious background, not adequately familiar with Paul's terminology concerning the gospel. Let us learn to use Paul's language with respect to the gospel. Let us speak of the fellowship of the gospel, the defense of the gospel, the confirmation of the gospel, the advancement of the gospel, and the faith of the gospel.

When many Christians preach the gospel today, they do not do so in the way of the fellowship of the gospel. They are not engaged in the defense of the gospel, and they do not exercise for the confirmation of the gospel. Their preaching may not lead to the advancement of the gospel, and they may

not even have an adequate understanding of the faith of the gospel. For this reason, there are different ways of preaching Christ. Paul's preaching of Christ included fellowship, defense, confirmation, advancement, and faith. But when the Judaistic believers preached Christ, they preached Him in an altogether different way. Instead of preaching Christ in the way of fellowship, they preached Him because of envy. Instead of preaching Christ in a way to defend the gospel, they did so because of strife. Yes, the Judaistic believers did preach Christ, but their preaching was not for the confirmation of the gospel. On the contrary, they preached Christ out of rivalry, out of faction and selfish ambition. Instead of all the positive aspects of the gospel, there were envy, strife, and rivalry. Such a preaching of the gospel did not cause the advancement of the gospel.

In principle, today's situation is the same as the situation in Paul's time. Many are preaching Christ, but in this preaching we can discern envy, strife, and rivalry in place of fellowship, defense, confirmation, advancement, and faith. Therefore, we need to adopt Paul's vocabulary concerning the gospel and in a proper way, with humility and love, share this with other believers who are open to us. Perhaps the Lord will give many of the young people an opportunity to share with their parents what Paul meant by fellowship unto the gospel and by the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

Burdens for Church Prayers

- Pray for the enjoyment of reading Philippians
- Pray for 6th grade conference
- Pray for Russian speaking saints for their needed shepherding from past co-workers.
- Pray for Boston Training Center that all the practical needs will be met.
- For daily exercise in GOW training: prophesying on Lord's day by daily enjoying His word and pursue the truth and attend Lord's day meeting on time.
- Pray for migration to the 30 cities for shepherding and establishing churches. And for GTCA of the local people and gospel preaching in our daily living.
- For gospel preaching on West Valley College campus, as well as for English-speaking testimony in Campbell.

Announcement

- Morning Revival: Philippians, chapter 1, I 1:1-5, II 1:6-10, III 1:11-18, IV 1:19-20, V 1:21-26, VI 1:27-30. Life Study 1-8.
- YP Bible Reading this week: Mark chapter 11-12.
- GOW training 4th term, registration deadline 5/15, register with brother Peter.
- Prayer meeting 7:30PM on Tues.(4/26) at meeting hall.
- 5/29 Lord's day blending at Sanborn Park, Saratoga.
- Summer school of truth will be held on July 24-29, Alliance Redwood
- Sixth grade conference 5/13-15, fee \$60.