

## **Bibles???**

### **The Word of God is that Absolute Truth and the Final Authority**

#### **Philippians chapter 1.**

My title for today's message is, *Dealing with Discord with the Church*

Ok, let's get started.

So there was a man, he was stranded on a deserted island all alone for years.

Kind of like the movie Castaway but without the volleyball. Living on coconuts and the fish he caught.

Finally one day, he was found.

So a rescue team was sent to pull him off the island and bring him back to civilization.

The man realizing that he was never coming back to the island was happy to see the rescuers and wanted to give them a tour of what he had done and how he had lived on the island for the last several years.

So the man brought them to a hut where he lived all the years.

He showed them his bed and makeshift table that he had made out of palm branches.

He tells them, "This is the home that I built with my own two hands." They were impressed. And then, he took them a few hundred yards from his

house and showed them a second building. And then he said, “This is the church that I built with my own two hands.”

Now, he was alone on the island. But he said, this is the church I built with my own two hands.

And then, somebody from the rescue party noticed a third building which stood not far from the second building.

And they said, “what about that building over there, what is that?”

The man looks at hut and then said, “Oh, well that, there is nothing to look at there, that's just the church I used to go to.”

If you've been a believer and have gone to church for very long, you know that - that sentiment is not far off.

You see, contention and discord happen at every church you walk in. You leave one church, they will be there waiting for you in the next church that you walk into.

Every church.

And when I say church, I mean congregation – after all, we are the church, not the building. It's not the buildings fault – it's ours.

**And this contention and discord disillusioned many believers** – I thought things would be different going to a Christian church.

As a young Christian, I used to attend a church that had a singles bible study on Friday nights.

So I decided to give a try and meet people that were my age, After a few Friday nights of meeting new people, I was approached by a young man who pulled me aside and said, “Be careful, that’s my girl”

This is church.

The reality church is that we are all fallen, we are all sinful and we are all imperfect.

Remember, Jesus said, when he gave his sermon to that synagogue in Nazareth, he said that He had come-- his words-- to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to give sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed.

Did you hear the description of the audience he speaks about?

Poor, broken hearted, captives, blind and oppressed.

I have heard it been said that church life can be compared to being on a long road trip with your entire church family. Sooner or later, you will be disturbed by everyone’s nuisances.

The way they talk, the way they breathe, the way they smell, the way they sing, the way they dress.

So the question becomes if we are commanded to love one another, encourage one another, pray for one another – how do we persevere during these times where we might feel that we were wronged?

How do we deal with contention and discord within the church?

Do we simply go on to the next church, like I said earlier - discord and contention will follow. Do we stop going to church – that is not the solution. We better figure it out now because we will be spending eternity with each other.

In the text that we are going to study this morning, Apostle Paul is going to demonstrate not only to the church in Philippi but to us as well, how to deal with contention and discord when it originates from within the church.

Let's pray...

**[Phi 1:15-18 NKJV] 15 Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 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.**

Last week, in our study, we spent the entire morning going over three verses (12-14),

Paul, in his letter, was encouraging the church in Philippi and letting them know that despite his imprisonment, despite him not being able to go to the different churches to preach the gospel, God's will was still getting done.

The gospel was still being preached because he was still able to preach to those that came to visit him as well as the Roman soldiers who took turns being chained to him. The gospel was being still being preached by others who were sharing the gospel.

Let me ask you something...

Is God's will still getting done today? Is He still in control?

Of course –

We might not realize it by watching the evening news.

The constant attack on our Christian values by the world – especially on the word of God.

Right now, the world says, keep your religious beliefs to yourselves –

I am confident that in the near future, that will not be sufficient, they will be telling us to change our religious beliefs.

However, this should not surprise us because we are warned about it throughout scripture.

**[Mar 13:13 NKJV] 13 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved.**

We are told to simply endure – to not give in, to not give up the fight. To continue to race.

We have accounts after account early on in the book of Acts how Peter and John were arrested and beaten and warned about preaching the gospel by the religious leaders.

Apostle Paul before he was converted, as Saul, he was persecuting Christians, gathering them and imprisoning them and even having them put to death.

There is a book by the name of Foxe's book of Martyrs – if anyone is interested, I can email it to you. I have it in PDF format.

It goes into detail the persecution of the church throughout its history.

People burned alive, tortured, beaten, and crucified – all for preaching the name of Christ.

Despite the world's constant persecution, the church grew.

However, not all persecution is from the world. There is persecution that comes from the church itself.

You see, from the beginning of church, Satan realizes that outside persecution alone wasn't going to bring down the church.

So what did Satan do? He simply joined the church.

And by joining the church, he would do more damage than any persecution that came from outside the church.

The story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is a wonderful illustration of this. Go and turn with me to Acts 5.

**[Act 5:1-5 NKJV] 1 But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. 2 And he kept back [part] of the proceeds, his wife also being aware [of it], and brought a certain part and laid [it] at the apostles' feet. 3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back [part] of the price of the land for yourself? 4 "While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." 5 Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things.**

To understand the story of Ananias and Sapphira, you have to go back to the end of the previous chapter.

Because in chapter four, we are introduced to Barnabas and he had sold a plot of land and had given the money to the early church.

The differences between Barnabas and Ananias and Sapphira is that their intentions were very different.

Barnabas, whose name means encourager, did it in sincerity. He saw the need of the early church and he responded.

Ananias and Sapphira, did it because they wanted the recognition that they saw Barnabas receive.

To make matters worse, they proceeded to lie about how much they had given in order to receive higher recognition that they actually deserved.

**They wanted credit for a sacrifice that never existed.**

Their sin was not that they didn't give all the proceeds to the church, their sin was that they lied about how much they gave. And because the church was blossoming during this time, God took it upon Himself to cut away this cancer before it spread to the rest of the church.

The consequences, God strikes Ananias and moments later, God strikes Sapphira after she refused to repent and reveal their true intentions. Look at what Peter told Ananias again in verse 3,

**3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back [part] of the price of the land for yourself?"**

Satan had filled the hearts of Ananias and his wife with envy.

**"Why should Barnabas get all the attention – we want some for ourselves"**

You see, the problem with envy is that it goes beyond coveting what someone else has. Envy also means that you believe that the person doesn't deserve what they have.

Envy is something that we must be careful about church, you see, envy was the reason that the Religious Rulers (Pharisees and Sadducees) sought to have Jesus Christ killed.

They didn't want lose their position amongst the Jewish people.

They didn't want to lose their status within the community.

That was more important for them than to receive the Savior that stood before them.

This is what's going on in the early church as Paul is describing here in verse 15.

**Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill:**

He is describing two groups of people, one of the groups is preaching the word out of envy and strife.

**These were Christian men who were preaching the gospel out envy and strife.**

**How do we know that they were Christian?**

The last verse we covered last week.

**[Phi 1:14 NKJV] 14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.**

Many of these guys saw that God's will had not stopped despite Paul being in prison and this embolden them.

**"If God can continue to use Paul while he is still in chains, then surely God can use me"**

The problem is that some did it with the wrong intentions.

How do you preach the word of God with envy? You talk bad about other pastors. You talk bad about other churches – other congregations.

Based on what the scriptures are telling us here in the book of Philippians, there were people going around preaching the Word of God and in the process, bad mouthing Apostle Paul.

Envy is still alive in the church today.

There are people that are involved in the ministry that preach the Word of God out of envy. Pastors that are envious of other pastors – regarding how big their church is.

The problem is that it's not even their church, it's God's church.

One of the greatest missteps that a pastor can do is to fall into the temptation to “wish” for something better.

All this does is produce a sense of disappointment and discontent.

Instead of offering praises to God for the blessing of being able to equip a church, they have their eyes set on other sheep.

There are others within the church that are envious of other people's ministry.

“I can't believe they made that guy a deacon. Look at his kids – I would have made a better deacon”

Or that guy can't even hold a tune and he is leading worship.

My first pastor, Raul Reis, as people would fill out their ministry applications to serve in the church, he would assign them to either parking duties or toilet duties.

Those that were sincere about serving, they didn't care.

They were serving. They were doing it unto the Lord.

Others said "no way" – I want to be a Sunday school teacher or a Youth Pastor and they would leave the church.

You see, those people are only in ministry to lift up themselves, **all they seek is a title**, instead of lifting up the one who deserves to be lifted up and that is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Verse 15 also tells us that these group of believers were also preaching the gospel out of strife, meaning that they did it just because they wanted to be combative or argumentative.

There are people who love to argue about everything. You explain your position to them and they continue to argue.

I did a home bible study for about 5 years for Calvary Chapel of Sahuarita, and one time I had a lady who walked in and the first thing she asked was, what bible translation was I planning on using. She was an Old King James person.

She didn't stick around for very long – especially after I pointed out that the word unicorn is listed in the OKJV at least 6 times.

People in the church love to argue – for the sake of arguing and this has been occurring from the beginning.

Paul also states in verse 17 that this group was motivated out of selfish ambitions.

This is a very interesting term. It is a political term that speaks about a politician canvassing for office. Using negative campaigns, putting other people down to make themselves look better.

This doesn't happen anymore does it??

All of this was done at the expense of Paul.

In the book of Acts, we have the sermon that Paul gave the elders of the church in Ephesus. Turn with me to Acts 20.

**Remember, these guys are "elders" in the church.**

Let's look at what Paul tells them.

**[Act 20:29-38 NKJV] 29 "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.**

This is exactly what these guys were doing.

But look at the way Paul reminds them of his own conduct as he was with them.

**31 "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears. 32 "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34**

**"Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. 35 "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' " 36 And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. 37 Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him, 38 sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.**

Paul is demonstrating to them the heart of a true servant. One who is driven by the gospel, And he is telling them this despite the revelation that God had already given to him that some of these same elders that were weeping with him, were doing it with the wrong intentions.

**How sad!**

So here's a group of people putting Paul down to puff themselves up, like a politician might do in a campaign ad.

Again, preaching the gospel with wrong motives.

Not only were these group of believers preaching the gospel out of envy, strife and selfish ambitions, verse 17 also states that they did all of this to hurt Paul.

They wanted to Paul to suffer the humiliation that somehow these guys were better at proclaiming the gospel than he was – especially because he was under house arrest awaiting trial.

These individuals saw the opportunity to increase their influence in the early church.

So what is Paul's response to this group's action???

**[Phi 1:18 NKJV] 18 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.**

Paul's response can be summed up in two words... So what!

But Paul, these people are saying all these lies about you – so what!

But Paul, these guys are preaching with the wrong motives and they are claiming to be better than you – so what!

Was Paul someone who was so thick skinned that he didn't allow any of this to affect him?

I don't believe so, I believe that Paul was deeply hurt by what the others were saying about him.

In the same way we are hurt by gossip that might go on in church and false accusations.

However, and here is the reason for his response, he wasn't going to allow this group of individuals to rob him of his joy.

Paul was once again looking at the big picture.

And Paul had every reason to rejoice as the message of the gospel was still being preached.

Even though their motives were wrong, the message that they preached was the right message. The gospel.

And there were people being saved because of it.

Please memorize this verse –

**[Isa 55:11 NKJV] 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper [in the thing] for which I sent it.**

The gospel is never spoken in vain, and never fails to produce the effect which God intends.

This is why we continue to share the gospel with nonbelievers. That is why we continue to share the gospel to the prodigals that are in our families and in our communities.

The gospel will have an effect in their lives because God's word doesn't return to Him void. The seed has been planted, it is slowly starting to soften that person's heart.

Apostle Paul wasn't focused on the motives or the intentions of these people.

That was between them and God. God will judge them for their intentions.

Paul was focusing on the correct message of the gospel getting out to the multitudes.

Note this, The power is always on the message and never on the messenger.

Never forget, it is the work of the Holy Spirit that saves people and never the preacher. God is the only one who adds to the church.

Billy Graham's main objective was to preach the gospel. That is what he did faithfully for all those years.

God used Billy Graham mightily to proclaim the gospel – and the message of the gospel did not return void as millions responded to the gospel.

The question will then be asked, what if these people with false motives started preaching a perverse gospel – one that was different from Jesus Christ being the only way to salvation.

Turn with me to the book of Galatians 1. Because Paul addresses this.

**[Gal 1:6-10 NKJV] 6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if**

**anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. 10 For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ.**

If the message is tampered in any way shape or form, as a pastor, it is my responsibility to point them out.

That is why I can call out the gospels that are preached by the Church of Ladder Day Saint or the JW's or any other cult.

That message has been tampered.

This is no longer out of envy – this is out of love to make sure that you are aware that what they preach is contrary to the Word of God.

Ultimately what Paul is saying throughout this entire ordeal is, **I'm not called to defend myself. I'm called to defend the gospel.** I'm not called to protect myself from these attacks, I'm called to proclaim the gospel.

As long as the true message of the gospel is being preach – **I will rejoice!**

In closing,

I believe that many of the discords that occur in the church are all part of Satan's ultimate plan. To divide the church, to distract us from the commission that we were given.

How do we overcome it? By focusing on the glory of Jesus Christ

We must have the mindset that Paul had – So what?

Our lives here are only temporary. We have to focus on the eternal.

I think one of the things that God has placed in my heart is to lift up the other churches in the area that are proclaiming the gospel.

I think that part of what is happening in the church today is not a stand for righteousness as much as a stand for personal preferences and opinions.

I believe it is a waste of time and energy and ultimately that time and energy can be investing in sharing the Gospel with those that are lost.

Amen...

Let's pray...

Dear Jesus,

Please forgive me of all of my sins.

I know that my sin has separated me from You and I am deserving of death.

I believe that you died for my sins and rose again.

I turn from my sins and I am asking that You come into my life.

Show me how to live my life that is right and pleasing to You.

I accept You as my Lord and Savior.

In Jesus name I pray.