

[what's my motivation?]

:: philippians 1.15-18 ::

When filming a scene, actors will sometimes approach their director and ask 'What's my motivation?'

They are wondering why their character would say or behave in the way that is scripted. What is it that is causing the action? Knowing their character's motivation will assist them in acting intensely and realistically.

Paul speaks to us about motivation in our next portion of Philippians chapter 1. He's been talking about the preaching of Christ and his confidence in the master plan of God to bring men to salvation. He's explaining how God has a specific plan for each of us and is orchestrating our lives in such a way that we will accomplish His will in even the most mundane of situations.

But now, he takes a moment to speak to us about what the driving force behind our spiritual lives is, especially when it comes to preaching Christ.

Beginning in verse 15 we read:

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.

We see a lot here about 'preaching Christ.' What we need to do is set aside the idea we might have that 'preaching Christ' is only what evangelists or pastors do behind a podium. Every Christian is given the privilege of preaching Christ through their words and through their behavior. Each of us are charged with the command to go and make disciples throughout the world. We make disciples by telling others about who Christ is, what He has done and why they need Him. That is preaching. For a Christian, simply *living* is preaching. So, Paul's comments here are not meant for only a few individuals who prepare sermons, but for all believers, everywhere.

In our text there are 4 different categories we might find ourselves in. 4 different mindsets that will effect our Christian life. They all deal with the motivation behind our action.

The first category is not specifically listed but should nevertheless be mentioned. That is the category of those believers who are **without** motivation. These are Christians who have not taken up the call to discipleship. Instead, they are stalled in their walk with God. They are the ones that sit while God moves. They are spiritually inanimate. Not taking part in God's work. Not taking part in God's grace. Not taking part in anything.

These are like the tribes of Israel who refused to conquer their inheritance in Canaan. They sat back and watched a few other tribes do what *they* were charged to do, but instead they did nothing.

In America I believe this category to be not only possible but actually quite popular in the Church at large. It doesn't have to cost us very much to be a Christian here in the States. We're not under persecution. We have a huge amount of freedom. We have great wealth and luxury here. Those aren't bad things, however those blessings tend to produce complacency in our lives if we're not diligent to keep moving forward with the Lord.

In this letter, Paul is talking about getting from Point A: Salvation to Point B: Completion. A person is not going to experience the full completion of Jesus Christ if they refuse to walk forward with Him. If we refuse to go and to grow (which is our choice to make), then we will find that our lives have been quite literally wasted on temporal things.

The second category of motivation is listed in verse 15 and 16:

Philippians 1.15a-16 - Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife...[They] preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains;

There were those who felt they were in competition with Paul. This category of people were preaching Christ, they were doing ministry, but they were doing it for selfish ambition, for pride, for personal glory and gain. More than that, they were hoping to actually hurt Paul as he suffered in prison.

Unfortunately, this is not a problem that was unique to Paul and it is not a problem that has gone away over the centuries.

As you live out the Christian life, you will find that there are other believers out there who are trying to push you down so that they can build themselves up. We'll talk about how to spot these people and then how to deal with them in a moment, but first our desire is to figure out if we as individuals are headed for this category and what to do about it.

When we evaluate our motivation in the Christian life, we should search very carefully for pride and ambition and self-glorification. Those characteristics are not compatible with the model of Jesus Christ. They are not compatible with the filling of the Spirit. Yet, I would dare to say that they are the most frequent and most persistent shortcomings we find within our hearts.

Our desire is to serve the Lord, but if we couple that with a desire to glorify ourselves, then we are perverting the ministry. Getting free from this craving for personal recognition or personal fame is incredibly challenging, but we **must** do it if we want to be completed in Jesus Christ.

There are a number of reasons we could talk about, but here are just 2.

First, God will not share His glory. Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 9 are the prime examples of this principle, but throughout the Scriptures we find that if we try to take any part of God's glory, the result is judgment, either immediately or in the future.

Second, when we are motivated by a desire for personal glory or fame, we inevitably attack our brothers and sisters in Christ. Jealousy and envy will always lead to strife and division, as we try to **take** from others so that we can have it ourselves. This kind of motivation leads to a strange spiritual cannibalism which hurts the Body of Christ in unimaginable ways.

The third category of motivation is what Paul called 'goodwill.' Back in verse 15 and then 17:

Philippians 1.15,17 - Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill...[They preach] out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.

This category is an interesting one. When you compare the different translations, it seems to indicate that this group were preaching with pure motives, but their efforts seemed to be focused on Paul. Their desire was to assist him and to encourage him. They saw what was going on in his life and seemed to dedicated their service to him.

Their motive was love, but it was more love for Paul than it was love for the lost.

Now, without criticizing them too much, we do want to focus our hearts the way Jesus did. We want to be motivated in our faith the way He was. Not only focused on how we can encourage other believers, but how we can extend a lifeline to the lost, who are only moments away from an eternity in hell.

That Christ-modeled motivation is the fourth category, demonstrated by Paul, who said:

Philippians 1.18 - 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 was focused on his calling. He was motivated by the Spirit of God. Throughout this whole section, Paul is pointing out how important it is to be confident in where God has placed you and accomplishing His will there. Because he knew that he was in the place that God wanted him to be, he was able to rise above the attacks, rise above the discouragement, and see heaven's perspective with heavenly urgency. He lived completely above pettiness and in spiritual contentment.

This is where we want to be. Because the Holy Spirit is concerned with saving the lost. The Holy Spirit is concerned with encouraging other Christians. The Holy Spirit is concerned with doing the right thing the right way. And so, if the Holy Spirit is our motivation in life, then we're going to accomplish those things and avoid the others. And now we're on the fast track to being men who are dynamically used by God, in His timing, for *His* glory.

But what about the divisive folks back in category 2? Did Paul really say that he was excited about their ministry and their attitude?

Well, not really. He rejoiced that Christ was preached. Obviously he understood that those divisive glory hounds were dangerous. They weren't going to receive an invite to teach at any of the churches he founded. But since he was right in the middle of God's will, since he understood that his chains were of Christ, not of men, his location was of Christ, not of men, his ministry was of Christ, not of men, then he didn't have to be afraid of these guys who were trying to hurt him. And, he was able to rejoice in the fact that God was accomplishing His work, despite their sinfulness. God was furthering the Good News of salvation *despite* the fact that men were trying to profit from it.

What they were doing was wrong, but God, by His grace, could work in spite of that sin.

Of course, this would lead us to the famous statement: should we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. But, the work of Christ is not hamstrung by our shortcomings. And that is a very encouraging

thought. Because we are sinners and we will fail. But God does not fail and His faithfulness to us will not fail either. He must deal with our sin, but He continues to work in us despite the fact that we are currently imperfect in our service.

So what do we do? How do we spot the negative categories and make sure that we're in the place we want to be?

First, we need to evaluate our lives to see if we *have* any motivation to preach the Gospel. Do we have any desire to bring people to Jesus? Do we have any excitement to share with others about the Lord?

If not, then we've fallen out of the realm of discipleship and into the lukewarmness of complacency. If that describes us, we need to get out of that place *FAST*, because our lives are literally being wasted and we're not moving forward with God.

Second, we need to evaluate our lives to see if we're trying to grab up glory for ourselves. Are we trying to make a name for ourselves? If so, we need to realize that God cannot share His glory that way, and we will inevitably start hurting other believers as we try to steal ministry from them.

While we're on this topic, you're going to encounter these sorts of Christians from time to time. We do not know the heart, but, luckily, God does. He will give us discernment by His Holy Spirit to spot this kind of motivation in a person. The thing to do is to ask for discernment. Then, if you see a person trying to steal Christians from other churches or trying to gain fame or trying to prop themselves up, you just need to distance yourself from that person. God may use them, He may use them to preach the Gospel, but we don't want to be categorized with them and we don't want to be cannibalized *BY* them.

And then third, we need to evaluate our lives to see if we are only focused on our Christian friends. Are we only mindful of the people we already know and care about, or do we have a genuine desire to save souls from hell? If we don't have that desire, the answer, again, is to ask for it. To ask the Lord to give us more of a burden for the lost. We're not going to abandon our fellow Christians, but we will be excited to bring in others from darkness to light.

God has a specific calling for each man here today. If you want to get moving in your Christian life, then get focused on the Holy Spirit. He is the greatest motivator you could ever hope for. If we surrender ourselves to Him and if we allow Him to direct our lives, then we will find that confidence, that assurance, that excitement, that maturity, that encouragement for believers and compassion for the lost that we see in Paul and want for our own lives.