

Motives for Preaching

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Both the attitudes and motives for *preaching* the gospel of Christ are vital for its success in the sight of God. The consequences of effective preaching far out weigh any other endeavor. Preaching will result in the eternal salvation of some and the eternal damnation of others, depending upon what is preached and the condition of the hearts who hear it. When the apostle Paul said: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21), he was talking about the **fact** of preaching the gospel and not the **merits** or **character** of the person doing the preaching.

Both the enormous good and potential danger of preaching are found in the fact that the gospel is a tremendous power to change the hearts and lives of men and women so that they might be saved eternally (Rom. 1:16); and also in the fact that the preacher is dealing with the most precious possession in all the world: the soul of man. How could any labor be greater and of more serious consequence than preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ? Its importance cannot be measured in terms of earthly wealth, and the good that may be done will span centuries in influence, and eternity in destination.

Most preachers are dedicated men, honest and sincere about their work of preaching the gospel of Christ. Unfortunately, some preach from other motives. Paul described some: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (Phil. 1:14-18).

These verses touch on the motives and attitudes of preaching. Paul affirms that his imprisonment in Rome had advanced the gospel, because guards, servants and all in the palace, and other places knew of his bonds for the sake of Christ and the gospel. Paul was bound, but the gospel is not bound (2 Tim. 2:9). The news of Paul's bonds spread even to Caesar's household (Phil 4:22). Many brethren became "much more bold" to preach the word of Christ without fear by Paul's courage, even in chains, to preach Christ, without severe and immediate punishment.

Peter and John were arrested soon after Pentecost for preaching Christ. The priests and Sadducees saw the **boldness** of these two, "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Boldness to preach Christ does not guarantee the right motive and attitude. That will come to light in the course of one's preaching. "Many of the brethren in the Lord" became confident by Paul's example in bonds and were "much more bold to speak the word without fear." "Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will" (Phil. 1:15). This portrays motives for preaching Christ.

These brethren in the Lord were Christians in Rome. Paul wrote a letter to the church in Rome and told them he longed to come to them to impart some spiritual gift that they might be established, but he had been hindered (Rom. 1:10-13). There were Jewish as well as Gentile Christians in Rome. Where this envy originated, we can not be sure. Paul was a prisoner in his own hired house for two whole years, and he received all who came to him. He preached the kingdom of God and the things concerning Jesus Christ, with all confidence (Acts 28:30-31).

Envy And Strife

Webster's New Century Dictionary defines *envy* as: "hatred, ill will . . . to look askance at; in, upon, and **videre**, to look, see.

1. Uneasiness, mortification, or discontent at the sight of another's superiority or success, accompanied with some degree of hatred or malignity, and often or usually with a desire or an effort to depreciate the person envied . . . ; envied, envying . . .

1. To feel envy toward; to look upon with envy; to hate (another) for excellence or superiority in any way, and to be desirous of acquiring it, as to envy a wealthy man.

2. To feel envy on account of: to look grudgingly upon, as the advantages possessed by another; to regard with a covetous spirit; as, he envies your superior knowledge; they envied his advancement."

W. E. Vine says of *envy*:

"Phthonos. envy, is the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others; this evil sense always attaches to this word, Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10; Rom. 1:19; Gal. 5:21; Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4; Tit. 3:3; 1 Pet. 2:1; so in Jas. 4:5, where the question is rhetorical and strongly remonstrative, signifying that the Spirit (or spirit) which God made to dwell in us was certainly not so bestowed that we should be guilty of envy."

"Zelos, zeal or jealousy, translated 'envy' in the A.V., in Acts 13:45; Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; 2 Cor. 12:20; Jas. 3:14,16, is to be distinguished from phthonos, and, apart from the meanings "zeal" and "indignation," is always translated 'jealousy' in the R.V. The distinction lies in this, that envy desires to deprive another of what he has, jealousy desires to have the same or the same sort of thing for itself." (W. E. Vine).

Envy is an infection of the heart that began long before it came to the surface, and destroys the one who possesses it. Through self-interest and greed this infection burrows into the mind like a virus into the blood stream. It is an evil which causes one to waste away (etymology of word). Envy is "rottenness of the bones" (Prov. 14:30).

Envy caused the death of Abel. It caused Joseph to be cast into the pit (Acts 7:9). It caused Jesus to be delivered to be put to death (Mark 15:10). When Paul preached in Antioch, almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. When the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with *envy*, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming (Acts 13:44-45). **Love never envies** (1 Cor. 13:4). Envy is a detestable state of mind, and breeds hate, strife and division. Envy and selfish ambition go together. The factious party spirit is the

fertile soil in which envy and jealousy breed. The bitter fruits of envy and strife divide preachers and brethren today. The saddest part of this is that those who are envious deny it vehemently.

Malice is that badness, perversity and wickedness of the mind that breeds and manifests envy of the heart. *Jealousy* is afraid of losing what it has, and *envy* hates the person who has anything.

Those who preached Christ of envy and strife were not charged with preaching another gospel (Gal. 1:6); or another Jesus (2 Cor. 11:4). There is no indication that any of these mentioned in Philippians 1:15-16 were false teachers. But while they were preaching Christ, they were preaching from different motives. This is what divided the preachers in Rome into two groups. The first group preached from envy and strife. It may have been that Paul's courage in his bonds to preach Christ in the very seat of the Roman government, and his preaching overshadowed them, caused them to envy him. They sought to make his bonds more difficult by their preaching. Their real motive was to inflict anguish upon Paul, of whom they had become envious.

This act of envy is repeated among some preachers today. A man will work long and hard to establish a congregation in a community, only to receive barbs and hurtful deeds from an envious heart of some preacher. They may use preaching as a means of hurting him and his reputation. One preacher may realize that he can never have the personal influence that another has, or attain the wisdom and knowledge of the scriptures that another has, therefore envy consumes him and destroys what influence and ability he has. He becomes debilitated to the point that he is useless to the cause of Christ.

Why do preachers do this? It is done because they are self-centered and do not want another to receive encouragement and commendation, but want all the praise and honor of men for themselves. By hurting another they suppose they can help themselves. There is no doubt that the love of money and self prestige are at the heart of their envy.

Paul discloses the motives of the heart of these brethren when he says they preach Christ "even of envy and strife . . . of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add afflictions to my bonds." On the other hand, others preach Christ of good will and of love, because they knew Paul was set for the defense of the gospel. The envious were willing to aggravate Paul's affliction in preaching if it served their own selfish interest.

Pride and ignorance contribute to the quibbling about questions and strifes of words, which produce envy, strife, railing and evil surmisings (1 Tim. 6:4). A continuing state of mind in malice and envy produces hating one another. "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). Lust produces envy. "Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?" (James 4:5).

The desire to be the *greatest* produces strife among brethren (Luke 22:24). God's word forbids doing anything through strife or vainglory, but to be humble (Phil 2:3). Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work (James 3:16). Of all men, preachers ought to be without envy, but they are not. Self-love and lust for power, cultivated by the love of money and professionalism in

the pulpit, have seized the life and ability of too many preachers, old and young. The love of money is the source of much evil and sin. "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:9-10). It seems to me that young men today begin with the love of money, the lust for professionalism and the ambition for power over churches. From there on it is down hill to apostasy! What ever happened to genuine faith, humility and dedication to the gospel truth? Can any be redeemed before time yields to eternity for them?

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