

Living for Christ:

Sacrificing for the Gospel

Scripture Passage

“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things [which happened] to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: 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.” (Philippians 1:12-18 NKJV)

Biblical Thesis

Believers should put the Gospel ahead of their own comforts.

Commentary

Paul refers to his imprisonment and argues that it is not an issue about which to worry. In fact, he says it has actually worked out for the furtherance of the Gospel (v.12). Apparently, the palace guard and others had come to understand that Paul’s imprisonment had been orchestrated by Christ Himself (v.13). Now how are we to understand this statement? What was it about Paul’s imprisonment that made the people see Christ?

Evidence of a Godly Life

It is likely that the guard and others were taken by Paul’s unusual demeanor. While the following things are not spelled out in the text, it is reasonable to assume these qualities attended Paul’s life.

1. An unusual calmness in the face of danger
2. A loving attitude toward his captors
3. A commitment to preach Christ under every circumstance

Do these qualities manifest themselves in your life?

Effects of a Godly Life

Paul’s attitude had an impact on his captors, but it also had an impact on his brethren. Many had been emboldened to preach the Gospel even more because of Paul’s imprisonment. You might think the opposite would be true, and likely it would have had Paul displayed a broken and defeated attitude. However, he does not allow himself to waver from his commission. He was able to do this because he saw the Gospel as more important than his own comforts. When a person has this kind of faith, it influences everyone around.

It caused some to preach from envy and strife

Now it is important to understand that Paul's is glad for men to preach Christ even from envy and strife. Some have taken this passage to mean it is ok to preach an errant message as long as you mention Christ's name. This is far from the truth for Paul said if any man preach another Gospel let him be accursed (Gal. 1:9). No, these men were preaching from ill motives, but they preached an orthodox message.

Likely, they were preaching to gain a following since Paul was no longer on the scene as it were. Paul would have overshadowed any other man's ministry. Now, with Him unable to preach freely, others had the opportunity to gain a following.

It caused some to preach from love

Others found courage in Paul's unwavering commitment, and they stepped up to take over out of a love for God and Paul. If Paul could endure his imprisonment for the Gospel, then they would risk the same seeing his faithfulness and joy.

Conclusion

Paul placed the Gospel above his own comforts. God richly rewarded him with a ministry of incredible influence. He was a powerful ambassador for Christ. Living for Christ means we must sacrifice for the Gospel. Jesus said it himself.

“. . . Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:34-38 NKJV)

Will you notice the importance of Jesus' words? This is not a matter of reward or loss. This is a matter of life and death. Are you ashamed of Christ or His words? He will be ashamed of you if you are ashamed of Him.

Father, forgive our weakness. Strengthen us through your word and by your Holy Spirit. We are not ashamed of you, but the flesh wars against the Spirit, and we sometimes lack the courage we desire. Cause us to have a fresh boldness in these dark days. Let the world see our good works that they may glorify you, amen.