



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

5 = An Important Difference

Announcements:
8/11 @8:30 -
Sunday School

AUGUST 18-25
Grace Groups
Relaunched!
SEE SIGN UP
SHEETS

REVIEW: Was there anything covered or said on Sunday that you had any questions or comments about?

ICE BREAKER: What is your Biggest Pet Peeve?

READ: Philippians 1:12-18a

Though we ended up calling the sermon on this passage “Gospel First” I originally thought I might have to title it “Why Paul is a Much Better Person Than I Am. In particular that thought centered on the ending, and the grace that Paul shows to people that, if I were to be honest, I might not want to show that same grace too. They are those who “preach Christ from envy and rivalry.” So today I would like to look at what exactly Paul is talking about here, and see how we can try and be more like Paul.

The first distinction that we have to make is to be sure of what Paul is *not* saying. Not that these people are preaching “Christ”. While their motives may be off (more on this later) the content of their message is still true. This is important because it can help us to see when a gracious heart is warranted and when we need to be more firm. To make this point even more clear: here Paul says that he can “rejoice”; but when people preach “a gospel contrary” to what Paul has preached they should be “accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9). In other words before we dive into people’s hearts we need to first listen to the words that they say. Some things deserve grace, some more fierce condemnation.

DISCUSS: Why is this distinction so important? Can you think of examples (of possibly things other than preaching) where the grace/strictness distinction is important?

So what then is the problem with these preachers? Simply put they are saying the right thing with the wrong heart. They are preachers trying to gain notoriety or fame, possibly they think that being a preacher is an “easy” job that doesn’t require much hard work. Some people think that these people hated Paul so much that as he is arrested for preaching they start to rub it in Paul’s face that he is in prison and they are not. While the details are left out of *exactly* what they are doing there we know enough to know this: The actual presentation of the Gospel is probably about 3rd on their list of priorities. Number one: Be better than Paul (see verse 15). Number two: help yourself (verse 16). Then maybe we think about: what is the truth and how can I preach Christ. Sadly many people still operate in a similar way. Jesus is “convenient” and speaking the truth and being a Christian are to “fit in” or “get ahead”. While this is not to be praised, we should still be grateful that “in every way... Christ is proclaimed”!

DISCUSS: How can we be sure our motives are pure? What is the recourse when we see people operating like Paul says these preachers are?

While there is much application that we can and should make, I would like to end with what is in some ways the most basic question: how can we live in light of these things. Here I have just two simple points. The first is this: do you know God’s Word (and in particular the Gospel of Jesus Christ) to be able to tell the truth when you see it, even when clouded by bad morals? In other words, the first application is to know and love God’s word enough to tell the difference. And the second is this: can you trust God enough that you trust he can use all sorts of broken vessels to get his point across. The truth is, for most all of us, we are never 100% pure in all our motives, and while we should work on that the hope is this: God can still use our message, as long as Christ is preached!

DISCUSS: In other words we have to KNOW and GO. Know what we are preaching and GO and preach it all the time. Which of these is more difficult for you? How can you work on them both?