

January 27, 2013 Sermon Application Handout

“Striving for a Christ-Exalting Perspective”

Philippians 1:12-18

1. Before you begin, pray for understanding (Proverbs 1:23)! Read Philippians 1 in one sitting. Write down some general observations as you go along. What are some of the exhortations you observe in the text? Who is being addressed? What is the context?

2. Read Philippians 1:12-14 again. How does Paul respond despite his difficult circumstance? Is he thriving or is he resentful? Is he despairing or is he hopeful? What is his singular focus and passion?

3. Paul says in verse 12 that his circumstances (imprisonment) have turned out for the greater "progress" of the Gospel. That word "progress" has the idea of an army clearing a path without hindrance or obstacle. Think through your own difficult circumstances and begin to list out ways it can be used for the greater "progress" of the gospel?

4. Why is it that Paul can have such a joyful attitude despite the fact his circumstances were so difficult? Carefully and thoughtfully read Galatians 2:14, 20; Romans 1:16; 1 Cor. 9:16; 1:17; and Philippians 1:21 to help you formulate your answer. What did you find out about Paul's supreme passion? In like manner, what should be every believer's supreme passion?

5. Take time right now to just reflect on your life. Answer honestly, is the Gospel of Christ truly the supreme passion of your life? Is it of utmost importance or have you found that you have lost your focus? If you have lost some focus, spend some time in the Word. Read Revelations 2:2-7; Psalm 119:1-16; and Joshua 1:8. Then begin to list out some tangible ways to refocus your attention.

6. Read Philippians 1:13-17 again. Who are the various groups of people that Paul is talking about? List out the characteristics of each group.

7. Paul saw the bigger picture despite his difficult circumstances. Instead of complaining and growing bitter, he had become an example to the believing community and disciples were being made. Like Paul who was chained to a soldier, are there circumstances in which you are chained to? What are those circumstances and how are you responding? Do you see the bigger picture like Paul did? If you are struggling, stop and pray a prayer similar to this one, "Lord, I do not understand but please help me to refocus my attention and be open to learn the lessons you have set before me. Help me to rejoice and understand that you are using these trials to conform me into the image of your Son Jesus Christ. Help me to make Christ everything and see Him as my only sufficiency."

8. Sometimes when we are faced with difficult circumstances, we also face difficulty in our relationships. What was the difficulty Paul faced with one group of Christians according to verses 15-17? How did he characterize them?

9. Difficult people are evident in the church today. Instead of seeking to build one another up in the body of Christ, they can be so quick to tear people down. All of this is motivated by the same heart issue of the unruly believers Paul dealt with. But despite challenging relationships, how can one maintain a focus on the progress of the Gospel? List out some ways you are doing this today or ways you should be doing this.

10. According to verses 15-16, what should be the heart motive behind striving for a Christ-exalting perspective? What should drive believers toward the progress of the Gospel despite difficult circumstances and/or difficult people? What about you? What is driving your ministry?

11. Joseph was such a great example of a godly man who saw the bigger eternal picture despite his difficult circumstances. Read Genesis 50:1-21. What was his perspective? What did he teach his brothers about God?

12. How about you? What did you discover about your perspective regarding your difficult circumstances and/or difficult relationships? Do you have the bigger picture? Do you view God the way Joseph did? Go to God in prayer and confess your sin. Then ask Him to help you to have an eternal perspective regarding your trials. You may want to pray through Scripture passages like Romans 8:28-29; James 1:2-4 and 1 Peter 1:3-9 to help you understand the bigger picture.

Resources to Help You *Strive for a Christ Exalting Perspective!*

- *Trusting God Even When Life Hurts* by Jerry Bridges
- *The Gospel For Real Life* by Jerry Bridges
- *A Gospel Primer for Christians: Learning to See the Glories of God's Love* by Milton Vincent
- *The Gospel According to Jesus: What is Authentic Faith?* by John MacArthur
- *Be Joyful: Even When Things Go Wrong, You can Have Joy* by Warren Wiersbe.