

“ . . .walk worthily. . .” from the Book of Philippians

Scripture Block: Pp 1:12-30

Theme: TO LIVE, IS TO ACCOMPLISH THE PURPOSES OF GOD.

Life verse: Pp 1:27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

Today's passage: Pp 1:15-18

Notes

Interpretation

During our last study, we saw that many of the believing brothers were more boldly proclaiming the Gospel message (vs. 14). In verses 15-17, we can see that there were two motives among these “preachers” of the good news:

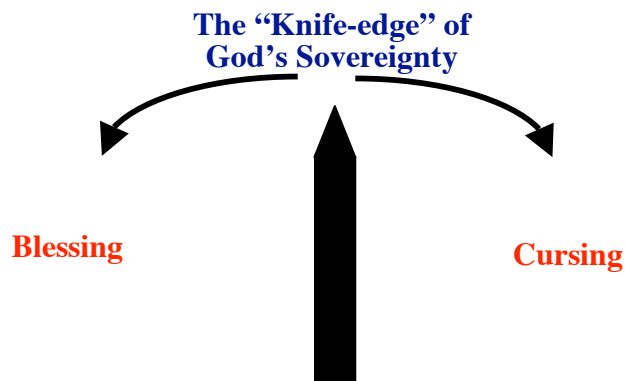
- some were motivated by Paul’s bold witness;
- some were motivated by self and envy.

Paul’s analysis of the above situation, at least initially, seems very peculiar for he says, “But what does it matter?” (vs. 18) How do we understand Paul’s seemingly strange attitude?

1. As long as the Gospel is advancing, it doesn’t matter to Paul how, since he has his eyes on the plan of God.
2. However, in terms of the consequences to the individual preacher (or believer), it matters a great deal indeed!
3. This is a good time to introduce you to something I am going to refer to as the “Knife-edge” of God’s sovereignty.

Application

1. Consider the simple graphic below. Keep in mind—the choices we make will come up against the sovereignty of God, causing us to be “sliced” to one side or the other.



2. Let's develop this graphic with a few Biblical illustrations.

a. Pharaoh—as representative of an unbeliever

You can read the full background of Pharaoh's response to God in the first 12 chapters of the book of Exodus. Briefly summarized, the Israelites had initially been preserved in Egypt, but now were in bondage. In God's timetable, it was time for them to leave Egypt and move to their own land. God sent Moses to Pharaoh with both a clear message of God's intent and a manifestation of His power. At this point, Pharaoh had a choice—he could either respond positively to the revealed will of God by letting the Israelites go, or he could resist the will of God by attempting to maintain control of his slave-labor force. What he didn't understand, and we often don't either, is that the one thing that was not at issue, was whether or not the Israelites were going to leave!

The Israelites did in fact march out of Egypt, because it was God's plan for them to do so. Not only was Egypt left in ruins, but they actually gave booty to the Israelites. It didn't have to be this way, but because of Pharaoh's hardness of heart, he fell on the cursing side of God's sovereignty. You see, the resistance of an unbeliever does not thwart the plan of God; rather, what is at stake is the temporal and eternal condition of the individual.

b. Let's consider the Exodus Generation as representative of believers.

1) I have categorized the Exodus Generation as believers based upon the text of 1 Cr 10:1-4, which makes clear they all drank from the spiritual "rock" that is Christ.

2) God's will was to bring this group of people numbering close to 2 million into a land of their very own, a land "flowing with milk and honey."

3) Not only had he demonstrated his inherent power to accomplish his will through the 10 plagues against Egypt, he also demonstrated his power by parting the Red Sea, supplying water from a rock, food from the heavens, etc. In order to enter into the blessing of the Promised Land, the Israelites simply needed to trust in the provision of their God.

4) However the "giants" of the land loomed too large in their thinking and they choose instead to complain against God. For this reason, even as believers, they fell on the "cursing" side of God's sovereignty because of their lack of faith. (See Heb 3 - 4 for more details).

5) The lesson for all of us—what's at stake is the discipline (cursing) of dying in the desert or entering the Sabbath rest of God!

We have one more challenging aspect of the Knife-edge of God's Sovereignty, which we will look at in the next lesson.