

“Journeys and Destinations – Turning Point”
Pastor Wally Contreras
January 17, 2021

“The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, ‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.’ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as were appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was spreading throughout the whole region. But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them and went to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 13:44-52)

* * * * *

In verse 45, I find that the Jews “were filled with jealousy” after seeing the crowds that had come to hear Paul and Barnabas preach. In what way(s), if any, have I allowed jealousy to impact my relationships, spiritual growth or ministry and why?

“Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave.” (Song of Solomon 8:6) Charles Spurgeon pointed out that, “[w]hen jealousy begins to turn its sharp tooth upon a man’s heart, his reason fails him. Madness takes possession of his faculties. A determined purpose, which he would not have dared to contemplate under the influence of a well-balanced judgment, prompts, plans and performs almost without premeditation, an atrocious crime, when jealousy rules the cruel hour!...No revenge has ever been found too bitter, too malicious, too lawless for jealousy to inflict.” The “revenge” of the Jews against Paul began by contradicting what Paul was saying and “reviling him”. (Acts 13:45) Webster’s 1828 dictionary defines “revile” to mean “to treat with opprobrious (“reproachful; scurrilous (using the low and indecent language of the meaner sort of people)”) and contemptuous language”. What are some of the ways that I’ve seen people treated in a reproachful and scurrilous way?

God’s Word says in Proverbs 23:17, “Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.” To envy or to be jealous of someone does not mean only that I want what someone else has. If I’m honest, I have to confess that being jealous means also that I am sad when things are going very well for someone else. Likewise, I tend to rejoice when things are not going well for another person. Spurgeon went on to say that “‘Jealousy is cruel as the grave.’ ‘Hard’ is the word. ‘Jealousy is hard as the grave.’ Truly the grave is hard. It has not the slightest [remorse]. It holds fast the prey that is taken by its master. As Christians we are, and we must be, lovers of mankind. Men we love—men we would at all times help and serve. No clime nor caste, no geographical line or national character can define the boundary of our

heart's yearning for the welfare of humanity while we act on the commission to preach the Gospel to every creature." Does this describe my heart...that it yearns "for the welfare of humanity while [I] act on the commission to preach the Gospel to every creature" or are there those for whom I hold no remorse for their spiritual condition? Explain.

Jealousy has a twin brother...envy. Proverbs 14:30: "A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot." As a result of my envy of others, has my joy and/or gratitude suffered? If so, how so? If not, why not?

But what of Godly jealousy? John Piper once said that "So the real battle, I think, has to be fought at the level of trusting God. James 3:14–15 says, "If you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above." In other words, James is saying your jealousy is owing to the fact that you are not getting this from heaven. This is not of the Holy Spirit. This is not borne of faith. This is coming from something demon-like and ugly. So we need to kill — I would say kill — sinful jealousy with godly jealousy. Godly jealousy says, "I am jealous that God get all my affections of love and trust and not be given away to anybody else. And if God has them, then my heart will be steadied, and I will not crave the attention that I am sinfully craving in my jealousy of others." So I think really at the root, being eaten up with a sinful jealousy is probably owing to a failure to be jealous enough for God getting all my affections and all my trust and all my allegiance so I can be stable and strong and restful in him." In what way(s), if any, does this describe me, "being eaten up with a sinful jealousy...owing to a failure to be jealous enough for God getting all my affections and all my trust and all my allegiance" and why?

Pastor Wally said that I need to be a Berean. In Acts 17:10-11, I find that "The brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived they went into the Jewish synagogue. Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." This is a part of why we have (hopefully) Digging Deeper discussions. Does this describe me...that I am "eager" to receive the Word and examine the Scriptures daily "to see if these things were so"? If so, why do I think that? If not, why not?

When it comes to the matter of God's election, do I struggle with the idea that it isn't "fair" as opposed to it being a manifestation of God's favor or do I just avoid the topic of God's election in its entirety?

Paul speaking of God's sovereign choice asked, "What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy." (Romans 9:14-16) In Romans 9:30-32, Paul continued to press, "What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, a righteousness that is by faith; but that Israel who pursued a law that would lead to righteousness did not succeed in reaching that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone..." which is Jesus, the Christ. How hard is it for me to grasp the concept that I can obtain something by not pursuing it?

Paul came to a turning point in his ministry from that of preaching to the Jews to sharing the Gospel message with the Gentiles, but note why they changed their "target audience" – it was because "the Lord [had] commanded [them]". When it comes to making major decisions in my life, what has been the driving force behind those decisions? Explain.

To revisit Spurgeon's comments ("When jealousy begins to turn its sharp tooth upon a man's heart, his reason fails him. Madness takes possession of his faculties. A determined purpose, which he would not have dared to contemplate under the influence of a well-balanced judgment, prompts, plans and performs almost without premeditation, an atrocious crime, when jealousy rules the cruel hour!"), we see it played out against Paul and his missionary team in Acts 13:50 ("But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district."). When I watched mobs of people over recent months attacking police, destroying property, and physically assaulting others who have differing opinions, do I believe that their actions were a result of "jealousy rul[ing] the cruel hour" or do I attribute their actions to something else and on what have I based that assessment and why?

It has been said that it takes two to have an argument. What would have happened if one side or the other had simply "[shaken] off the dust from their feet against them" and left?

Paul and his missionary team "were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:52)." How do I normally feel when I walk away from an argument and why?

Are there any life lessons for me in the way that Paul and his missionary team dealt with those who persecuted them? If so, what are they? If not, why not?