

## **Life with Christ**

### **Purpose**

Philippians 1:12-26

### **Excited by Hardship**

Paul wrote Philippians while he was chained under house arrest. For an apostle who was constantly on the move planting and building churches, he should have felt that his ministry was effectively shut down. And yet the opposite was true.

Paul saw his trial as a unique opportunity – a reason to rejoice, and a great benefit for the gospel he so loved.

While most of us struggle through our seasons of trial, Paul seemed to actually be thriving. Every season, good or bad, had its own potential for unique fruit.

We have our versions of being chained:

#### **Circumstances:**

- All of us experience circumstances which restrict our preferred lifestyle.
- Careers, debt, family issues, health and even the economy seem to control us.
- We are in some ways chained to things that are often out of our control.

#### **Captives:**

- Many of us are still chained to the things that have happened to us that are no fault of our own.
- Captives are those who are put in chains by a more powerful force.
- The legacy of parents, bosses, teachers or anyone else who has influence in our lives can linger on if not processed properly.

## Prisoners:

- Prisoners are in chains because of their own actions.
- Our bad choices have ramifications, even when we find God's forgiveness.
- We may have hurt ourselves or other people, and this can't be undone easily.

But Jesus proclaimed good news:

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favour (Is 61:1-2)*

When you are free on the inside – no chains have a hold on you.

Circumstantial joy has its own elastic limit – we are stretched by losing the source of our joy. The only joy without limit is joy in the lord, since He has no limit and never disappoints.

Paul's vision for life was established in being a part of God's greater story. That which mattered to God mattered to Paul. He was constantly defining himself in relation to what was important to God.

As such, all that mattered was the gospel.

## Win/Win

Paul saw two great benefits to the predicament he found himself in.

### 1) Advancement of the gospel

Paul's unique position meant that the palace guard were fully exposed to the gospel.

They heard about it, saw it demonstrated, and then talked together about it.

Your chains too can serve such a purpose.

- You are “Paul” to your workmates and community.
- You are chained to them. Take advantage of that unique opportunity.
- Regardless of your personality, position or limitations – you can demonstrate the effects of the grace of God in your life. That may be through forgiveness, mercy, encouragement or even a state of peace amongst turmoil.
- God has placed you in that place for the gospel.

## **2) The encouragement of others**

- Paul’s optimism and boldness spread.
- The infant churches he planted could have easily responded negatively to their leader being incarcerated, assuming God and His gospel had no power.
- But rather than retreat, His faith and love turned the curse into a blessing.
- Your words and responses are immensely powerful. They can change people’s opinions simply because you demonstrably believe what you do.

Paul was focussed on what he saw as inevitable victories. When we are found in God’s limitless story we can never lose. As soon as we place our own story in first place we falter.

Paul’s ministry was being slandered while he was powerless, and yet he even rejoiced in that.

He wasn’t looking to better himself, there was no advancement here for him. But there was massive potential to advance the gospel, therefore he genuinely rejoiced.

## Your Life Matters

Paul considers for a moment the ramifications of life and death. Again, it is a win/win situation for him since his purpose is found in God.

He appreciates the value of living, even though imprisoned.

Our life's work is never quite over. There are always people to influence and pray for. There are still things to do, great and small, which contribute to God's story.

Your life matters – it always has.

If we find ourselves in the purposes of God we can go from glory to glory, regardless of our physical and emotional state.

*“Sometimes God has to put chains on his people to get them to accomplish a pioneer advance that could never happen any other way.” Warren Wiersbe*

## Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever felt that your circumstances restrict what God wants to do in your life? How do you feel about that after reflecting on this passage?
2. What are your current restrictions? Discuss together how God may have specific work for you to do in that place.
3. What does the statement “To live is Christ” mean to you right now. Does it govern any of the priorities or choices you make?