

Place: Lurgan Baptist 9:11:2014

THE JOURNEY TO JOY

Philippians 1:12-26

4. JESUS, ALL FOR JESUS

Victor Frankl knew the reality of suffering as a prisoner in World War 2. His experience in Nazi German camps enabled him to see life at its worst. Some survived the horrific camps, while the pages of history are besmirched with the blood of those who did not. Victor Frankl wanted to know why. After carefully studying his prisoners he concluded, "*Everything can be taken from men but one thing, the last of human freedoms, to choose one's attitude in any given circumstances.*" Victor Frankl came to realise that while many Jewish prisoners died as the result of starvation, torture and disease, many others died due to the death of their will to overcome. I heard about a little boy who was a perpetual pessimist. He was preparing to take a test and kept saying, "*I know I am going to fail this test.*"

When his father asked him why, the little boy said, "*Because I don't know the material.*" His father replied, "*Son, you have to be positive.*" To which the boy said, "*Okay I'm positive I'm going to fail this test.*" Paul wrote the Philippian letter while he was incarcerated. Yet, when we read Paul's words we do not get the sense that he was dejected, but delighted, not discouraged, but encouraged, not pitiful, but

positive. In fact, his words leave an indelible mark upon our souls as to how God turns tears into telescopes, miseries into milestones, and burdens into blessings. You see, God often has hidden purposes in the adversity He allows. The prisons of our lives can often become places of great opportunity and ministry. Charles Colson, the famed Watergate conspirator, concluded his book "*Loving God,*" with these words,

My lowest days as a Christian (and there were low ones-seven months worth of them in prison, to be exact) have been more fulfilling and rewarding than all the days of glory in the White House.

Was it not that way for the apostle Paul ? For two years he had been a prisoner in Caesarea and now he was a prisoner in Rome. By his own testimony, we know that Paul had a great desire to preach the gospel in Rome. Do you recall his words, "*After I have been there that is Jerusalem, I must also see Rome.*" (Acts 19:21) He says "*So, as much as in me I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*" (Rom 1:15) My Paul lives for Christ and the gospel. Indeed have you noticed that in (1 dir) he speaks of "*the fellowship of the gospel,*" in (1:12) he talks about "*the furtherance of the gospel,*" and in (1:27) he speaks of "*the faith of the gospel.*"

My Paul had one supreme purpose in life and that was to spread the gospel. Nothing else mattered. After his vision of the Lord from Heaven on the Damascus Road, all else took second place to the man with the nail prints in His hands. God in Christ had invaded

time, and only the truths that related to Him were important in this life. Salvation from sin, a home in Heaven, union with Christ, life in a new dimension, and driven by a new dynamic were the glorious realities that everybody needed to know. And Paul's sole goal in life was to make Christ known. He could truly sing, "*Jesus all for Jesus all I am and ever hope to be.*" My Paul didn't find joy in ideal circumstances, he found joy in winning others to Jesus Christ, and if his circumstances promoted the gospel that was all that mattered. That's why we see here that,

(1) HIS IMPRISONMENT WAS PURPOSEFUL

When he referred in (1:12) to "*the things which happened unto me,*" he was reminding the Philippians that he had experienced some difficult days. Well, what happened to Paul ? Well, if you read the latter part of the book of Acts you'll discover, that he was falsely accused (Acts 21:28) then he was illegally arrested, and he remained a prisoner in Caesarea for two years. (Acts 24:27) After appealing to Caesar, Paul was nearly shipwrecked on his way to Rome, (Acts 27:44) and now he finds himself imprisoned in his own hired house chained daily to a Roman soldier. (Acts 28:16)

My *Paul wanted to go to Rome as a preacher, but instead he went as a prisoner.* (Acts 19:21 Rom 1:15)

It seemed as if his voice had been silenced, his work had been stopped, and his ministry had been stymied. But Paul turns the opposition into an opportunity. He did not complain about his chains, he consecrated them to God and asked the Lord to use them for the

furtherance of the gospel. So the things that happened instead of shutting the door, opened the door. His frustrations brought fulfilment's, his adversity an advantage, and his difficulties became doors. God took the negatives and turned them into positives. "*The things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.*" (1:12) You see, through Paul's imprisonment,

(a) GOD DID A WORK OF EVANGELISM:

The word "*furtherance,*" means "*to cut before,*" "*to cut down in advance,*" the picture is that of cutting away trees and undergrowth, removing barriers which would hinder the progress of an army. Paul says, "*my chains have not hindered me, in fact my chains have removed barriers, I'm doing a bit of pioneer work, I'm cutting down a new road for the gospel.*" Do you see that word "*palace,*" ? That was the Praetorian Guard. The Praetorian Guard was the elite of the Roman army. They were the Imperial Guard of Rome. They served a term of 12-16 years, received double-pay and special privileges. ***They were somewhat like the Musketeers of Rome.*** They were the Emperor's personal army and bodyguards, 10,000 hand-picked men of Italian birth. Again, the word "*bonds,*" refers to being shackled and chained.

Dr. Luke tells us that, "*Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*" (Acts 28:31)

For two solid years, Paul was under, what we would call, "*House Arrest.*" During this "*house arrest,*" soldiers of the Praetorian Guard were assigned to him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The shift changed every 6 hours, so each day there would be 4 different soldiers connected to Paul by an 18-inch chain. *Paul couldn't get away from the soldiers, but, better yet, the soldiers couldn't get away from Paul.* Can you do the math's ? **4** soldiers a day for a period of **2** years, or **730** days, adds up to Paul witnessing to almost **3000** soldiers. Sam Gordon said, "**Paul may have been locked up but he was not tongue tied.**" Now think about this for a moment. What would you do if you were chained to a soldier twenty-four hours a day ? What would you write ? Would you be saying what bad B.O. the soldier had, how difficult it was to take a shower with a soldier chained to you. But, you see, Paul did not look on those unfavourable circumstances as difficulties, Paul looked on them as an opportunity to win somebody to Jesus Christ.

What do you think happened ? Why, some of these soldiers came to Christ. (4: 22) Listen, Paul's writing letters, he's down on his knees praying heaven down, he's talking about the Lord, and four times a day there's a brand new prospect. Paul was a chain preacher. My all of us have "*chains,*" but the Lord wants to use our "*chains,*" to cut a new road for the gospel. Do you as a young mother feel "*chained,*" to the home as you care for your children ? The Lord can use those "*chains,*" to reach people with the gospel ! Susannah Wesley was the mother of 19 children, before the days of labour-saving devices, and

disposable nappies. Out of that large family came John and Charles Wesley, whose combined ministries shook the British Isles. At six years of age, Fanny Crosby was blinded, but even as a child she was determined not to be confined by the chains of darkness. In time she became a mighty force for God through her hymns and songs. My do you feel "*chained,*" to that job, that school, avenue, street, bed ? Do you realise that God wants to use those "*chains,*" to cut a new road for the gospel ?

(b) GOD DID A WORK OF ENCOURAGEMENT:

Did you notice what he says in (1:14) ? Paul's "*chains,*" not only gave contact with the lost, they gave courage to the saved. Many of the believers in Rome took fresh courage when they saw Paul's faith and determination. (1:14) That word "*speak,*" does not mean preach, rather it refers to "*everyday conversation.*" These believers saw what Paul was going through and it encouraged them to take a stand. They stepped out of the shadows and became much more bold, to talk to others about Christ. Of course, all the believers in Rome were not for Paul. Some preached Christ sincerely wanting to see people saved, some preached insincerely wanting to make the situation more difficult for Paul. (1:16)

But all that mattered to Paul was the promotion of the gospel of Christ and this happened as result of his joyful attitude. My Paul's detention was a stimulus to the church. I tell you discouragement spreads but so does encouragement. Often what we go through and

how we go through it is an encouragement to others. Do you remember Jim Elliot and those missionaries who were murdered in Ecuador on 8 January 1956 ? My as a result of their savage slayings untold numbers gave their lives afresh to the Lord to do His will. David Jeremiah tells us that in 17th century England, George Fox and the Quakers were making their mark for the Gospel and hundreds were being converted. In the midst of the revival, while preaching at the Castle of Carlisle in the north of England, George Fox was arrested on charges of blasphemy. After his trial, he was thrown into a filthy dungeon overrun with vermin and criminals. No one was allowed even a glimpse of him. Some who tried to bring him food were driven back by the jailers.

But 150 miles away, sixteen-year-old James Parnell, a cripple endowed with a brilliant mind, heard about Fox's situation and walked the long miles to the prison. Somehow he managed to get in, and he was never the same again. Says Walter Williams, in his volume on Quaker history, *"After he and George Fox spent some time in fellowship together, the lad left Carlisle prison with heart aflame, and gave the rest of his life to Christ and the Friends Movement."* Does your lifestyle bring encouragement or discouragement ? Does it stir the saints into action ? Are you an example to others ? Through Paul's detention (a) (b)

(c) GOD DID A WORK OF EDIFICATION:

Do you see (1:19) ? The word *"salvation"* **soteria**, here does not refer to salvation in the sense of a soul

being forgiven and saved. The word has to do with *" health, or well-being. "* Paul was saying that everything that happened had been healthy for his own heart and soul. Paul had understood it took grief to promote growth, and fire to produce faith. My God had not changed the circumstances of Paul, but He had changed Paul in the circumstances. (1:6) God's intention was not to break Paul but to make Paul. Thomas Edison's manufacturing facilities in West Orange, New Jersey were heavily damaged by fire one night in December 1914. Edison lost almost 1 million dollar's worth of equipment and the record of much of his work. The next morning walking about the charred embers of his hopes and dreams, the 67 year old inventor said, *" There's value in disaster. All our mistakes are burned up. Now we can start anew. "*

My do you realise that trials have a purging effect on our lives ? Do you recognise that there may be qualities lacking in your character that God can only secure when He puts you in the place of adversity ? Someone has said, *" The thickest cloud may bring the heaviest shower of blessing."* Certainly through

(1) (a) (b) (c)

(2) HIS COMMITMENT WAS PRAISEFUL

Look at (1:20-21) Talk about dedication. *Did you know that the C word is a bad word today especially with Christians ?* But Paul was committed to a cause and totally committed to Christ. The logo of one missionary organisation is a picture of an ox with a plough on one side and an altar on the other.

Underneath the picture are the words " *Ready for either.*" That was Paul's motto. He could be exonerated or he could be executed. The scales could swing either way. His goal could be accomplished, " *by life or by death.*" In the final reckoning all Paul cared about was magnifying the Lord Jesus. Here was Paul's commitment and dedication to the Lord Jesus. Consider this commitment like this.

(a) WHAT ?

" *That Christ shall be magnified*" (1:20) To " *magnifi;*," means "to make great." Does Christ need to be magnified ? After all, how can a mere human being magnify the Son of God ? Well, think about the stars for a moment. The stars are much bigger than the telescope and yet the *telescope* magnifies them and brings them closer. Now when the world looks at Christ He seems very far away. To the average person Christ is a misty figure who lived centuries ago. That's why you and I have to be God's telescopes to magnify the Saviour and bring Him closer. Now if a telescope brings distant things closer then a *microscope* makes tiny things look bigger. My to the world out there, the Lord Jesus is not very big, other things and people are far more important, that why you and I have to be God's microscopes to make Christ bigger. My is Paul's desire yours ? Is your constant cry, " *He must increase but I must decrease ?*" (Jn 3:30) " *That Christ shall be magnified,*"

(b) WHERE ?

" *In my body*" (1:20) Paul wanted every line of

the lovely life of the Lord Jesus to be reproduced in his life. Do you recall his words to the believers in Rome, from where he writes, " *I beseech that ye present your bodies*" (Rom 12:1) Christ magnified in the body, magnified by lips that bear testimony to Him, magnified by hands employed in His service, magnified by feet happy to run on His errands, magnified by knees glad to bend in prayer, magnified by shoulders happy to bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. My God wants to get hold of our bodies. What are we doing with them ? Are we yielding them to sinful practices or we yielding them to spiritual priorities ? " *That Christ shall be magnified*"

(c) WHEN ?

" *By life or by death,*" (1:20) Guy King said, " *Mary's Magnificat was ' my soul doth magnify the Lord. ' Paul 's Magnificat was ' Christ shall be magnified in my body. ' "* In a church in New Jersey U.S.A, a young man was baptised and later married to a dedicated Christian girl. Together this couple went to China where they served Christ in such a way that the whole countryside knew them. Then came a momentous day it was the 8th December 1934 when these two young missionaries were caught by bandits and cruelly murdered. The manner in which they died did more for the gospel work in that area than years of missionary endeavour. The last letter John and Betty Stam wrote included these words, " *God knows what our end is, but we have decided that, by life or death, Christ shall be magnified.*" My this was Paul's

desire, he says " *that Christ shall be magnified,*"

(d) WHY ?

Why does Paul want to magnify Christ ? Well look at (1:21) for it gives us the answer. "*For to me gain.*" Paul wants nothing out of life but to live Christ, and nothing out of death but to be with Christ. "*For me gain.*" Christ is the sum total of all his desires. He aims to be all for Christ while he lives, and to find Christ all for him when he dies. An U.S.A. Christian leader once took a Russian friend to see a World Series baseball game. At the end of the game he asked the Russian what he thought of the game. The Russian answered that he had never before *seen such first-class dedication to such a secondary cause.* My is this you ? Do you have first class dedication to secondary causes ? What are you living for ? What is your goal in life ? Do you have to say this " *For to me to life is wealth,*" " *For to me to live is power, prestige, popularity ?*" Or like Paul are you giving first class dedication to a first class cause. "*For to me to gain.*" Paul's commitment was total. Is yours ? (1) (2)

(3) HIS PREDICAMENT WAS PAINFUL

Wouldn't it be nice if making decisions became easier with age ? It would be great if the more grey hairs we grew, the more black and white the issues would become. **But** life's not like that. We do get older, but the decisions don't get any easier. Dilemmas are complicated and fuzzy. Dilemmas put us between a rock and a hard place. My do you see Paul's

dilemma ? He feels torn in two directions. He says " *But if I live in the flesh* (1:22-24) Paul has two options. Option 1: To Remain: Option 2: To Depart. You see, Paul is faced with,

(a) A FRUIT-BEARING LIFE DOWN HERE:

Look if you will at (1:22) If Paul were to be set free, he would go on living for Christ "*If I am to go on living down here,*" Paul thought, " *it will simply mean that much more work for Jesus, and that much more reward by and by.*" By staying Paul knew that he could help these Philippian believers with the enlargement (furtherance) and the enjoyment of their faith. (1:25) What a man he didn't care about personal circumstances as long as he was a help to others. He is faced with (a) or,

(b) A FAR BETTER LIFE UP THERE:

He says, "*I am in a strait (I am being pressed)* (1:23) If Paul has to consult his own interest, he has no hesitation in coming to a decision, " *to die is gain.*" What is it for a Christian to die ? Paul tells us it is to " *depart,*" (1:23) Do you see that word " *depart,*" *it's a soldiers word.* It meant to take down the tent and move on. (Acts 18:3) Paul wanted to exchange camp life for home life with Christ. It's *a sailor's word,* it meant to loosen the ship and set sail. My Paul wanted to pull up anchor and set sail for glory. It's *a prisoner's word,* it described the setting free of a prisoner. So often as believers we are in bondage, in bondage because of the limitations of the body and the

temptations of the flesh, but death will free us.

(Rom 8:18-21) It's *a farmer's word*, it meant to unyoke the ox, and when we depart our service for the Lord will be over. It's *a philosophers word*, it suggests the unravelling of a problem. Paul himself says, "*Now I know in part but then shall I know even as also I am known.*" (1 Cor 13:12) My do you see what death is for the believer ? Its gain, it's to depart and to be with Christ which is far, far better.

*He who in the hour of sorrow
Bore the curse alone
I, who through the lonely desert
Trode, where He had gone
He and I in that bright glory
One deep joy shall share
Mine, to be for ever with Him
His, that I am there*

Yet as, badly as Paul wants to be with Christ he chooses to stay instead. What a man Paul is. Warren Wiersbe says "*He is willing to postpone going to heaven in order to help Christians grow and he is willing to go to hell in order to win the lost to Christ.*" (Rom 9:1-3) For Christ and souls was ever Paul's motto. "*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*" Baron von Welz renounced his title, estates and revenues and went as a missionary to British Guiana where he fills a lonely grave. Renouncing his title he said, "*What is to me the title, Wellborn, when I am born again to Christ ? What is it to me the title Lord, when I desire to be the servant of Christ ? What is it to me to be called Your Grace, when I have need of God's*

grace. All these vanities I will do away with and all else I will lay at the feet of my dear, Lord Jesus."

Sometime take a blank piece of paper and alone with God write these words "*To me to live is,*" then draw a blank. Think about your motives, goals and desires. Then fill in the blank. What would it be ?

" For to me to live is money, and to die is to leave it all behind."

" For to me to live is fame, and to die is to be forgotten."

" For to me to live is power, and to die is to lose it all."

" For to me to live is possessions, and to die is to take none of them with me."

On one occasion William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army was called to appear before Queen Victoria. Amidst her regal surroundings she enquired, "*General Booth what is the secret of your ministry ? How is it that others are so powerless and you are so mighty ?*" Booth looked into the face of the Queen and with tears streaming down his cheeks replied, "*Your Majesty, I guess the reason is because God has all there is of William Booth.*" Has God all there is of you ? Can you say, "*For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*"

*Jesus, all for Jesus,
All I am and have and ever hope to be
All of my ambitions hopes and plans
I surrender these into Your Hands*