

## The Prisoner of Christ

- I. Introduction
  - a. Problems of imprisonment
    - i. Discomfort
    - ii. Not in luxury
    - iii. "bring my cloak"
    - iv. "Come before winter"
  - b. Loneliness
    - i. His friends could come see him
    - ii. but many did not
    - iii. only luke is with me
  - c. Danger
    - i. Condemned but on appeal
  - d. Loss of Freedom
    - i. Literally chained to a Roman soldier every hour of the day
      - A) What a contrast with the last couple of decades of his life
      - B) traveling throughout the world preaching the gospel where it had never been heard
    - ii. from a human perspective, only Satan could be pleased that Paul was in Prison
    - iii. but paul did not have a human perspective
- II. Key Thought - In Philippians 1, Paul tells the brethren that he has discovered the good that can come from being imprisoned
- III. Imprisonment can actually further the Gospel 1:12
  - a. The Praetorian Guard - 1:13
    - i. The personal bodyguard of the emperor
    - ii. In Paul's case their job was to keep him secure and confined until his day in court
    - iii. They became very powerful and could be evil setting up emperors or taking them out
    - iv. At least one emperor was formerly the leader of the Praetorian Guard
  - b. The boldness of fellow-Christians - 1:14
    - i. They saw his zeal and boldness
    - ii. They were encouraged to act the same way
  - c. The household of Caesar - Phil 4:22
    - i. "Paul sends special greetings from the Christian brothers who are of Caesar's household. It is important to understand this phrase rightly. It does not mean those who are of Caesar's kith and kin. Caesar's household was the regular phrase for what we would call the Imperial Civil Service; it had members all over the world. The palace officials, the secretaries, the people who had charge of the imperial revenues, those who were responsible for the day-to-day administration of the empire, all these were Caesar's household." (William Barclay, *The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, p. 87).
    - ii. They were the josephs, daniel and nehemiahs of the roman empire
    - iii. They exercised christian influence at the highest levels of government
    - iv. When they were transferred elsewhere, they took the gospel of christ to every corner of the world
    - v. when they were persecuted or killed they demonstrated that even the most desirable positions in roman society were nothing compared to the riches in christ
    - vi. could paul have reached these people as an itinerant preacher whose main contact with government was due to riots caused by his message?
  - d. **Question for the Imprisoned Christian: how can my confinement actually further**

### **the gospel ?**

IV. Imprisonment can provide valuable dependence on God and on the help and prayers of others 1:19

- a. paul knew he needed the help of Jesus
- b. he knew he needed the prayers of the saints
- c. what he wanted was deliverance
  - 1) he didn't want to stay in prison he wanted out
  - 2) and he hoped his release would result in being able to see the brethren in philippi again v. 26
  - 3) but he would be delivered one way or another - v. 20
- d. until he was delivered he would act with boldness so that he may honor Christ

**e. Question for the Imprisoned Christian: how can I display boldness and dependence so that my confinement results in honor for Christ ?**

V. Imprisonment can provide a valuable perspective of the relative value of this life and the next - v. 21-26

- a. to live is christ, to die is gain
  - b. if he had to choose, he is not sure what he would pick
  - c. but it was god's decision
  - d. he suspected that god had more work for him to do and would therefore extend his life
- e. Question for the Imprisoned Christian: what can my confinement teach me about what is truly valuable in this life, and the true value of the life to come ?**
- f. dean franklin - played tennis together in my college days, saw him two years ago at 1000 voices, had three kids. Saw him this year, he is in a wheelchair. Shortly after he and his wife found out they were expecting their fourth child, he was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy, an incurable disease that causes the muscles to weaken and atrophy, sometimes it progresses slowly, but his has not. Within a few months of his diagnosis he became so disabled he could not keep his job and has to use a wheelchair to get around. His mind is as sharp as ever, but it is imprisoned in a body that is losing its ability to function. This would be nothing but tragedy for a 40 year old father of 4, except that he has chosen not to suffer as a victim of the blind hand of fate, or suffer in defiance of an unjust god, but rather to suffer as a christian. He told me, I'm glad this has happened, it has changed me, I have a better understanding of what is important, and I don't love this life as much. He is a prisoner for christ.

VI. Conclusion

- a. are you suffering
  - 1. Discomfort
  - 2. Loneliness
  - 3. Danger
  - 4. Loss of Freedom
- B are you suffering as a prisoner of christ
- c. v. 27-30 - lets do it together
- d. invitation