

2. Learning How God Can Work Through All Situations

In our last topic, we saw that we want to follow the example of Paul and pray for our physical and spiritual children. We also need to pray that the love of our children will continue to grow. We also want to pray that they will determine the things that are really important in their lives. Then we want to pray that their lives will be pure and blameless. We also need to pray that their lives will bear the fruit of righteousness or righteous living. In our topic today, we are going to learn that God can work to accomplish His purpose through every situation that we face in our lives.

Philippians 1:12-14 says, “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Paul looked at the things that happened in his life in a very different way than most people. His great concern was how those events affected the spread of the Gospel. He was filled with joy because of the fact that his imprisonment actually was helping the Gospel to spread.

It was through the imprisonment of Paul that the Gospel had spread to the whole palace guard. These were the men who had to guard Paul day and night. Acts 28:30-31 says, “Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.” Instead of being in a prison, Paul was able to stay in his own rented house. This made it possible for him to teach all who came to him to learn more about Christ. The palace or imperial guards were the ones who had to guard Paul in his house. As a result, each guard that guarded him heard him teach the Word of God to those who came. As a result, they heard the Gospel and what Paul taught about Christ whether they wanted to listen or not. This was in addition to the people in Rome that came to hear Paul teach.

Everyone that heard Paul realized that he was not a criminal. They realized that he was a prisoner because he taught about Christ. The great concern of Paul was to use every opportunity to speak the Word of God with boldness. In fact, Paul gave a personal prayer request to the Ephesians in Ephesians 6:19-20 where he asked them to pray, “And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Paul wanted boldness to continue to share the Gospel at every opportunity while he was in prison in Rome.

The fact that Paul was witnessing with boldness even though he was a prisoner also had a great impact on the rest of the Christians in Rome. The other Christians became persuaded that if Paul could continue to speak about Christ even though he was a prisoner, they did not need to be fearful, because the Lord would use them just as He was using Paul. As a result, most of the Christians in Rome had become very bold about sharing the Gospel with others. The word that is translated “without fear” is also used in Luke 1:74-75 where we read, “To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.” In this verse, we see that Zacharias realized the importance of being

delivered from our enemies so that we can serve the Lord without fear.

We see that there were some who were preaching the Gospel with wrong motives but most were preaching with right motives. Philippians 1:15-18 says, “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.” Here, we see that it is possible for some people to preach the Gospel with wrong motives.

We see that there was a group of people who were preaching the Gospel from envy and strife. We see that they were controlled by selfish ambition. In 1 Corinthians 3:3 Paul was talking about those who were spiritually immature and wrote, “For you are still carnal. For where *there are* envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like *mere men*?” Here, we see that envy and strife are the result of spiritual immaturity. The word that is translated “selfish ambition” means *to put oneself forward*. James 3:14-16 says, “But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there.” In these verses, the word is used twice and is translated “self-seeking”. Those who were preaching the Gospel for this reason certainly had wrong motives.

In contrast, we see that most of the Christians in Rome were sharing the Gospel from good will. The word that is translated “good will” means *by choice with a desire to do good*. Philippians 2:12-13 says, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.” In these verses, the word is translated “good pleasure”. God works in our lives because it is His choice to do good in our lives. We see that these people were motivated by love. The word that is translated “appointed” was the word that was used when a soldier was placed on duty. Paul felt that he had been placed where he was so that he could carry out the ministry that the Lord had given him. That ministry was the defense of the Gospel.

Paul did not care whether some people preached the Gospel out of pretense. The word that is translated “pretense” means *the reason people say they do something to cover up their real reason for doing it*. Matthew, Mark and Luke all record what the scribes did to cover up the fact that they were stealing the houses of widows. Mark 12:40 says, “Who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.” Here, we see that the scribes prayed long prayers to cover up the fact that they were actually stealing. Those who were preaching the Gospel out of envy and strife were using their preaching as an excuse to cover their selfish ambition. Even if some had a wrong motive, Paul was still filled with joy because the Gospel was preached.

Paul went on to say in Philippians 1:19-21, “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest

expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.” Paul expected the Lord to work through the prayers of the Philippians and others to complete the will of God in his life. Here, we see that Paul expected their prayers to be answered in the way that God chose. That could mean his death, which would take him to heaven. However, what he said in the following verses indicates that he thought God would answer by his eventual release from prison.

The word that is translated “earnest expectation” means *to eagerly wait to see what the Lord is going to do in the future*. Paul was eagerly waiting to see how the Lord was going to work in his life. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is in Romans 8:19 where we read, “For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” In this verse, we see that the creation is eagerly waiting to find out each person that will become a child of God. Paul also had a great hope. Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Paul knew that regardless of what happened to him personally, he could eagerly wait for the coming of Christ.

The one goal that Paul had for his life was that he would not do anything that would cause him to be ashamed. That is why he wanted to speak the Gospel with boldness at every opportunity. 1 John 4:17 says, “Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.” Love caused Paul to witness with great boldness because he looked forward to the day when he would stand before the Lord to receive rewards for his ministry on this earth. Because of that confident assurance about the future, Paul was eager to glorify the Lord by whatever the Lord had for him in the future. If he was set free, he wanted to glorify Christ by his life. If he was killed, He wanted to glorify Christ by his death. Here, we see that Paul was filled with joy because his concern was to glorify Christ.

Paul had one goal in his life. That goal was to live for Christ. As a result, he had no fear of death. In fact, Paul knew that he could look forward to death. 1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 says, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him.” Paul knew that Christ was with him as long as he was on this earth. He also knew that he would be with the Lord eternally when the Lord took him from this earth. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand and have this inner peace so that they can look forward to either life or death with joy. That will happen as they make it their goal to live for Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn that God can work through every situation they face.