

Our Lives Are Not Our Own
We Have Been Bought With a Price
Ambassadors For the Kingdom - Part 3

Philippians 1:12-30
November 23-24, 2019

Introduction

- **The Power of Telling the Story of Jesus Christ** - The gospel is really the Jesus Christ story. The power of the story is that it changes perspective. It creates a new reality. People can accept or reject it, but at least they know it and can decide accordingly.
- **Who Needs to Hear It?** - simple answer...everyone. Do you believe that?
 - **What about your enemies?** -
- **How will they hear it?** - some won't listen to words. God has to show them that it's real. How will He do that? That's what this message is about. But the bottom line is...

Jesus Christ Must be PROCLAIMED Everywhere

Lesson

- **You Can't Stop the Lord**
 - **Paul's Imprisonment Actually Advanced the Gospel**
 - **Php 1:12-30** - *"I want you to know, brothers [and sisters - adelphoi], that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ."*
 - **What Happened...Advanced the Gospel**
 - **What happened?** - What he was doing was 'illegal'. Paul was disrupting society and the way they wanted things to go. He was a fly in the ointment. He brought agitation to a society that craved ease for the powers that be.

- **Jail as an Advance to the Gospel** - what did Paul really want? To advance the gospel by any means necessary. Tah-dah!
- **Known to Unbelievers (in Rome)** - Imperial guard (Praetorium). Paul couldn't have reached them effectively if he tried.
- **God's Plan vs. God's Redemption** - was that God's original plan? What about your life?
- **You WILL be My Witnesses (verbally and visually)** - Our life and what happens to us, speaks louder than our carefully crafted, pretend statements.
- **What You'll Talk About In Your Groups** - LIFE to 33222 - **God Uses Our Lives as Message Displays** - Are you okay with that? Can God use you as He wishes without you getting mad or depressed about it? What if it means less for you and more for the Kingdom? What if your sign says, 'God's more important than suffering?' Can you accept that?
- **Living with a Bigger Perspective**
 - **God Can Work with Anything**
 - **Php 1:14-18a** - *"And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice."*
 - **Some were Emboldened by Paul's Imprisonment** - due to his example.
 - **The Power of Christian Heroes (role models)** - role models, heroes and idols.

- **Give some famous examples:**
 - **George Mueller (1805-1898)** - 700 children
 - **Orphanage Food Story**
 - **The Deck Chair story**
 - **The Boiler warmer story** - 300 children,
 - **The Fog** - *When he finished. I was going to pray, but he put his hand on my shoulder and told me not to pray. "First, you do not believe He will; and second. I believe He has. And there is no need whatever for you to pray about it...Captain. I have known my Lord for forty-seven years, and there has never been a single day that I have failed to gain an audience with the King. Get up, captain, and open the door, and you will find the fog is gone.' I got up, and the fog was gone!*
 - **Hudson Taylor (1832-1905)** - a 21-year old man from Liverpool England set out in 1853 to reach China for the gospel. China Inland Mission (CIM). Millions reached.
 - **Amy Carmichael (1867-1951)** - Ireland. She built a church for the poor. Despite her personal illness and weakness, at 34 years old, she felt the call to go overseas as a single woman missionary, specifically to India. She spent 50 years becoming a 'mother' to hundreds of poor girls who normally would be sold into temple prostitution. Even bedridden from a fall for the last 20 years of her life didn't stop her. She wrote an additional 16 books about missionary work (beyond the 20 she had already written).
 - **The list goes on:** Jim Elliott & Co; D.L. Moody; Billy Sunday; Billy Graham; etc.
- **Varying Reasons for Preaching**

- **Type A: Bad Preachers** - What in the world? Why? I would guess they justify what they do.
 - **Preaching from envy & rivalry** - jealous false teachers. With Paul now, out of the way, they can freely preach what they want, the way that they want ("the right way").
 - **Preaching from selfish ambition** - their own selfish point of view. they are more interested in their view than the gospel.
 - **Preaching Insincerely but to Afflict Paul in his imprisonment** - This is taking advantage of Paul being 'shut up' for a time.
 - **Irritation with Paul's Methods** - I can guarantee you that Paul was too extreme for many of the Christians at the time. He pushed things too far. He made too much mess. He was too loud. He was too bossy. He didn't work with the status quo. He broke too many taboos and social rules.
 - **Our Reactions to "Extremism"** - Consider the sit ins of the 1960's and the refusal to move from the bus seat by Rosa Parks. We don't like to be inconvenienced. We want everyone to go along with the flow. But what if the flow is unhealthy, wrong and dangerous?
 - **MLK Jr. in Birmingham Jail** - he came under fire from his fellow Christians. They said that he was too extreme and needed to mellow out and let things go. He responded. It has incredible similarities to what Paul was experiencing as he was in jail.
- 16 April 1963
My Dear Fellow Clergymen:
While confined here in the Birmingham city jail, I came across your recent statement calling my present activities "unwise and untimely."
Seldom do I pause to answer criticism of my work and ideas. If I

sought to answer all the criticisms that cross my desk, my secretaries would have little time for anything other than such correspondence in the course of the day, and I would have no time for constructive work. But since I feel that you are men of genuine good will and that your criticisms are sincerely set forth, I want to try to answer your statement in what I hope will be patient and reasonable terms.

- I think I should indicate why I am here in Birmingham, since you have been influenced by the view which argues against "outsiders coming in."... But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid... You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations
- For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This "Wait" has almost always meant "Never." We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that "justice too long delayed is justice denied."
- We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights... Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait."
- You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern...The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."... Of course, there is

nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was evidenced sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar, on the ground that a higher moral law was at stake. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians, who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks rather than submit to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire.

- I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Counciler or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection...
- I must honestly reiterate that I have been disappointed with the church. I do not say this as one of those negative critics who can always find something wrong with the church. I say this as a minister of the gospel, who loves the church; who was nurtured in its bosom; who has been sustained by its spiritual blessings and who will remain true to it as long as the cord of life shall lengthen...
- ...In the midst of blatant injustices inflicted upon the Negro, I have watched white churchmen stand on the sideline and mouth pious irrelevancies and sanctimonious trivialities. In the midst of a mighty struggle to rid our nation of racial and economic injustice, I have

heard many ministers say: "Those are social issues, with which the gospel has no real concern."

- There was a time when the church was very powerful--in the time when the early Christians rejoiced at being deemed worthy to suffer for what they believed. In those days the church was not merely a thermometer that recorded the ideas and principles of popular opinion; it was a thermostat that transformed the mores of society. Whenever the early Christians entered a town, the people in power became disturbed and immediately sought to convict the Christians for being "disturbers of the peace" and "outside agitators." But the Christians pressed on, in the conviction that they were "a colony of heaven," called to obey God rather than man. Small in number, they were big in commitment. They were too God-intoxicated to be "astronomically intimidated." By their effort and example they brought an end to such ancient evils as infanticide and gladiatorial contests. Things are different now. So often the contemporary church is a weak, ineffectual voice with an uncertain sound. So often it is an archdefender of the status quo. Far from being disturbed by the presence of the church, the power structure of the average community is consoled by the church's silent--and often even vocal--sanction of things as they are.
- Never before have I written so long a letter. I'm afraid it is much too long to take your precious time. I can assure you that it would have been much shorter if I had been writing from a comfortable desk, but what else can one do when he is alone in a narrow jail cell, other than write long letters, think long thoughts and pray long prayers?
 - **Type B: Good Preachers**
 - **Preaching from Good Will & Unselfishness**
 - **Preaching from Love & Truth**
 - **Partnering with Paul & Understanding his imprisonment**

- **It Really Doesn't Matter, if Christ's Story is Being Told Right** - They are telling the story and the story leads people to Jesus to be set free.
 - **How Accurate Does the Story Need to Be to be Legit?** -
- **Where's the Line of Demanding Accurate Truth vs. Grace-Filled Unity?** - I'm a hardcore TRUTH guy. But there is a motto that I embrace that allows my LOVE to be demonstrated in my truth search: ALL OF OUR THEOLOGY IS FAULTY. It's when we pretend that we know it all that we get into trouble. Let me give you some examples of our ignorance:
 - **What is God Really Like?** How Does the Trinity really work? Is that only the portions of the nature of God that He revealed to us, but there's much more? Even what we know, we don't understand.
 - **Why did God Set in Motion the Plans that He did?** We don't know. We can argue about what the plan ended up being: creation, redemption, salvation...but we don't know why. Without the full motivation we can't project into the mysterious places accurately.
 - **How does the Holy Spirit work?** We have no clue. Jesus describes Him as mysterious, like the wind. Lots of people claim to know His ways, but there's a million examples of why they are wrong too.
 - **What is the Real Way that We Are Saved?** Predestined to be saved or chosen by Free Will? Both are argued clearly in Scripture. It's so complex that the greatest minds sound like they are simply guessing. No matter which side you land on, I can blow the theory out of the water.
 - **What's the Normal, Expected Christian Experience?** - how should we really live? We don't know. Some of it is copying Christ, but even He did stuff we shouldn't do (die for the sins of the world). What should we expect to be

able to do? How much of our sinful nature can we remove? How much can we expect to hear God in our day to day lives?

- **What's Heaven Like?** - Nobody knows except the ones who have been there. Almost all of the Biblical description is metaphorical. We don't know what types of bodies we will have, what our experience will be, how we will interact with God, what it's going to look like or be like.
- **I can go on...**
 - **I'm a Bible-Answer Man (always have been).** And I know enough to say that at best...we are guessing.
 - **The Point: Go easy on other people and other ministries.** You can hold them accountable for principles that don't line up with Scripture, but don't attack the people. You can examine the fruit of their ministry and determine whether you think it's healthy or not, but no ministry is fully healthy. You can decide by evidence whether a person seems to be in it for the right reasons for wrong reasons and hold them accountable for their revealed motivations, but no one fully knows the heart of another person.
 - **Paul's View and Mine** - with a world around us (America) increasingly becoming more secular and Anti-Christian, we have plenty to do spreading the gospel to them.
 - **If they are doing it wrong...**you go do it right.
- **Optimistic Paul**
 - **Paul Believes that He will be Freed from Prison**
 - **Php 1:18b-20** - *"Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as*

always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

- **Rejoicing in Bad Circumstances** - I am still firmly planted in the desire for things to go well for me and my family and my church. When will I mature to see that God works with all kinds of stuff and it's not about me?
 - **How Things Change: Prayer & The Holy Spirit** - Notice that Paul is convinced that God is going to move on his behalf to get him out of jail.
 - **Giving a Good Testimony (Courage, not Ashamed)** - Paul really doesn't want to slander or embarrass the name of Jesus Christ and the gospel.
 - **Honoring Christ in Life and Honoring Him in Death - The Power of Martyrs**
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- **To Live and Die in...God's Eyes**
 - **The Value and Purpose in life and death in this world**
 - **Php 1:21-26** - *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again."*
 - **To Live is Christ** - More Fruitfulness for the Kingdom (racking up points) and for his loved ones.
 - **Why This Life Really Matters (and why it doesn't)** - We only have one chance at this life.
 - **To Die is Gain - Freedom, Refreshment and Purpose, but mostly full connection to Christ (far better).**

- **What You'll Talk About in Your Groups** – Evaluating Life and Death by God's Standards. Do we live with Paul's perspective? Do we evaluate what happens to us in light of heavenly purpose? Do we submit to His plans? Are we too attached here?
- **Unashamed**
 - **Live in a Way that Honors the Lord at all Times**
 - **Php 1:27-30** - *"Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have."*
 - **A Manner of Life Worthy of the Gospel** - After all that Jesus has done, and all that God is trying to do, are we living a life that is worthy to be in the same sentence as that stuff?
 - **Standing Firm in ONE spirit, ONE mind, striving SIDE-BY-SIDE for the faith** - The importance of unity in the Body of Christ for effectiveness (see last week's message about that).
 - **Don't be frightened by your opponents** - is what they can do to you, important to you? If it is, it will be scary. The best thing for courage is to change what's important to you internally. Little by little they lose their power to frighten you.
 - **The more we care about God's opinion, our reputation doesn't matter** -
 - **The more we are building God's Kingdom and not ours, the less we have to lose** -

- **The more secure our identity in Christ, the less words and opinions of others don't stick**
- **The more we believe in miracles, the less our circumstances impact us.**
- **The more we long for heaven, losing this world is less a burden**
- **God's Purpose = Salvation and Suffering for His Sake -**
Why is that a part of it? I don't know fully, but I know that it is.
God's not done fixing stuff yet.

Conclusion

- **We are Walking Displays for His Purposes** - it's a huge paradigm shift for most of us.
- **Let's take a moment and pray about that.** Let's pray for understanding, for courage, for perspective, for tenacity, for loving hearts.