

Paul, Prison, and Covid-19

Phil.1:3-8, 12-14

Phil.4:4-7

Phil.4:11-13

April 19: It's Day 25 of the Lockdown! Are you surviving?

- “Lockdown” a most unfortunate word – has connotations of being “in prison” (actually true for many of us!)
- Leads me to think of Paul’s prison experience, facing trial and possible death

Paul’s “Prison Epistles” (Ephesians [?], Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) written while in prison – Philippians particularly relevant to our situation vis-à-vis isolation from Covid-19 (**recommend that everyone reads it through – only 4 chapters**)

Paul’s prison experience:

- **Positive effects** (Phil. 1:12-18):
 - ✓ Served to **advance the Gospel** (v.12)
 - ✓ Paul’s **testimony known throughout the entire palace guard** (v.13) >>> all the saints ... who belong to Caesar’s household” (Phil.4:22)
 - ✓ Others **encouraged** by Paul’s chains (v.14) >>> increased boldness
 - ✓ Others preach with false motives, but in every way, **Christ is preached** (vv.15-18)
- **(Possible) negative effects:**
 - ✓ Prays to have sufficient **courage**, so that Christ might be glorified in whatever happens, whether life or death (vv.19-20)
 - ✓ May die, but even if this happens, “for me to live is Christ and to die is gain (v.21) – ultimately beneficial

What is Paul’s attitude in his imprisonment?

No negativity in Paul’s attitude!!!:

- **Confidence in God’s work within us** (past, present and future):
 - ✓ “Being **confident** of this, that he began a **good work in you** will carry it on to **completion** until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil.1:6)
 - ✓ “It is **God who works in you** to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil.2:13)
- Emphasis on **joy** and **rejoicing** (even in prison):
 - ✓ “In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with **joy** because of your partnership in the gospel...” (Phil.1:4-5)
 - ✓ “Even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am **glad** and **rejoice** with all of you. So you too should be glad and **rejoice** with me,” (Phil.2:17-18)
 - ✓ “**Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!**” (Phil.4:4)
- Paul still “on track” to **fulfil his calling:**
 - ✓ “I **press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me**” (Phil.3:12)
 - ✓ I **press on toward the goal to win the prize** for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil.3:14)
- Note: “Take hold” - Who is Paul “locked down” by?
 - ✓ “Paul, the **prisoner of Jesus Christ** for the sake of you Gentiles...” (Eph.3:1)
 - ✓ “As a **prisoner of the Lord**, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (Eph.4:1)

Practicalities: what should we do?

- Move from **anxiety** to **prayer** and **thanksgiving**:
 - ✓ “**Do not be anxious about anything**, but in everything, by prayer and petition, **with thanksgiving**, present your requests to God” (Phil.4:6)
 - ✓ **Result of doing this**: “And the **peace of God**, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil.4:7)
- Move from **need** to **contentment** (developing habits of frugality):
 - ✓ “**I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances**. I know what it is to be in **need**, and I know what it is to have **plenty**. I have learned the secret of being **content in every situation**, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.” (Phil.4:11-12)
 - ✓ **How can we do this?**: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.” (Phil.4:13 – note context of need)
- Be aware of the needs of other people (developing **community habits of giving**):
 - ✓ Only Philippi had supported Paul in his early ministry (Phil.4:15-16); now had sent gifts to Paul through Epaphroditus (Phil.4:18)
 - ✓ **Result of their giving to Paul’s needs**: “My God will meet all **your** needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus (Phil.4:19)