

Week of 5/3/20 - Solitary Refinement
Paul on being imprisoned

Ask, what has been the best part of this quarantine for you?

Re-read Philippians 1 -

“From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the overseers and deacons. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ! I thank my God every time I remember you. I always pray with joy in my every prayer for all of you because of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am sure of this very thing, that the one who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is right for me to think this about all of you, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel all of you became partners in God’s grace together with me. For God is my witness that I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And I pray this, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel: The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ, and most of the brothers and sisters, having confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment, now more than ever dare to speak the word fearlessly. Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. The latter do so from love because they know that I am placed here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, because they think they can cause trouble for me in my imprisonment. What is the result? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Now if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean productive work for me, yet I don’t know which I prefer: I feel torn between the two, because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more vital for your sake that I remain in the body. And since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith so that what you can be proud of may increase because of me in Christ Jesus, when I come back to you. Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that—whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent—I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel and by not being intimidated in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of their destruction, but of your salvation—a sign which is from God. For it has been granted to you not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him, since you are encountering the same conflict that you saw me face and now hear that I am facing.” (Philippians 1, NET)

Refer to verses 12-14

In what way did God use Paul’s imprisonment for His glory?

God has plans for bad circumstances to bring Him glory. Look at the life of Joseph and of the Son Himself. Bad circumstances are a useful tool in the spreading of the gospel.

How could we be emboldened by our trials in this season?

Also ask, *How could God be using you differently now than before lockdown?*

Torn between Life and Death - Refer to verses 18-25

Paul knew there was more work to do, not that he was a workaholic, but walking in the Spirit, he knew there was more for him to do on this earth.

- *What does it mean that Christ will be "honored in my body, whether in life or by death?" (Refer to verses 18-25)*
- *How should this affect our fear of death?*
- *Michael said that "death is retirement" what does that mean to you?*

Your Manner of Life - Re-Read Verse 27

- *What does it mean to have a manner of life that is worthy of the gospel?*
- *We were not meant to be alone in the mission of the gospel. Can you list people who you believe are with you in the mission of the gospel?*
- *In what ways might we stand side by side and strive for the gospel?*
- *If you have ideas let your small group leaders know. We can share them with the other groups.*

Pastor Michael confessed his melancholy, "being all blues and no clues." *Have any of you ever struggled with pervasive sadness or as Winston Churchill put it, "the black dog?"*

How might your current condition help to advance the gospel? What are some ways you can be transparent, yet encouraging of God's sovereignty? Look at James 1:2-4 for some inspiration.

Finding Joy

Pastor Michael made four points at the end of the sermon. Let's look them over and ask them of ourselves:

- *Can you find joy when others have it better off than you? If not, how might you make the switch to applause from resentment?*
- *When things don't go the way you expected or planned God is still sovereign. Can you find joy in God's better plan?*
- *Even while we are all sequestered at home Jesus is still on mission. He has not taken a break or shut the door to his office to be alone. Knowing that He is still at work what are some ways that we can find joy from Jesus on His mission?*
- *This pandemic has really leveled the playing field of for unity because we are all in the same boat, all locked down and wondering what will come next. In these circumstances, in what ways can you find joy from unity and suffering?*

Tell them: We are meant to remind ourselves of the gospel every day. This reminder can be your joy. The gospel reveals the sufficiency of Christ. *What are some ways that you can remind yourself of the gospel every day?*

Solitary Refinement

Michael said that seasons of solitary are for our refinement. *What do you think God might be using this refinement for in your life? What is some good news that has come out of this season in the world?*

If there is time, finish by reading Philippians 2:1-11

Verse 3 says to "consider others more important than yourself." *What are some ways that this quarantine is forcing us to learn to consider others more important than ourselves?*

Take time to share prayer requests.