

Areas Of Boldness

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Okay, we're going to be back in Philippians. Philippians. So Paul is finishing his introduction in Philippians chapter 1. Philippians chapter 1, verse 12, Philippians 1:12. But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me 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. Let's pray. O Father God. Lord, here we are.

Unfortunately, maybe not as bold as we should be. Lord, I pray that you would encourage us, Lord, to understand the areas we need to be bold, Lord. To give us the strength to be bold, Lord, but also to take part in the fruit that comes from being bold. O Lord, we ask in Jesus name. Amen.

Paul prays and asks for prayer. Back in Ephesians, it says, praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end, with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints. Then he asked specifically for himself 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. I think probably that if you were to answer honestly whether or not you consider yourself a bold person in proclaiming the gospel, that you might be like me, where sometimes you might regret the opportunities that seem to present themselves to you, but you didn't have the boldness that may have been necessary to address the situation in the way that God may have been offering it to

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you, that there is a desire maybe in your heart for prayer for the same situation that Paul is asking for here, praying, asking them to pray for him, for boldness to share the Gospel. Well, here we see that as a result of the circumstances that Paul is in, there is a boldness springing up from an unlikely place in the life of believers in early first century Israel here.

So we're going to look at those situations and I hope from it encourage to live a life that demonstrates boldness, but then also be a part, hopefully, of spreading that boldness to others who may get to participate or watch what we are going through. Okay, so we're in Philippians 1:12. It says in verse 12. But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel. Here we see that God, as we read the Bible, he seems to have a point from the very first pages.

But the plan is unfolding. It seems to be about his creation and the life of Adam and Eve, but quickly turns to one of destruction. In the life of Noah we see springing from that the life of Abraham and then it turns towards his family and then the nation of Israel and then bringing them out of bondage and into their own land where they become a nation. And it seems to change to the focus on David and his kingdom and his lineage. But then after the destruction of his kingdom, we see the prophets and their focus seems to be on future events, that God's plan is one in the future.

But in all of these circumstances, as we see the sometimes random looking actions happening, we recognize that behind the scenes God is playing an active role in the life of these people. That he is bringing together situations and circumstances that appear just random. Taking a prostitute from Jericho or a Moabitess woman from Moab, and bringing them into his plans or taking certain battles or activities. But we see his hand actively engaged in this tapestry that he is building. We see him involved in the situations from the very first intel through the nation of Israel, through the coming of His Son.

But then we recognize that his real goal through all of this is the work of the Gospel in the lives of both Jews and Gentiles, barbarians, slaves and free men and women. His

goal is to bring his gospel to the whole world. We see that is his active and was the fullness of his picture originally. It's as if you were taking one of those cameras that they show from space and this, you know, a thing and they're focusing and it seems like there's just black and stars, right? And then it begins to zoom in and it begins to seem like it's focusing on one point of light and it gets closer and closer and then you realize it's not just one point of light, it's millions of stars in a four armed galaxy swirling around.

And then the focus goes even deeper and it seems to pick out one point of light and it's the sun. And then it goes in further and it seems like oh no, the focus isn't the sun, but you see a blue speck come into existence and oh, we're focusing on the earth and then keeps on getting deeper and deeper and more pinpointed. But the goal, his goal is always working in each of those viewpoints to bring about his purposes. And here we see that God is involved in the life of Paul for the furtherance of the gospel that you and I also are in this time period where God's focus, the way he is moving, how he's encouraging people, is in the gospel. But if one thing we can learn from the Old Testament is the way God furthers his plans is not always easy to see ahead of time.

He takes random events, and miraculously, it is exactly the key needed to bring about the fullness of his plan. One thing we shouldn't be surprised about is that God's ways are above our ways. We have logical plans and we think there is a certain way to bring them to completion. God's ways are not our ways. And yet sometimes we're disappointed or we're sure that God is directing a certain way only to find out that it's not the way he was intended.

Well, Paul finds himself in one of these plans, one of these events which is really the plan of God to bring his gospel to the world. And he finds himself chained in jail. And they think, oh, this is not a good situation. This is kind of a random event. But it is actually that event which is most going to impact the future.

With his gospel, the very best place that he could be put is now here in jail, taking these obscure pictures and bringing them, melding them together into the fullness of the picture of what God is doing. Paul says, but I want you to know, brethren, that the

things which happened to me actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. We just read in Romans. It says that all things work together for good, for those who love God and who are called according to his purpose. This doesn't mean that everything is good.

It means that that design which God has for the life of a person is good. That the situation, the circumstances he bring into your life, that he is working through them for a purpose. That these things which God brings into our lives should not be despised because he is using them to accomplish his plans. Paul is in chains and in jail. Some of us also have situations and circumstances that we are encountering.

Not all of them are pleasant. But I'm not sure we can always say with Paul that the things I am going through are the very best things for accomplishing the work of the gospel in my life. Sometimes we don't have the same attitude. If we're looking for, for boldness here, there has to be a willingness to encounter the things that are brought to us. Things that are brought to us.

If our viewpoint was a willingness to encounter difficulty with joy, the Bible says that these things bring endurance into our lives. Number one, if we want to have a type of boldness, there has to be a willingness to view the circumstances that we are in as part of the plan in which God is using to forward his Gospel. It also goes to show that his focus and the way he wants to demonstrate his power and his sufficiency is the spreading of his Gospel. There may have been a lot going on on planet Earth back in David or in Moses time, but it seems like his focus was there. If we want to be a part of God's focus, his miraculous and sustaining power, then we need to be involved in the gospel.

Okay, verse 13, it says, so it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ. We're looking at a first Peter. So it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ. Now, as I thought about this, it seems now to me, not an individual that it seems. There's three possibilities here.

Where is Paul? Where is Paul? He is writing to the Philippians. So look, where is this palace guard that he is making a difference in? And so just before we go any further, I thought, well, the first option is Philippi, that he is in jail.

In Philippi, if you remember, there was a slave girl who was possessed with a demon who followed him around for a certain amount of time. And Paul cast the demon out and as a result was beaten. They tore off their robes. The judges commanded him to be beaten, and he was thrown into jail. And there he and Silas, in the middle of the night were singing songs.

And then there was a great earthquake. Chains were loosed. The Philippian jailer came in and was saved. During that time, washed their wounds, and then the next day they were released. I don't think that's where Paul is.

The second situation that, to me, I thought where he might be is, if you remember that he was back in Jerusalem. And as a result of him being in the temple, there was an uproar by which he was arrested. And then he was brought by night to Caesarea. And there he had the opportunity to defend himself, first before Festus and then before Agrippa and Bernice. And the last place that possibly he could be would be not the last possible place, in my mind, what I've read, the last possible place he could be would be in Rome itself.

If you remember that he was taken captive from Caesarea, put on a ship, and through a long series of events ended up in Rome in a rented house and was able to preach the Gospel no matter where he actually was. We have one absolute consistent testimony from him that in jail, he is using that witness to speak to others about Jesus. We see the Philippian jailer saved. We see before Agrippa, before a Festus. Festus says, you almost persuade me to be a Christian in his own house in Rome, that he testified continually to all who came to him about the grace of Jesus Christ.

It's interesting that that is not the normal mentality in jail.

That is a unique mentality to the Christian. I have the privilege and the burden of being a homeschool teacher. Now. There's some benefits and some drawbacks of

being a homeschool teacher, right? One of the benefit is you get lots of little kids books to read, right?

And so you read lots of them because they're reading them. You just naturally read them. They're not extraordinary deep books, but they have a lot of good information in them. Well, two book kinds of books that I've probably read the most of. One is missionary books and the other is books on the Holocaust, right.

I found it interesting in the books of the Holocaust. I cannot remember even one situation where Jewish people wanted to spread their faith to their German captors. Not one time that I know about. I never see them acting out of a deep desire to see German guards saved. But on the other hand, wherever you see a Christian in jail, it seems as if their first focus is recognizing that where they are is a peculiar part of Christian ministry.

And their guards, those who incarcerated them, become the individuals whom they are called to minister to. We see that over and over again. We see individuals even in similar situations in the holocaust, like Corrie 10 boom reaching out with a heart's desire to reach her captives or captors. For the Lord. This is a part of Christianity, is to reach out to those who are persecuting us.

I'm going to read a couple scriptures out of 1 Peter, chapter 2, regarding our first of all, our calling as citizens, as members of government. To our government it says, therefore submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the King as supreme or to governors as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may be put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. As free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the King.

There was a burden in my house a bit over this last election. Hearing of possible threats of violence and disgust, or even hatred towards members that God has given us as elected officials in our country. And I felt like I need to and needed to then stand

out and say, those individuals which God has given us are better than we deserve and should be approached with a gratefulness and a heart, and we should offer service to them, no matter what their affiliation. And my heart to us as a church is to show honor even whichever way the election would have went, that we're called to honor the king. Paul is here in jail with a heart's desire even to honor those who have put him in jail.

Even the situation, if it comes to what we see. In chapter 4 of 1 Peter, verse 12, it says, Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you as though some strange thing happened to you, but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you also may be glad with exceeding joy if you are reproached for the name of Christ. Blessed are you for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is glorified. Let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or a busybody in other people's matters.

Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God. And if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Paul sees it as a Peter here sees it as a privilege and an opportunity and even a part of God's will to endure the suffering that sometimes comes upon believers by their government or other people. The reason that Peter and both Paul see this as an opportunity is because they get to experience a part of the life of Jesus Christ that would not have been available to them without being incarcerated.

That being able to experience the life of Christ, it says, but rejoice to the extent that you partake in Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you also may be glad with exceeding joy. Turn back to Philippians, Paul says in verse 13 it says, it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ. He had been brought into the jail as an evildoer, as someone arrested, as a fomenter of rebellion, as someone who preached customs that were not lawful for the Romans to accept, as someone that had brought in Jerusalem what They thought Greeks into the temple as guilty of doing something against the religion of the Jews. And he was brought in, incarcerated, stamped. My son gets to bring people into the

jail, right?

And he tells us sometimes about these situations, about bringing this person. The highway patrol or the sheriff's office or the police bring an individual and Isaiah checks them into the jail, make sure they're familiar with the system. And here Paul is also being brought in. And at first everyone thinks he's just like everyone else, a criminal. But by the time he's in there for a while, people begin to recognize there's something different about Paul.

They begin to surmise maybe it's not actually because of what he did. There's something else. There's another reason that he's there, that he's suffering this persecution and incarceration. Maybe because some other plan, other purpose than him. Just as a normal lawbreaker, we see that this is a consistent part of God's message.

We see even back in the life of Joseph that yes, he was incarcerated, he was falsely accused and brought into the king's prison or dungeon. But there they begin to recognize that there's something different about Joseph, that even in prison, in even that darkness, it cannot extinguish the light of Christ living in the light that Christians under persecution, number one, act differently than others. That even in a place of pressure, that the light of Christ shines differently through their actions, the way they treat the officers over them, the way they interact with other prisoners. There is something that shows that they are a Christian. But number two, that we see that Paul was faithful to use his words to communicate with others about Jesus Christ.

He became a missionary in jail. We see all over that many of the areas that God opened up to the gospel. He opened up first of all through a prison, that individuals were incarcerated there first before a move spread to open up that nation of the gospel. And it becomes evident that the chains are in Christ Jesus. What does this do?

When an individual accepts the opportunity to endure persecutions and even incarceration at the hand of an unjust government?

We live in a culture that may look forward and see certain situations that you and I may have to encounter regarding the way our society is going. We may look with hesitancy or fear at what we may possibly have to endure. But ultimately, if this is a part of God's plan, there should be a hopefulness that it also is going to accomplish something in our lives and in the lives of the people around us. Paul viewing this incarceration as a part of God's plan and living his life in a way that is in line with God's plan. We see in verse 14 that there is something that comes as a result.

It says, and most of the brethren in the Lord having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear. 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, willing to go through a difficult situation brings or instills a certain kind of boldness in the life of those people around him. One of my favorite sayings, or not favorite sayings, but one thing I heard regarding the Civil War, a comment that was made back then, it says, it's not the men, it's the man, right? That the individual who is inspiring people sometimes is more important than the people themselves.

That what's needed is for one person to stand up and make a stand regarding the Gospel. And then there is an outflow in the lives of other people as a result of one person making a stand. And if we look back at biblical history, isn't that what we see? We see God usually taking hold of the life of one man or one woman, and the outcome comes from their willingness to suffer and go through situations that are difficult. That boldness as a result, if we remember Jonathan and his armor bearer scrambling up a hill towards the Philistine garrison, saying, hey, let's just go up and present ourselves to us.

It may be that God would give us, give them into our hands, and they scramble up the hill and sure enough, they start a great victory. Everyone else is encouraged. And then a great route happens. It seems like every time it's one person willing to go through a difficult situation, to accept the circumstances that they encounter as part of the plan of God. And then they see not only a victory in their own life, but they see a falling away of the enemy before them.

My encouragement to you and I is to view the difficulties that you and I encounter as a part of the plan of God for our life.

It's not enough just to think, oh yeah, when that time comes, I'm going to be a great prisoner.

When they begin to whip me with scourges, I am going to do now, not so much. But when that time comes, you guys quit pastoring me, leave me alone. But when, hey, when, you know, when it really hits the road, stop with all the little nonsense, right? No, those are the beginning of the scourges. That is the beginning of the prison.

That is the training for that time in the Future. The real test of the blessing or the reality of a church is absolutely not based on how many people come to church. The strength or the success of a Christian church is found in how many of those people are willing to endure the sufferings of Christ. It's how many people will be in jail. It's how many people will stand firm even when circumstances are very against us.

What's going to show the effectiveness of a ministry is the steadfastness of a people who learn to walk with God. In the difficulties that surround you and I today, I don't think it's too much of a stretch to ask ourselves. You know, it may be that some of the difficulties that I'm experiencing around me today are God's plan for me to experience, for the preparation of my own self, but also for the encouraging of other people. Little things to be sure, but things that we need to be willing to go through in order to experience the fullness of the blessing that God has for us. And so my encouragement for you and I, though it seems like you might be in a little corner part of the universe where it doesn't seem that God's focus isn't very strong, it may just be something so small.

My encouragement for you is to say no. God's heart is to use me for his gospel. I'm willing, I'm willing to endure the chains, the reproaches and the shame, to stand firm in following the life of Jesus Christ wherever he puts me. I would say I hope that's true for you, but I have something else that if you're willing to, if you're willing to walk through the fire. God always takes that work that he does through the life of an

individual and he encourages others with it.

There are other people that you are ministering through to by your actions. So that's my goal for you and for I, is to endure that as part of the gospel. And I believe we'll see a result.

O Holy Father, Lord, here we are. O Lord, we're being whipped or being whipped, Lord, it hurts.

We're being whipped in our families by those we love at times in our societies, in our work. Oh Lord, help us to endure suffering as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Oh Lord. And I pray that the fruitfulness of that ministry which you're doing in our heart would expand to the circle around us, Lord, there would be a good result as a good work, as a result result, I just ask in Jesus name, amen.