

The Happy Prisoner

Philippians 1:12-14

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connect groups

PATH

What does it take to steal your joy? To answer that question honestly, you would need to discover what you're passionate about—what drives you and what your expectations of life are. Why is this so important? Because things won't always go your way. Unfavorable winds will toss the ship of your life around on the ocean of circumstances and heartbreaks. What do you need then? The right perspective! Pastor Skip continued unpacking the book of Philippians, teaching truths from Paul's prison cell in Rome:

I. Godly Passion Is Commendable (v. 12b)

II. Great Problems Are Inevitable (v. 12a)

III. Good Perspective Is Essential (vv. 12-14)

POINTS

Godly Passion Is Commendable:

- Paul wrote Philippians from a Roman prison cell, but he was determined and had a singular focus: the gospel. In all of his writings, Paul mentioned the gospel seventy-two times.
- Until you experience the gospel's power, you'll never have a gospel passion.
- Paul's passion for the gospel is summed up in a pair of verses: "As much as is in me, I am ready to preach the gospel" (Romans 1:15) and "I have made it my aim to preach the gospel" (Romans 15:20).
- Spiritual maturity can be measured by what it takes to steal your joy. Paul's passion was his purpose, bringing him a joy unfettered by his imprisonment.
- **Probe:** Discuss your master passion in life. Is there a connection between your master passion and the gospel? If not, how can you help bring them together?

Great Problems Are Inevitable:

- A godly passion invites great problems: the great commission will always bring great conflict. Faith can be fatal (but only in this life).
- Paul returned to Jerusalem after his third missionary journey. He was later

accused and sent to Caesarea Philippi for a two-year prison sentence. His heart was set on reaching Rome with the gospel but instead he found himself in jail. Through it all, he didn't lose his joy; instead, he set it loose wherever he found himself.

- **Probe:** Share about a time in your life when your problems seemed so big that nothing could solve them. How did God show Himself in the midst of the problem? Did He solve the problem, use it to refine you, or both?

Good Perspective Is Essential:

- The words *rejoice*, *joy*, and *rejoicing* are mentioned sixteen times in the four chapters of Philippians.
- Paul's joy is found in the word *furtherance*. It means advancement or forward movement in spite of obstacles.
- Paul's suffering wasn't an obstacle in advancing the gospel; in fact, it made it possible. His suffering furthered the gospel in three specific ways:
 - His suffering furthered God's plan for Roman soldiers (see v. 13). Paul preached to the Praetorian Guard—Caesar's elite soldiers.

- His suffering furthered God's plan for Roman citizens (see v. 13b): "And to all the rest."
- The longest period of Paul's incarceration was the greatest period of Paul's impact.
- Paul's confinement was his assignment; his prison became his pulpit.
- During his imprisonment, Paul wrote Philippians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Colossians.
- Paul's suffering furthered God's plan for reluctant saints (see v. 14).
 - If God could use Paul in jail, He can use us out of jail. Paul's example inspired other Christians who were afraid of Roman persecution to share the gospel.
 - Don't be a sappy or scrappy prisoner but a happy prisoner for Christ.
- **Probe:** Having the right perspective helps determine our priorities. Discuss the connection between perspective and priorities. How are they connected? What are your priorities in life? How do they relate to the furtherance of the gospel?

PRACTICE

Connect Up: Share with your group the things about Jesus you are passionate about (e.g., His love, compassion, salvation, etc.). How does Christ's character help you draw close to the Father? What does Christ's character reveal about the Father (see John 10:30)?

Connect In: How does your passion for Christ influence the body of Christ? What ministry roles do you perform in your local church? What ministry roles have you wanted to take part in, but time or other priorities took precedence? What difference would it make if you made the gospel your priority? What would the risks and rewards be?

Connect Out: As Bob Dylan said, "You're gonna have to serve somebody." To put it another way, we're all imprisoned to someone or something. How is this analogy helpful in reaching out to nonbelievers? Besides sin itself, what things were you chained to before coming to Christ? It could be a life you didn't anticipate or expect (e.g., a job, an illness, or even an actual prison cell). How can you use your story about how you found purpose in Christ to help others in similar situations?