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NO MATTER WHAT

As you read through the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, remember his situation. Falsely accused and imprisoned in Jerusalem. A Roman citizen, he appealed to Caesar. After an extraordinary voyage, miracles including surviving a shipwreck, Paul is now in Rome, under guard.

A prisoner was responsible for his own living expenses, including food and accommodations. Paul wrote the Philippians because they prayed for him and provided financial means. Scripture commands believers to minister to those in prison. Through groups like www.persecution.com and www.prisonfellowship.org you can make a big difference in many lives.

But just because Paul was in chains doesn't mean the Gospel was. We should take his same perspective. No matter your circumstances, God has prepared you for THIS moment of your life, to be His witness. Your REAL LIFE is not about personal pursuits or worldly wealth, but rather to represent Christ to others.

Paul says in Philippians 1:12-21 that all these things REALLY happened to advance the Gospel. Read all about his adventures in Acts 20-26. The hardship and shame of his imprisonment resulted in numerous and even unprecedented opportunities to preach the Gospel to the powerful people of his day, including kings and officials, just as Christ had promised.

Meanwhile, the whole imperial "praetorian" troop knew he was imprisoned for the sake of Christ. Likely every Roman soldier aspired to become part of this elite palace guard of 9,000 men. You think you're "chained" to your daily duties in life? Paul was chained 24/7. As the guards rotated their duty, each one would soon discover the uniqueness of this prisoner. They would hear every conversation, prayer, hymn, and Scripture Paul shared with believers attending his needs.

Paul both preached and LIVED the Gospel in front of them. Word spread. Paul was not a ruffian or white-collar criminal. Educated, cultured, well traveled, Paul was one of the most intellectually accomplished men of his day. Now in chains, Paul cared about the guards, even as he was cared for by his friends. His personal liberty was impinged, but he doesn't dwell on chains and discomfort. He proclaims Christ.

Verse 14 says all this emboldened most of the believers in Rome to speak the word of the Lord "without fear." Persecution does that. Rather than squash the church, people live out the reality of the Gospel and become stronger. Christ is worth suffering for. The people were not just in the pews, but actively proclaiming Christ in public. Are you among them today? Christ promises confidence, courage, and competence to do so! He speaks clearly to hearts and minds, even through your faltering words.

However, some believers in Rome took a different tack. They preached Christ, but they were careful to distance themselves from Paul. They didn't want to be identified with someone so controversial. Even today, we have outspoken controversial people speaking out for Christ. You may or may not go along with their methods, but if they are preaching the message of Christ, how should you respond?

Paul said "What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice." Will you take Paul's attitude? No matter their motive, pray for God to truly speak His message through them! No matter how Christ is proclaimed, rejoice when people hear the Good News about Christ, because that can REALLY change their lives !