**Lesson 4: Joy in Advancing the Message of Christ**

Text: Philippians 1:12-21

**Introduction**

It is obvious that advancing the message of Christ was always on the forefront of Paul’s mind! It is also clear that he did not preach the message of Christ out of a sense of obligation. He was motivated by the joy he found in Christ. Paul viewed it as his life mission to help others hear the message of Christ. How do you view sharing the gospel? What does it take to stop you from sharing the gospel? In this lesson, I hope you will be challenged by Paul’s joy in advancing the message of Christ.

1. Paul had joy in advancing the message of Christ despite difficult circumstances. (v. 12-14)
   1. Circumstances could not rob Paul of his joy because he viewed every circumstance as an opportunity for the gospel.
   2. He viewed his Roman imprisonment as an occasion for the gospel.
   3. The word “furtherance” means “progress, advancement.” It has the idea of the progress made by a pioneer. The term was used in the Greek military to refer to the army engineers who went ahead of the soldiers to open the way into new territory.
      1. Paul opened new territories for the gospel!
      2. The Roman imprisonment that was designed to hinder the progress of the gospel actually advanced it!
   4. He viewed his “bonds” as the means to make Christ known in Rome.
      1. “God sometimes uses strange tools to help us pioneer the gospel….The same God who used Moses’ rod, Gideon’s pitchers, and David’s sling used Paul’s chains.” (Wiersbe).
      2. His bonds gave him contact with the lost in the “palace.” (v. 13)
         1. This is most likely a reference to the imperial guard.
         2. He was chained to Roman guards who worked in shifts. Paul was a prisoner who had a captive audience!
         3. These men may not have been able to hear the gospel if it were not for Paul’s chains.
      3. What might be the “chains” that God could use in your life?
   5. Many of the believers in Rome were encouraged to proclaim the message of Christ by Paul’s example. (v. 14)
      1. If Paul could witness while yet in prison, surely they could use their freedom to make the gospel known.
      2. Whose example has bolstered your confidence to witness for Christ?
2. Paul had joy in advancing the message of Christ despite difficult people. (v. 15-19)
   1. There were those who preached Christ with wrong motives. (v. 15)
      1. That they were filled with “envy” indicates that they were jealous of Paul.
      2. They were filled with selfish ambition.
   2. The word “contention” means that they tried to secure people to follow them. (v. 16a)
      1. They were trying to gain a following for themselves under the guise of gaining a following for Christ.
      2. They were using Christ to make themselves look good!
      3. How could we be guilty of the same today?
   3. They hoped to bring additional trouble to Paul during his imprisonment. (v. 16b)
   4. What kept this from becoming a major distraction for Paul?
      1. He chose to focus on those who had a pure motive. (v. 17a)
      2. He believed he was placed in Rome for the sake of the gospel. (v. 17b)
      3. He chose to rejoice that Christ was preached. (v. 18)
      4. He knew that his adverse circumstances were temporary. (v. 19a)
      5. He rested in the fact that the Philippians were praying for Him and that the Lord would help him. (v. 19b)
   5. Paul’s unselfish attitude led to broader proclamation of the gospel.
3. Central Idea: Paul had joy in advancing the message of Christ despite difficult circumstances and difficult people because his focus was on Christ. (v. 20-21)
   1. He wanted to magnify Christ whether by life or by death. (v. 20).
      1. To “magnify” means to make great, exalt or glorify.
      2. You might wonder, “Does Christ need to be magnified? After all, how can a mere human being ever magnify the Son of God? Well, the stars are much bigger than the telescope, and yet the telescope magnifies them and brings them closer. The believer’s body is to be a telescope that brings Jesus Christ close to people.” (Wiersbe)
      3. How can you bring Christ into focus for others?
   2. He viewed all of life to be about Christ. (v. 21)
      1. Complete the sentence, “For to me to live is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and to die is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
      2. If you live for money, you will one day leave it all behind.
      3. If you live for fame, you will one day be forgotten.
      4. If you live for power, you will eventually lose it all.
      5. If you live for Christ, you will never be disappointed!

**Conclusion**

There is joy in advancing the message of Christ! This does not mean it will be easy and always enjoyable. You will inevitably encounter difficult circumstances and difficult people in proclaiming Christ. He is worth it all! View your circumstances as God’s way of furthering the gospel. Choose to make your life about Christ. Discover the joy that comes from advancing the good news!