

## A Gospel Driven Perspective

### 1. Intro

- Last week we kicked off our series 'The Gospel Driven Church' looking at Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Philippi
- Saw Paul is in prison, probably in Rome and he's writing to his friends from the church in Philippi that planted some 10 years before hand
  - He's thanking them for sending people to care for him and bring him supplies
  - But also to encourage them to keep standing firm in their faith, growing in Christ-likeness and be united together as they proclaim the good news of Jesus
- What we see in this passage and right throughout the letter is ...
  - Paul is facing a terrible trial
  - In chains, in prison ... on death row
  - But not only that ...
    - Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles
      - His job was to go and plant churches
    - Yet here he is in prison
      - Career on the skids
      - Facing trial and possible execution
      - Life in the balance
- And yet he's rejoicing! He's full of joy!
  - He's not discouraged > he's not in despair
  - And here's why
  - Because he's worked out a definition of life that means he can deal with anything life throws at him
- What we learn from Paul in this passage is ...

- It's not the circumstances of your life ...
- It's not whether things go well for you or bad for you
- Rather it's the way you define life that will determine whether you stand or fall in this world
  
- What is your definition of life?
  - What are you living for?
  - What's the most important thing in your in life?
  - What's that thing that will make your life worth living ... regardless of what else happens?
  
- So "what is life?"
  - How do I define life?
  - What's the thing I'm living for?
  - Most of us don't ask that question until terrible things happen to us
  
- Something terrible happened to Paul ... but it wasn't for the first time
  - But he's worked out a definition of life that enables him to face anything
  - Nothing more practical than that ... let's take a look
  
- What's he saying here in this passage?
- Telling the Philippians
  - "Don't worry, don't be discouraged, even though I don't know whether I'll die tomorrow or live another 20 years ... it doesn't matter because it's not actually harming my life
  - That which I live for isn't touched by what I am going through
  - Don't worry for me
- So if we see how Paul can do it ... we'll see how we can do it also

[SLIDE]

## 2. A Gospel Driven Perspective of Life

- Here's what Paul says ...

- *v12 – Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*
- Philippians are discouraged and concerned for Paul ... and yet despite his suffering and circumstances ... he's writing to assure and comfort them
- Why are they discouraged?
  - Because of circumstances Paul is in
  - Paul was the great architect / the leader / entrepreneur of the biggest movement in the history of the world
  - He has such skill, leadership qualities, convictions and trust in God ... that he would turn up in any modern, sophisticated, cosmopolitan city in the Greco-Roman world, set up shop, start preaching the gospel ...
  - And after a while there'd be so many converts he could leave a church there
  - And he did that all over the Mediterranean
  - He was an incredible leader and church planter
- But the Philippians are discouraged, because they see that he's in prison
  - Here he is in the middle of a career it looks like his life is about to end
  - Think of all the great things he could do > how much more he could achieve in life
  - And yet he's chained so he can't do his work
  - And not only that ... he's in danger of being executed
- You can understand their concern can't you
  - Not only do they have deep affection for Paul and his wellbeing
  - But they'd also be wondering why God would allow this to happen to Paul
  - Just doesn't make sense
  - He's the Apostle to the Gentiles!

- Surely it'd be better for God's plans and purposes that he'd be out preaching and planting more churches
- "God what are you doing? Why are you allowing this?"
- But Paul doesn't think like that?
  - He's not concerned ... in fact he rejoices despite what he's going through
  - Here's why
- *v12 – Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.*
  - *v19 – what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*
- He's saying ...
  - "I want you to see, that even though it looks bad ... it's actually turned out for the spread of the gospel" – v12
  - "I want you to see that all the terrible things that have happened to me will turn out for my deliverance" - 19
- Saying ...
  - "I know that as bad as this is ... its working both historical good and personal good"
- v12 – I want you to see, that even though it looks bad it actually turned out for good.
- Why?
  - *v13 – As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.*
  - Everyone, in the prison knows Paul's there because of Jesus
  - That is, because of his preaching of the gospel
    - "Hey why's this Paul fella in here for?"
    - "Because he's been telling everyone about this guy called Jesus who was resurrected from the dead"

- So the word has got around to everyone about Paul and the message of the gospel he's been proclaiming
  
- And the impact Paul's boldness is having on everyone ... then becomes an encouragement to the other Christians there in the city ... to be bold in proclaiming the gospel too
  - *14 – Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*
  
- Now Paul wants to plant churches
  - He would never have planned a mission to those in that prison unless God had wanted him to
  - But now he's got a captive audience for him to share the gospel
  - Every day there's a bunch of guards looking after this guy who just so happens to be the most gifted evangelist the world has ever known
  - And one by one they're converted
  
- And Paul would have been thinking
  - *"You know what ... I wouldn't have planned this ... but I can see how God is using me and my awful circumstances for the advance of the gospel and for his glory"*
  
- And so he can rejoice in that
  
- God does that all the time with the circumstances of your life
  - Joseph > Genesis
    - Sold as a slave by his brothers
    - Prays "God why you letting this happen?"
    - Becomes governor of Egypt
    - Saves his brothers from famine and starvation

- **Application**

- Like Paul, like Joseph ... sometimes God gives us a glimpse into what's he's doing in and through our pain and suffering ... and shows us how he's using it for good

- **Illustration – Helen and Zoe**

- Friends Helen and Martin [SLIDE]
  - Zoe born with anencephaly > is the absence of a major portion of the brain and skull that occurs during early stages of pregnancy
  - Zoe not expected to survive the pregnancy > if she did, it was likely she would die within hours or days of birth > encouraged to terminate the pregnancy
  - But they didn't > convicted that God is sovereign, he gives life and takes away life > Zoe still created in the image of God therefore her life was still valuable regardless of how brief it might be
  - Zoe lived for 4 years
  - Lots of time in and out of hospital
  - Required lots of intensive care by Marty & Helen > sleepless nights, lots of stress and anxiety > four year trial
- But even in the midst of what they were going through ... like Paul they could see the good God was doing
  - Able to talk with nurses about their trust in God > hope of heaven for Zoe
  - Able to talk with Christians and at churches and encourage them in their faith as they explained
    - the ethics of their decision to keep Zoe and not to abort her
    - their trust in God and his sovereignty throughout the pregnancy and life of Zoe
- They were able to genuinely rejoice in the life of Zoe
  - Not be bitter about their circumstances

- Because they had a glimpse of what God was doing in and through their circumstances

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- As you go through hard times in life, it's worthwhile asking God to give you a glimpse of the good he's doing through the trials you are experiencing
  - That's not to say you can see the whole canvas that he's painting ... but just a glimpse
- It maybe that God is
  - Forcing you to let go of your trust in worldly things and trust more in him
  - Using your circumstances to be a witness and encouragement to others around you
  - Maybe there are characteristics and habits God wants to prune away to help you grow in faith
- As you see what God is doing its not going to knock you down, it's not going to destroy you
  - Because you have a gospel perspective of life

**3. A Gospel Driven Definition of Life [SLIDE]**

- But ... so often when we are facing pain and tragedy and trials in life ... we **don't** see what God is doing and how he might be using our circumstances for good
- And so Paul goes on ...
  - v19 – *for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*
  - Word 'deliverance' in original language literally = salvation (σωτηρίαν)
  - Better = "*what has happened to me will turn out for my salvation.*"
- Confusing when translated deliverance ... because when you read it, it looks like he's saying
  - "I am sure that I'm going to get out / not be executed / gone soon"

- But what he's actually saying is
  - "In spite of what is happening to me I will be saved by God"
  
- That is
  - Paul is confident in his ultimate salvation / his ultimate deliverance whether he's released from jail or not
  - He knows his captivity has been part of God's plan for the preaching of the gospel and he's okay with that
  - Because he's confident in his final salvation that comes in Christ
  
- The reason Paul can be so content with
  - Uncertainty of his future
  - Pain and suffering he's experiencing
- Is because of his definition of life
  - He says "I can rejoice in all that's going on in my life ... and here's the reason why"
  - v21 - "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain"
  - That's his definition for life!
  
- If you have a proper definition for life ... you'll be able to face anything
  - If you don't have a proper definition of life ... you won't
  
- What does Paul mean when he says "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain"?
  - He means - "for me ... Jesus and seeing his name glorified is the thing that makes life - life"
  - "That's my bottom line"
  - "This is the thing that makes life worth living"
  - Knowing Jesus and making him known is the thing that gives his life meaning and purpose
  
- As long as he's doing that ... he can deal with anything



- Anything else that comes his way in life ... is secondary compared to magnifying Jesus
- When he's magnifying Jesus ... he's content ... even if he's going through difficult circumstances
  
- **Application**
- What are some alternative definitions for life that we might adopt
- **Hedonism** – for me to live is to have fun / pleasure
  - Hedonist might have a good job, might make a lot of money and work hard ... but that's not the meaning of life
  - The hedonist says "Work – Shmurk. I want money because I want fun. That's the important thing"
  - "I only do this job because it makes enough money so I can ...
    - Go on that holiday
    - Live the lifestyle I want
    - Buy that guitar
    - Eat at nice restaurants
    - Do the things in life that really give life meaning – recreation / pleasure
  - Hedonist says take away the pleasure ... I've got no life
  
- **Materialism** – for me to live is to have lots of stuff
  - Materialist ... says life is the sum of all you have / life is all about what you accumulate
  - There is no God, there is no afterlife ... therefore get as much stuff and enjoy it while you can
  - My bottom line is ... life consists of the possessions I own
  - Materialist says ... you take away my stuff I have no life
  - So when a materialist
    - Business goes bankrupt
    - Made redundant

- Bad investment decisions
  - Share market starts tanking
  - And they lose all their stuff ... life is miserable > not worth living
  
  - **Moralism** – for me to live is to be morally superior [SLIDE]
    - Why does Javert kill himself in Les Miserables?
    - Because he thinks of himself as morally superior and can't stand the thought that Jean Valjean – a common criminal is better than he is
    - He can't stand the idea that he needs forgiveness
    - He can't stand the idea than he needs grace
  
  - When tragedy and troubles come to us and they take away that which makes our life worth living
    - And unless you have a right definition of life ... then you collapse
  
  - **Illustration – Grease** [SLIDE]
  - In movie Grease ... Danny Zuko played by John Travolta is a 'Greaser' ...
    - Working class youth with greased hair and tough guy attitude
    - But he falls in love with Sandy Dee (Olivia Newton-John) who' a sweet, innocent girl ... and the movie is a constant tension about Danny trying to be with Sandy but at the same time maintain his 'Greaser' image
- [SLIDE]
- In the end ... Danny realises he has to change his bottom line
    - He changes his image > what he considers important in life ... to get what he knows is better
  - Javert ... will not change
    - He will not accept grace
    - But he wants to insist that he lives for being morally superior, a religious man, a good guy ... yet he dies

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- Most of us aren't thought through where we stand in our worldview and what we live for, whether we're
  - Hedonists
  - Materialists
  - Moralists
- Most of us have chosen something else that we live for
  - Our family
  - Our friends
  - Our boyfriend / girlfriend
  - Our career / sport
  - Our spouse
  - Our children
- And we say ... for me to live is to have that
- But when the circumstances of life change
  - When tragedy comes
  - When you go through trials in life and you lose that thing you live for
  - Either ..
    - You utterly collapse ... or
    - Or you convert
  - That is ... either
    - You're live isn't worth living; or
    - You realise you need change your definition of what it means to live
- Paul says there is only one definition of life ... there is only one bottom line that will stand up to anything life throws at you
  - *For me to live is Christ and to die is gain*
- You know what that means?
  - It means Paul's career is over!
  - Paul can't plant churches anymore!
  - But his career is not is life!

- So he says
  - “So what, I may live, I may die ... it doesn’t matter. It hasn’t touched my bottom line / it hasn’t taken away my life”
  
- If your
  - relationships are collapsing
  - wealth is ebbing away
  - children aren’t behaving the way you want them to
  - don’t make it in the sport your playing / career your pursuing
    - And as a result it feels like life is a misery
- The problem is not the circumstances of your life
  - The problem is the definition of your life
  
- So what do you do?
  - Convert!
  - Change your bottom line
  - Change the thing that you live for to something that will never be undermined or taken away
  
- Paul had a definition of life that enabled him to deal with everything life threw at him and that was
  - *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain”*
  
- How do you take that worldview on for yourself?
  - How do you believe it / own it for yourself?
  - What’s it going to take for you to want say “For ME to live is Christ and to die is gain”?
  
- In Phil 2 Paul tells us what Christ did for us [SLIDE]
  - 2:5-8 – ... *Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but made himself*

*nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross!*

- That mission of Jesus in coming to earth and going to the cross
  - His whole reason for living ... was so that he would
    - pay the penalty for your sin and mine
    - reconcile us back to the Father
    - give us a life that is eternal and full and meaningful and wonderful
  
- By coming to earth and going to the cross Jesus is saying
  - "everything about my life ...
  - the reason I became human,
  - the reason I left my heavenly throne,
  - the reason I died,
  - everything I'm doing now in heaven,
  - everything I am doing is to give you the eternal, full, meaningful and wonderful life you can have by knowing God"

**[SLIDE OFF]**

- If you understand what Jesus has done for you
  - There you'll see Jesus definition for life
  - Jesus definition for life is this ... "For me to live is you"
  
- Jesus Christ ... God the Son, Lord of heaven and earth says
  - "For me to live is you"
    - "My life is to see you sharing in eternal life"
    - "My life is to see you living with sure hope"
    - "Everything I do is subservient to that goal"
  
- What does it mean when you see Jesus up on that cross

- It means Jesus is willing to do anything for you ... so that as you're dealing with the hard times and tragedies of life ... you can deal with those things because you have a sure hope and eternal life
- "For me to live is you"
  
- As the Holy Spirit convicts us of this truth ...
  - and we see what Jesus Christ ... my brother, my friend, my shepherd, my saviour, my king has done for us ...
  - We can say
    - "If for you to live is me ... then for me to live is you"
  
- And if for you "to live is Christ and to die is gain" ... then you have the best definition of life that means you've got nothing that can be taken away from you that is life
  
- So what is your definition of life?
  - Do you have a definition of life?
  - Don't wait until the end when it's too late like Javert
  - Look to the cross ... see how on that cross Jesus shows us "for me to live is you"
  - And see therefore that the best definition of life is for us to say "for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"

## **PRAY**