

OUTLINE OF TALK 2

LIVING IN CHRIST PHILIPPIANS 1:12–26

AIM

- To explain that everything in Paul's life serves one aim – to “advance the gospel”. Nothing – not his circumstances, nor his reputation, nor his uncertain future – is allowed to interfere with that aim. In fact, all these things are used by God to fulfill that aim.

INTRODUCTORY ILLUSTRATION

I read this true story recently in a newspaper. A car crashed into Gordon White's living room last week – exactly a year after the same car, driven by the same driver, crashed into the same room. Eric Williams, 60, is believed to have suffered a blackout both times, leaving the road at the same spot in Cleckheaton, West Yorkshire. It took White nine weeks to clear up the mess last time, and a full year to redecorate. “I've only just finished getting the house how I want it,” he said. “If I'd known this would happen, I would have used cheaper wallpaper.”

If we know what is going to happen in the future, it changes the way we live in the present.

OPENING

- Paul is writing to the Philippians from prison. His circumstances look bad.
- There are people who call themselves Christians, but who are deliberately trying to get him into trouble and ruin his reputation.
- His future looks uncertain as he doesn't know whether he is going to live or die.
- And yet Paul rejoices. Why? Because everything in Paul's life serves one aim – to “advance the gospel” – and nothing is allowed to interfere with that aim.

1. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES ARE BAD, BUT THE GOSPEL IS ADVANCED

- Many people who go through difficult times assume that God has abandoned them.
- Paul sees that God has not abandoned him, but has placed him where he is so that the gospel may be advanced. What seems like a disaster is actually God at work, bringing the good news to others.
- Even though Paul is in prison he makes use of his situation to advance the gospel.
- Not only has Paul been able to talk about Christ to the palace guard (v13), but his example has encouraged others to be more courageous in the way they talk about Jesus (v14).

› *Add your own illustration here: share from your own experience how something that might seem tragic or painful has brought an opportunity to advance the gospel. This is also an opportunity to remind participants what the gospel actually is.*

APPLICATION When somebody in an office, a school staff room, or on a college campus says something about Jesus, it encourages other Christians to say something as well. That was the effect that Paul's imprisonment had on other Christians.

APPLICATION It would have been very easy for Paul to say, “I'll just wait until I get out of prison, then I'll be able to get on with my work for the Lord”. But he doesn't do that. No matter what the circumstances, he is looking for opportunities to tell others about Jesus. It's very easy for us to think: “Well, I'll really be able to serve the Lord Jesus better when I've got the job right, when I've got my house sorted out, when my relationships are settled...”. We don't wait for our lives to get just right. They never do. God will use you to advance the gospel, whatever circumstances you're in.