**Lessons from a Lockdown**

Rommel J. Casis

**Day 2**

**Philippians 1:12-18**

Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

*Questions for Personal Reflection:*

1. How do you think Paul felt about his imprisonment? Why?
2. Have you ever been in a situation where you thought it was bad but it turned out to be beneficial? Remind yourself what happened.
3. How do you think the current limitations of your situation can be used by God for the good of many?
4. How do you think you can continue “preaching” the gospel in your situation?
5. In what ways do you need to rise up and minster to the needs of your small group or family?

*Insight:*

Paul was in prison but he wanted to encourage the Philippians by telling them that his imprisonment turned out to be a good thing. Paul was one of the most if not the most effective church builder at the time. Logic dictates that he had to be out in the mission field for gospel to advance and that him being in prison should adversely affect the mission. It’s like any team sport. The team needs to have the best player on the court for the team to be at its best. If the best player is not playing, then the team performance suffers. But in his church, God has a habit of defying logic. Shutting down the most effective minister of gospel turned out to advance the gospel even more.

Quarantines, social distancing and even lockdowns need not limit the gospel. In fact, the current situation may allow us to reach out to people we normally would or could not. In Paul’s case it was the “whole palace guard.” Paul’s “bad situation” allowed him to spend more time with people he normally would not have the chance to be with. What about us? Who do we get to spend more time with because of our current situation? Who are we in more contact with? Are we reaching out to them?

The other way the gospel advanced because of Paul’s imprisonment was through Christians rising up. Instead of being intimidated, brothers and sisters became more confident in sharing the gospel. This also needs to happen in our church today. Leaders of small of groups and leaders of families need to take on the role of minister for their groups. While we can still have large online meetings of the body, the call of the hour is for family and small group leaders to be confident and dare to preach the Word. The church needs more spiritual leaders to lead their groups. Will you answer the call?

Paul would rather have the gospel advance even it meant being in chains. If imprisonment was what it took to advance the gospel, he supported it wholeheartedly. For him, advancing the gospel was more important than his comfort. Is this our heart as well?

Paul even accepted the fact that some may not have pure motives when they preach. In the same way, having more but less trained family and small group leaders preach may mean less than perfect preaching. But its alright. The important thing is that Christ is preached. More and more people preaching Christ imperfectly will reach more people than one person preaching Christ perfectly. Besides, God can use our imperfect efforts for his perfect plan.

The lockdown cannot lock-up the gospel if we do what we can, with what we have and have faith in what God can do.