**Lessons from a Lockdown**

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**Day 39**

**Ephesians 3:1-6**

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

***Questions for Personal Reflection:***

1. Why would anyone be willing to be a prisoner for someone else?
2. What did Paul mean when he said he was “the prisoner of Christ Jesus”? Am I willing to be a prisoner of Jesus?
3. Am I able to see the spiritual reality beyond my circumstances? How do I need to see it differently?
4. What is my spiritual condition because of the pandemic?
5. What has changed for me because of the pandemic and what remains the same despite it?

***Insight:***

Paul said he was a prisoner for the sake of the Gentiles. How many of us would be willing to be a prisoner for the sake of someone else? Because of the pandemic we have to stay in our homes. Some would say we are prisoners in our own homes. But isn’t this for our benefit? We are prisoners to protect us from being infected by disease. But imagine you are immune. What if for some reason the virus cannot infect you and you can walk around freely if you wanted to. Would you be willing anyway to stay home for the sake of others? Are we willing to lose our freedom or experience suffering for the sake of others?

In the eyes of the world, Paul was a prisoner of governing authorities. He had no choice in the matter. But Paul saw it differently. Paul saw himself as a prisoner of Jesus. He was there because of Jesus. How about us? How do we see ourselves? Are we staying at home because the government requires us to do it or because we have no choice because we might get sick? Are we prisoners of our circumstances, without choice on the matter? Can we see ourselves as put in quarantine, lockdown or experiencing physical distancing, because of Christ? Are we staying home or limiting our movements because the government controls us or because Jesus controls us? Why do we do what we do?

There are a lot of things that have happened to us because of this pandemic. We see ourselves not being to go to work or school. We see ourselves unable to meet in large gatherings and enjoy the social activities we used to regularly engage in. We see ourselves forced to remain home. But have we ever wondered how God sees what is happening? Can we also see our circumstances from God’s perspective?

We need to see not only what is happening to us on the outside but also what is happening to us in the inside. “Whatever may be happening to us externally, who we are in Christ is not changed, and who we are in Christ is more important of the two.” (Thomas Jones) How has the pandemic affected us spiritually? This is more important than the pandemic’s physical effect on us?

Paul was already a prisoner of Christ even before the government put him in prison. Imprisonment didn’t change his status in Christ nor his mission. His mission remained the same, whether in or out prison. He was called to administer God’s grace by revealing the mystery of Christ, that the gospel is for all people. Our spiritual status also does not change no matter how much our physical circumstances have changed. The world seems so different now compared to what it was like a few months ago. But the world’s need to hear the gospel has not changed or diminished. We may have had to shift our battlefield to online interactions but it is still the same spiritual war to save souls. Only the venue of our activities (i.e. more in our homes and the digital world) has changed but our role remains the same.

Like Paul, we receive grace so we can share it with others. In Paul’s case, God revealed to him knowledge that others did not have so his role was to share that knowledge. As Christians, we too have been taught by God many things which many people in the world may not understand. Every day as we read the Bible and pray, God teaches us more and more things. God has taught us more than what many people in the world understand. Aren’t you sometimes surprised at how people in the world act and you can’t imagine yourself ever acting that way? It is because God has taught you and transformed you by his grace. So instead of being irritated or upset by the foolishness of the world, we should respond by teaching other people what God has taught us. Let us share the grace God has given us.

During the lockdown let us be prisoners of Christ.