



Prisoner of Christ

One of the things I love most about the Apostle Paul's writings is how he habitually emphasized the will and sovereignty of the Lord. This is an outward sign of a Christian with a healthy, thriving faith: complete and utter submission of oneself to the will of our perfectly righteous and just Creator, even in circumstances when it makes absolutely no sense.

As Paul continued his letter to the church in Ephesus, he opened chapter 3 with this:

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles- ([Eph 3:1](#))

Of course, in the original letter there were not chapter and verse breaks, so we need to look back a few sentences to get context on what ***this reason*** is. And we find this summarized in [Ephesians 2:19-22](#) where he states that both Jews and Gentiles, who have a saving faith, are being built together into a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit through work of God and the gospel being preached by the apostles and prophets ([Eph 2:20](#)). And as Paul repeatedly asserted his apostleship, we know that he received a divine calling to preach to the Gentiles; Scripture confirms this in [Acts 9](#).

Paul penned this letter around 60 AD, about the same time he wrote to the Colossians and Philemon. At that time, Paul was in prison in Rome. Because Paul's irresistible calling was to take the gospel to the Gentiles, we can now see why he said it was ***for the sake of the Gentiles*** that he was a ***prisoner of Christ Jesus*** (also see: [Col 1:1; 24-29](#), [2 Tim 1:8; 11-12](#)).

As I noted above, Paul knew exactly why he was in prison and Who he was a prisoner of: ***Christ***. He didn't blame the Romans or orthodox Jewish leaders for his circumstance, instead he acquiesced to the situation, knowing that God was in charge and that ultimately his fate rested in the Lord's hands.

Paul used similar stark language in other letters, often referring to himself in the Greek as a ***doulos***, or *slave* of Christ ([Rom 1:1](#), [Gal 1:10](#), [Phil 1:1](#), [Titus 1:1](#), etc.). Paul completely understood his place on earth – to do the will of God who called him, no matter what opposition he faced.

Had Paul rejected his calling and remain a pompous, self-righteous Pharisee, he would have no doubt lived a much easier life and never seen the inside of a Roman prison, but he would not have been doing the will of God. Instead, Paul obeyed his calling and completely submitted to the Lord, even though it was likely very difficult at times.

There is much we can learn from this great apostle, and one of the most important things is that God is truly sovereign. If God were not sovereign then He would not be God, because that



means something would be out of His control. There isn't. Not a single thing. But we may never understand it, and we need to be okay with that.

No matter what we are going through in this moment or the next, we can take a valuable lesson from Paul in recognizing that God has us right here or there for a very specific purpose, if indeed we are submissive to His will. In the case of [Ephesians 3:1](#), we learn that Paul was in prison for the sake of the Gentiles. He surrendered to that, and the gospel he preached came to you and me through his suffering. If we, too, are faced with prison, real or figurative, instead of fighting, kicking, and screaming we should ask God for clarity, understanding, and peace. We may never see the whole picture, but this is where faith comes in. And that faith in action is saying, under any circumstance we may encounter, "Lord, I trust you. Use this situation for Your glory."

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece