

Jason Huffman
Ephesians 3:7-13
Prisoners and Ministers Pt 2
5/5/24

Discussion Questions:

1. What mindset change could help you see a current “prison” as being from God with a purpose?
2. Do you treat your job like a ministry from God? How could you?
3. Have you ever felt especially spiritually weak or strong? How does that relate to the second point?
4. Is God’s grace a strong motivation for serving Him? Why or why not?
5. What is a clear takeaway for you this week? Why?

Teaching Notes:

Paul doesn’t see himself as prisoner of Rome or circumstance...
...he is a prisoner of Christ with a purpose to serve Christ.

It is a mature mindset to believe your prison has a purpose.

It is a powerful mindset to know your purpose is to serve Christ.

A biblical word for someone who serves is “minister”.

We are prisoners w/ a purpose...

...And ministers with a ministry.

Big Idea: God’s purpose for all of us is to serve Him.

Title is “Prisoners and Ministers pt 2”

For Paul...his purpose was to serve the Lord...

...& his ministry was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul practically fulfilled his ministry in prison by praying & writing.

3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles—**2** if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, **3** how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, **4** by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), **5** which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: **6** that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel,

7 of which I became a minister **according to the gift of the grace of God given to me** by the effective working of His power.

Paul was a prisoner, a minister, a servant of Christ...

...and he saw it as a gift of God's grace.

1. A minister's work is a gift.

Serving God is a holy & precious gift we steward & treasure.

God gives us something that was His...

...for us to care for and later give back to Him.

We serve people He has created in a world He made...

...that will return back to Him...

...and the question is: what investment did we make?

Let's go a little deeper into the theology of work & ministry...

Work is a gift from God...

From making burgers to pouring coffee to teaching kids to taking care of accounts to decorating houses to designing websites to raising children to cutting hair to writing code...

...we glorify God in our work.

From the beginning we were blessed to work & serve God:

Genesis 1:28 Then God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground."

To oversee creation & be productive was God's blessing.

God is a God of order, a Solver of problems, a Creator of beauty, a Helper of people...

When we work, we work for God & we are like God.

We take disorder and make order.

We see problems and find solutions.

We discover potential and create beauty.

We meet people and help them.

7 of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

2. A minister's power is from God.

"Effective working" is the Greek word: energeia.

This is different than dunamis which is sort of potential power.

Effective working means action, energy, operation.

What animates us, what energizes us is His Spirit and power.

I have what I have because of God's power in me as His minister.

**It is not about how energized you are right now...
...or how excited you feel in the moment...
...It is about how intimately you walk with Him every day.**

Ministry is a spiritual overflow of His power in you.

**God worked it out for Paul to have a ministry...
...And God is working in Paul for him to minister.**

8 To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, **9** and to make all see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

3. A minister serves by grace.

God regularly chooses the least because He is the greatest.

I Corinthians 1

26 Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you. **27** Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. **28** God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. **29** As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

If in pride or self-confidence, we think we can do the job...
...we are the best qualified, we have got it handled...
...we are sadly mistaken because ALL ministry is by grace.

On our own, none of us deserve it & none of us can do it!

10 to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*, **11** according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The church is not here to just help people solve problems today...
...we are here to help people solve problems that are eternal.

God has an eternal plan & the church is the one to fulfill that plan.

4. A minister sees eternal things.

Christ came to seek and save the lost.
He came to give His life as a ransom for many.

We have been given the ministry of reconciliation.

We want people to be reconciled with God.

12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him.

5. A minister has bold access.

As you serve Him, He is going to work through you and in you.
Have the boldness to show up & the humility to ask for help.

Be bold because you have access, and He is available.
Be confident because you trust Him, and He is able.

13 Therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

6. A minister willingly pays the cost.

As ministers, we will suffer, but we suffer willingly because we love and trust God and believe what He has demonstrated for people to be right and true.