

The Gospel Cannot Be Chained

Sermon Text: Philippians 1:12-18a

¹² Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. ¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ 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.

1.) Paul was in chains (likely chained to a Roman guard, while under house arrest) as he awaited trial before Caesar. Yet he says this turn of events has served to advance the gospel. How was that true in Paul's case? (v. 12-14) Have you ever experienced a time in life or ministry when God used "confinement" to serve the gospel?

2.) Why do you think Paul's chains were a positive motivation for some? How did the sinful flesh in others seek to take advantage of the Paul's situation? What was the net result?

First Lesson: Numbers 11:16-17, 24-30

The LORD said to Moses: "Bring me seventy of Israel's elders who are known to you as leaders and officials among the people. Have them come to the Tent of Meeting, that they may stand there with you. ¹⁷ I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit that is on you and put the Spirit on them. They will help you carry the burden of the people so that you will not have to carry it alone. ...²⁴ So Moses went out and told the people what the LORD had said. He brought together seventy of their elders and had them stand around the Tent. ²⁵ Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do so again. ²⁶ However, two men, whose names were Eldad and Medad, had remained in the camp. They were listed among the elders, but did not go out to the Tent. Yet the Spirit also rested on them, and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ A young man ran and told Moses, "Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp." ²⁸ Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth, spoke up and said, "Moses, my lord, stop them!" ²⁹ But Moses replied, "Are you jealous for my sake? I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!" ³⁰ Then Moses and the elders of Israel returned to the camp.

1.) What problem was Moses up against? What was God's solution? (v. 16-17)

2.) Scripture does not say why Eldad and Medad remained in the camp. List some possible explanations.

3.) How does this account encourage us when our (human) ministerial resources are limited?

Second Lesson: Mark 9:38-41

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me,⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us.⁴¹ I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.”

1.) John and the other Apostles had fallen into the trap of seeing themselves as exclusively sanctioned by Christ. How does this mindset damage and hinder: Our relationship with the Lord? Our relationship with other Christians? The gospel ministry?

2.) Evaluate: The old adage also applies to ministry: “The enemy of my enemy is my friend.”