



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: Eph. 3:1, 13; 4:1

Ask one person to pray at the beginning of your meeting.

Check-in

Check in with each other about how everyone is doing.

Bible Reading: Ephesians Eph. 3:1, 13; 4:1

Sermon Summary:

Paul the Prisoner

When we arrive at Ephesians 3:1 & 4:1 we read that Paul was an actual prisoner. That's right, the Apostle Paul was arrested and put in prison. Why? Because of his unflinching faithfulness to the revelation God had shown him: the Gentiles (non-Jews) are included in God's plan of salvation! Of course, the Gentiles rejoiced at this news. The Jewish rulers, not so much. So, they doggedly hunted Paul down and found a way to get him thrown into prison because of his erroneous teaching. And that's why Paul says he is a prisoner "on behalf of the Gentiles" (Eph. 3:1b). But, and this is a critical question, how did Paul see his imprisonment? Not as a prisoner of Rome or its authorities, but "of Christ Jesus!" His God was sovereign over all things. To Paul this meant God wanted him in that prison for a reason. Because of that realization, many were saved through his imprisonment and he wrote many letters while he was in there. In other words, the gospel continued to advance (Phil. 1:12-13).

There are times that we too find ourselves in prisons of sorts: health limitations, lingering in past

hurts, financial hardships, delays in medical procedures, COVID-19 lockdown. How do we see our prisons? Is God sovereign for you? How will you respond while God has you there?

Discussion:

1. N. T. Wright says “Paul in prison was forced to put his roots down... deeper... into... Jesus & his death.”

a. How has (is) the “confinement” of the COVID-19 pandemic causing you to “put your roots deeper into Jesus & his death”?

b. How do you view your life circumstances? Do we see ourselves as ‘captives’ of bad luck or unhappy circumstances that create bitterness & resentment? Or, do we look at every event in our lives as being under God’s control &...usable by him?

2. What circumstances in your life do you find difficult to see under God’s control? Why?

3. Read and discuss the following quote by Kathy C Miller. “Just as God brought good from Paul’s imprisonment—he wrote several NT books during that time—God intends to bring good out of everything, even unhappy things, in our lives.”

4. What circumstances in your life can you share where you saw God bring good?

5. What can help (or has helped) you see your circumstances not only under God’s control but that something good came out of it?

End with Prayer.

- Pray for deeper roots into Jesus and his death and that we would see everything under God’s control.
- Pray for any needs of people in your group.