



abclinks

connecting personal and small group studies with this week's sermon

Today's Edition for the sermon on April 22, 2007

this week's core belief

Hope

"I can cope with the hardships of life and death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ."

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf.

Hebrews 6.19-20

Adapted from **The 30 Core**

Competencies *The Christian Life Profile*,
Randy Frazee, Zondervan

See www.pantego.org/resources/30core.html

usingabclinks

Personal Bible Studies (inside pages)

- Personal studies that explore Scripture passages related to this week's sermon and include a prayer to help you through the week.

Small Group Discussion (back page)

- Small group questions that connect with the sermon and your personal Bible study
- If you are not in a small group, contact one of our small group staff members to get more information on ABC Small Groups or go to www.adabible.org>smallgroups.

See www.adabible.org for abclinks archives.



Part Two of a Five Part Sermon Series

"Stuck"

On Good Friday, Ada Bible Church lost a wonderful lady to cancer. Though cancer has become a very treatable disease for many people over the past 20 years, Jean wasn't as fortunate. Cancer moved very quickly through her body and during the week before Easter, her family and friends gathered to tell her "goodbye." Jean was a young, vibrant, 60 year old mom and grandmother who will be missed by many.

Jean and her husband Jerry had recently begun serving as small group leaders at ABC. As a small group pastor, I've been moved to tears several times in hearing stories how this small group has intimately banded together in love and care for Jean and Jerry. There are few things harder in life than learning that a friend is terminally ill and then walking along side of her as she passes away. Sharing in someone's sickness and death is not what we put in the small group brochure. I wonder if anyone from that small group ever thought, "Life would be much less painful if I wouldn't have joined this group." Knowing this small group, I'm thinking probably not. This group had previously helped another family in the group bury their daughter who passed away from cancer. They did it with incredible care, support and friendship.

At one of the funeral home visitations, I was fortunate to be able to listen to Jerry reflect on the last week of Jean's life. He was very frank about the pain and sorrow he felt and the difficulty of looking ahead to some lonely days without his companion of 42 years. He talked of the pain in aiding his family in processing what was happening to Jean and to them. But in the midst of his grief, he spoke with a gleam in his eye of the compassionate hand of God so prominently displayed during this time. Jerry told me about the hymn sings in Jean's hospital room during her final hours. He spoke of the forgiveness and restoration of family relationships that had been stressed in the past. He shared a story with me of how God had led him to reach out and encourage a young woman down the hall from Jean's hospital room, struggling with her own battle with cancer. Jerry was able to share his faith, his joy, his family and his God-given peace with this hurting girl. I was encouraged by Jerry's perspective. His heart was tender, filled with love and gratitude for God at the same time enduring grief, pain and confusion.

How can something as painful as losing a spouse be experienced with such a positive, God-honoring way? It is clear that God has given Jerry an incredible gift. God has given him the spiritual, supernatural gift of peace and joy. It is the peace that transcends human understanding. It is the joy that really doesn't make much sense in the middle of exceptionally difficult times. It is real. It is authentic. It is beautiful.



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personal bible studies

timeandplace

Paul was chained to a Roman guard as he penned the opening words to his letter to the church in Philippi. You could call it a form of house arrest. Today, people who are under house arrest are electronically tethered. Paul was tethered but to a living, breathing, speaking and listening human being. Paul had been arrested for preaching the Good News about Jesus. His message had stirred the Jewish leaders into a frenzy (see Acts 21.26-35). Because the Romans had the power to punish law breakers, Paul was held by the Roman guard as he awaited trial.

Since Paul's dramatic conversion to becoming a follower and preacher of Christ (see Acts 9), he had been passionately pursuing his mission of spreading the Good News of Jesus throughout Asia and Europe. New churches had sprung up in cities visited. People of all nationalities and backgrounds were coming to faith and sharing their new life with others. In the day of Paul, the gospel of Jesus was spreading like wildfire and Paul was a major contributor to the movement of the message.

What would happen to the Gospel message if Paul was removed from the process? Would the message be hindered or even stopped? If Paul got "stuck" in prison or worse, killed, would Christianity get "stuck"? Would people become afraid to share their faith? Would these new churches fold under pressure? In Paul's opening words to the Philippians, Paul says with great joy, "NO!"

storyline

"...everything that has happened to me here has helped..."

Read Philippians 1.12-14

Paul was imprisoned because of his commitment to follow Christ and to share His message with anyone who would listen. What was Paul's attitude toward being stuck in prison? Was Paul feeling unproductive? Why or why not?

How did Paul view the people who were holding him? What seems to be happening with the guards that have "Paul duty"? Is the Gospel advancing? How? Are people becoming more afraid or more courageous to share their faith? Tell why.

Is there an area or situation in your life where you feel like you are "stuck in mud," unable to get things done that are spiritually productive? Think about the following examples:

- ~ *Stuck in a job that's not fulfilling*
- ~ *Stuck in a marriage or relationship that's painful*
- ~ *Stuck in a family that doesn't love God*
- ~ *Stuck in a spiritual drought*
- ~ *Stuck with an illness that's slowing or stopping you*
- ~ *Stuck in a broken dream*

Today's Prayer

"Dear God, I feel stuck in _____.
Help me today to find the good that you are doing through the situation I am in. Help me to trust You by faith to do a good work in the middle of my muddy mess. Thank you for being a God who will make the ugly beautiful, the broken fixed and the sick well again.

How do Paul's words encourage you in your situation? Where do you see God at work in the area that feels like its causing you to feel stuck?

"...the message about Christ is being preached, so I rejoice..."

Read Philippians 1.15-19

In a perfect world, Paul would have preferred to be free and available to preach the Gospel himself. He would have also preferred that other preachers preach the Gospel with right motives, not out of spite for Paul. But that was not Paul's present experience.

What was Paul's attitude toward those who were preaching out of selfish ambitions, jealousy or envy? How do you respond to this? Should Paul be this generous with people who were out to hurt him?

Is Paul saying, "It's not about me!"? If so, who or what is it all about?

Where in your life would it be helpful for you to say, "Alright... this really is not about me"?

"...for to me, living is for Christ, and dying is even better..."

Paul's friends, who were probably monitoring his legal situation, at some point were tempted to ask, "So Paul, what if you don't get out of this one? What if they kill you?" Paul's answer is awesome! Read some of the greatest words about death ever penned.

Read Philippians 1.20-26

Summarize Paul's perspective on life and death.

What is your perspective on death? Do you view it with fear? Do you try to ignore it?

Are you comfortable with the concept of death? If so, why?

Is it okay to be homesick for heaven? Describe what a healthy homesick for heaven could be like.

Today's Prayer

When was the last time you prayed about death, heaven or mortality? It's okay to wonder, think and even pray about those things. Offer your questions about these things to God. If you're grieving because you've lost someone to death, ask God to comfort you and to give you peace.

memoryverse

"...I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better."

(Philippians 1.20b-21 NLT)

Week One

Philippians 1.4-6

Week Two

Philippians 1.20b-21

Week Three

Week Four

Week Five



small group discussion

warmup

Go around the room and tell some stories about “getting struck.” (*Stuck in snow, mud, the airport, at the in-laws, etc.*) **Who has the best story?**

divein

“...everything that has happened to me here has helped...”

Read Philippians 1.12-14

What was Paul’s attitude toward being stuck in prison? Was Paul feeling unproductive? Why or why not?

How did Paul view the people who were holding him? What seems to be happening with the guards that have “Paul duty”?

Is there an area or situation in your life where you feel like you are “stuck in mud,” unable to get things done that are spiritually productive? Review the examples on page two.

How do Paul’s words encourage you? How have you seen God at work in that area?

“...the message about Christ is being preached, so I rejoice...”

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What was Paul’s attitude toward those who were preaching out of selfish ambitions, jealousy or envy? Should Paul have been so generous with people who were out to hurt him?

Is Paul saying, “It’s not about me!”? If so, who or what is this all about?

Where in your life would it be helpful for you to say, “Alright... this is not about me?”

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Summarize Paul’s perspective on life and death.

What is your perspective on death? Do you view it with fear? Do you try to ignore it?

Are you comfortable with the concept of death? If so, why?

Describe what a healthy homesick for heaven could be like.

**take
action**

Read more about Heaven!

A wonderful little resource is available in the ARC (Ada Resource Center) called *Heaven*. It is a 60 page booklet written by Randy Alcorn that answers common questions about what heaven may be like and who will be invited to reside there. Paul had a healthy longing for heaven. The more you know about it, the greater the anticipation.

Volunteer Fair! Next week, April 29, ABC will be having a Volunteer Fair on The Bridge. This is a great opportunity for you to connect with some ABC ministries that are looking for friendly people who are excited to find a place to serve at ABC. Ministry leaders will help you find the best place to give of your time, talents and passion.