

The Enabling Christ

In the book of Philippians, we're reading about Paul the apostle who was in prison in Roman. As we think of this, we look at the testimony that Paul had and the testimony of the people at Philippi, because they had sent someone by the name of Epaphroditus from Philippi to bring certain things to Paul that he needed. Now, remember, Paul was in prison, but as we look at the life of Paul, we see that, after he was saved on that road to Damascus, he spent most of his life in prison. But Paul rejoiced in the Lord, as we read in the book of Philippians.

It was the Lord who put it in the hearts of those in Philippi to remember Paul, and it was the Lord who enabled Paul to face persecution, frustration, and suffering with composure. I don't know about you but it would be hard for me to do the things that Paul did, as he was in prison for most of this time.

And then we look at this book of Philippians, and especially in chapter 4, Paul shares the assurances that sustained him. He shared these with the people at Philippi, and it's through the grace of God that God has allowed Paul through the writing of the New Testament in the book of Philippians to share the assurances that he had in that prison cell. He shared this with the people at Philippi, and he shares those things with us as we read the Word of God in Philippians chapter 4.

There are three enablements. It's hard for me to say that word, but it means that God enabled Paul to do the things that he did, to have the outlook on life that he did although he was imprisoned and in chains.

But I notice first of all that Paul said it was through Christ that he could do what he ought to do and he could be what he ought to be. In verse 11 of Philippians 4, it says, *Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.* Paul had learned contentment. He learned that contentment comes from the Lord. It's not dependent on outwardly favorable circumstances.

In I Corinthians 15:10, it says, *But by the grace of God I am what I am...* and of course, that's Paul saying that, as well. It's with the grace of God flowing into his soul that Paul was serenely looking toward the light, and that light, of course, was Jesus Christ. And we know that the light shined in darkness, even in the beginning of what we consider time. In the beginning, it says, God created, and in Genesis 1, if you read that section of Scripture, it says, *God said, Let there be light.* And just as there was light that came into the world in the beginning, Jesus Christ is the beginning of light into the soul of man.

As man looks around and he sees that there's a need in his life, Jesus is there. He's the light, and He wants to lead people. He wants to be the light that shines in darkness. And the Bible tells us that we're all in darkness before we know Jesus Christ as Savior. And Paul knew this and even after he got saved he still realized that Jesus was the light, the light of the world that could lead, guide, and direct not only his life but the life of the people at Philippi and the life of the people of every place in this world.

It's by the grace of God lifting his spirit that Paul had something powerful that enabled him to rise above otherwise disabling circum-

stances. It's with the grace of God changing the heart of the foulest person today that the foulest heart becomes clean. The meanest we know becomes noble. And as we think of this and I think of the Philippian jailer in Acts 16, how that the Philippian jailer was in charge of Paul and Silas as they were imprisoned there. The Bible tells us that Paul and Silas didn't sit around moaning and groaning, but they praised God and they sang hymns.

The Bible tells us that something happened as they were singing one night, and it tells us that the gates, the bars of the gates of the prison flew open and all the prisoners could have escaped. The Philippian jailer rushed in and he was going to kill himself and Paul said, "Don't do yourself any harm, because we're all still here." The Philippian jailer knew that something miraculous had taken place there. He had, no doubt, heard Paul and Silas singing, and he heard them singing the praises of God. And, of course, his question was, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And Paul and Silas said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house.

And that's what people need to do today. People need to look to the Lord, and as people cry out, "What must I do to be saved?" the same answer comes back, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." That means to be willing to turn from sin. That means to be willing to go God's way instead of your way. That means to ask Jesus Christ into your heart to receive Him as Lord and Savior. In the book of Philippians, we're reading that Paul said that it was through Christ that he could be content. He said, "I've learned to be content," in verse 11. And then we see that it's through Christ that Paul said, "I can do what I ought to do." Verse 13 says, *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Have there been times in your life when you didn't know what to do or how to do it? Well, Paul had the answer. He said he could do all things through Christ. Christ gives strength to achieve what would otherwise be impossible. In Matthew 28:19-20, he gives marching orders to Christians. He says, "Go ye and make disciples." And he says, *Lo, I am with you always....* In John 15:5, Jesus said, *Without me, ye can do nothing.*

The outcome of our labors depends on that which the Lord adds or withholds. We need to stay close to the Lord as Christians and let him lead and guide and direct and make it possible for us to do the job that He's given us to do. And, of course, in Acts 1:8, he tells us when the Holy Spirit would come that He would give us power to perform or do the things that He had told us that we would be doing and that we were supposed to do as Christians, to go and make disciples, teach and preach the Word of God. He says, "I'm going to send the Holy Spirit and He will give you power." And, of course, the Holy Spirit came. And His ministry had changed. He came and he endued Christians that day to be able to go out and proclaim Jesus Christ as Savior.

And He does the same thing today. When we get saved, we have the Holy Spirit living within us, and that same power that was on the day of Pentecost we have living within us, and that is the power of God.

Christ gives strength to endure what would otherwise be intolerable. In Isaiah 40:31, the Bible says, *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.* Well, Christ gives strength to us just as a spring in the desert is sustained by the inexhaustible waters of a distant mountain lake. If you've ever been thirsty and you've walked around and maybe you've worked on your lawn or something like

that and you've just become so thirsty, and just as that refreshing water that you take in, that drink of water that sustains you as you're walking along and you're doing the work that you have to do, Jesus Christ is that Living Water that comes into our life and He is like that spring of Living Water that springs up within us and gives us the strength that we need to do the things that we're doing and to take care of the things in our lives that otherwise we couldn't do. Sometimes we get in a hurry and we try to get ahead of the Lord, but remember that verse: *They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.*

Christ also gives strength to face uncertainty and danger or death. I'm reminded of something that took place in New England at one time. There was an account of an awesome spectacle in the heavens when darkness fell at midday. Shooting stars flashed across the sky and flaming meteors fell to the Earth. Normal activities came to a sudden standstill. Multitudes of frightened, scared people believed the end of the world had come, and in one home the maid burst into the room where the head of the house was calmly at work. Hysterically, the maid shrieked, "The world is coming to an end!" "Let it," was the calm reply. "We can get along without it."

Well, you know, this is true. This is what everyone will have to do sooner or later, get along without the world. And we as human beings need to learn to depend upon the Lord to take care of the things in our lives first by trusting Him as Savior and then as Christians, letting Him lead and guide and strengthen and do what He wants to do through our lives and in our lives.

Paul the apostle knew that it was through Christ. He said, "Through Christ I can have what I ought to have." Verse 19 of Philippians 4 says, *My God shall supply all*

your need. My father is rich, according to the Word of God. Gladly believing, we sing the hymn of faith, "The Child of the King." It's an old hymn. "My father is rich in houses and lands. He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands. Of rubies and diamonds and silver and gold, His coffers are full. He has riches untold." The chorus says: "I'm a child of the King, a child of the King. With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King."

Are you a child of the King today? If not, you need to let Jesus Christ come into your heart and then you can sing that song, "My father is rich...." My Father in Heaven owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He is the Creator. He is the Sustainer of life.

Paul goes on in this chapter of Philippians, and we see that he himself was rich. In verse 18, he had no house or lands, stocks or bonds, but yet, Paul considered himself to be rich. Why? Because he was a child of the King. In Matthew 8:20, the Bible tells us that Jesus had no place to lay His head, but yet, He was rich as the Man who walked on this Earth. Now, remember he was God and he was man, but he was as much God had He never been man, and he was as much man had He never been God, but he was rich as a man.

As we look on in this chapter, we understand that Paul begins on a high note in the book of Philippians, and especially in verse 10 of chapter 4, and he concludes on the same level with his doxology, a salutation in his benediction in verses 20-23. Paul makes it clear that believers have cause for rejoicing, because it's through Christ I can.

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you can be saved. Trust Him. Ask Him to come into your heart and He'll save you today.

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