

The Discipline of Disability - 19

by Jack Hibbs

The sermon explores the concept of disability, emphasizing the internal struggles we face and the importance of sharing our testimonies of faith amidst challenges.

Duration: 59:12

Scripture: Matthew 28:19

Topics: "Discipline"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker reflects on the power of weakness and how God can use difficult circumstances for His glory. The speaker references 2 Timothy 4, where the apostle Paul, who is in prison and about to be executed, acknowledges his impending death and sees it as a sacrifice for God. The news of Paul's imprisonment spreads rapidly, and the speaker emphasizes that God can use even the most challenging situations to advance His kingdom. The sermon concludes with the reminder that we are unable to protect or promote ourselves, but when we surrender to God and invite Him into our circumstances, He can work in and through us.

Transcript

We'll be praying for you tomorrow, absolutely. Are you guys awake? Good deal, grab your Bibles tonight and turn to two places as usual, Matthew chapter 28 and Philippians chapter one. You can probably tell my normally bizarre voice is bizarre tonight, I'm fighting something, but I sound worse than what I feel, I think.

I certainly look worse than what I feel, but listen, somebody said, man, you didn't shave. Can you see that from where you're at? Can you, really? Let's just make something real clear right here, right now. I don't tell you what to do with your face, this is my face.

And this is my, Lisa says it's fine, it's my act of rebellion, it's as far as I go. So it'd be off by Sunday, so you don't have to worry about it, okay, those of you who are like all concerned about it, it's okay, I'm not gonna call you up tomorrow morning and look at your face and see how you're doing, so. Well, listen, Matthew chapter 28 beginning to verse 18 tonight, and it's those amazing words that Jesus said, and they are the foundation of this series, of the Disciplines of Life series and tonight, the Discipline of Disability.

And we're not necessarily talking about a physical disability, though we may touch on that for a moment, but Matthew chapter 28, verse 18, Jesus came and he spoke to his disciples, and he said to them, all

authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth, go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, verse 20, teaching them to observe all things, that is Bible teaching. What is it? That I've commanded you and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Now quickly, turn to the right, to Philippians chapter one, verses 12 to 14 tonight.

Philippians one, verses 12 to 14. Paul said to the church of Philippi, but I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happen to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel. So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and all the rest, that my chains, Paul was in jail, are in Christ, and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

We're talking about the discipline of disability tonight. Now when we see that word, we often think that it's a limp, or it's an ailment that we're going through, it is a deformity, it's something external, and it may very well be. In Paul's case, it was much more than that.

Yes, he was chained to a Roman guard, but the man was absolutely free on the inside. But we know from church history that Paul battled a lot of severe health issues. We know that church history makes mention in extra biblical writings that came later, that Paul was a man that had been stricken with malaria, he was a man that didn't appear to be very physically fit, and that kind of goes with the territory.

He was a Pharisee, that is that he would have been a full-time student most of his life. He spent a lot of time by candlelight and books. He was a nerd, we would say today.

And for him to come and preach and teach when he showed up, people didn't easily recognize him, he was not some big prominent figure. He easily blended into a crowd. But Paul was also a man that was keenly aware of the demonic activity that he fought against.

He was a man that loved God and loved God's people. We know that he was very passionate about what he believed. We know that in the book of Acts, for example, chapter nine, before he was a Christian, he was one who presided over Christians being arrested and killed for their faith.

Paul would be today kind of like, I don't know, Osama bin Laden getting converted, something like that, something so profound, because you know from the Bible that when Paul did get converted to Christianity, none of the Christians wanted to talk to him. They wouldn't let him in their churches. Remember that? He actually wound up, you read the book of Galatians and the book of Acts, he wound up actually staying or having been barred from churches from what appears to be years.

And in the book of Galatians chapter one, it tells us that Paul was in the wilderness of Arabia being instructed in the spirit by God himself. No wonder why he's a apostle of such profound teaching. But tonight we'll be looking at disabilities and how they come to us, how we deal with them.

There's obvious forms. There's not so obvious forms. Some of them, maybe for pride's sake, we would hide them.

We would seek to do anything and everything possible to make sure nobody knows what our problem is in life, what our disability is in life. And some of them are just flat out out there and they're in your face, we would say. So number one in our study tonight, look at this, jot it down if you would, and by all means, make this applicable to your own heart, is that disabilities are anything but common to us.

And let me explain what I mean by that. Disabilities are anything but common to us. You say, why do you say that? Because you and I, all of us have disabilities and we think for a moment that what is going on in our lives is something that is so uniquely us and with that, there's a stigma.

But disabilities are anything but common in the sense that when it's your issue, it is paramount. You can look at someone else and you can see, oh, isn't that sad? Or, oh, you know, look at that. I wonder how they get by.

But in reality, is not your situation very, very painful itself, very keen? And honestly, I've lived a little bit long enough to realize that I don't think there's anyone that's exempt from having some form of disability, be it physical and or emotional or mental or maybe spiritual. I was talking to a friend last night and when I came to know Jesus Christ, it was so wonderful for me. The first year of being a Christian was awesome.

And then I started reading some really legalistic books. I got into some really heavy legalistic books. And when I say legalistic, Pastor Romain at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa years ago, he said, listen, Jack, you need to put those books down and pick them up again in about 20 years when you're rooted and grounded in the grace of God because these books are not normal.

These books are for different kinds of people. Well, these kinds of books that I was reading were from great theologians, but they said things like this. If you were not praying four hours a day, you are probably not a Christian.

So I spent three years getting up at four o'clock in the morning and praying to seven to eight o'clock in the morning. Then I coerced a couple of friends to do that with me for a manner of years. And it's bizarre, all three of them now are pastors, pastoring churches.

But I tell you what, we were the four horsemen of the apocalypse back in those days of legalism. And we looked like super saints on the outside, but let me tell you, on the inside, we were withering away. We knew Jesus, we were saved, but we didn't know his peace.

And there's a big difference. Whatever the situation is in your life, mark this down, experience. We learned this in verse 12.

There's something to be said and that's regarding the experience of a disability and walking with God. Paul says to the church, but I want you to know, brethren. He's talking to fellow Christians.

And this is a mandate. The word know right here is the Greek word ginosko. It means this, I have this announcement.

Or we've heard the old English term resolved. Patrick Henry was big on that. Resolved, we make these declarations, resolved.

It means I'm making a statement and it's a big one. That's exactly the word that Paul used here. Resolved, know this, I'm making an announcement.

It means to make someone completely aware of what you're about to say. This is a tremendous thought. He says, I want you to absolutely not miss my fellow Christian brothers and sisters that I've got something to say.

He's talking about an experience. He says, I'm gonna share with you from prison an experience that will affect you for the rest of your life. And so everybody would have perked up.

They would have listened carefully to this. That's a testimony, my friend, that's a witness. And your witness as a Christian tonight is a very powerful thing, a testimony.

We don't hear so much about testimonies. Now, I know that some churches, they might get away from teaching the Bible and everybody's got a testimony. And then maybe like our church, we wind up trying to cram so much Bible into such a short period of time, we don't get to hear any testimonies.

But if you have a friend or a friendship with people or in a small group setting, you ought to share your testimony. You say, Jack, what are you talking about? Your testimony is your story as to how you met Jesus Christ. And if you don't have a testimony, I want to ask you, why not? Why not? All of our testimonies are different.

My wife grew up in a Christian home. She cannot tell you the day that she accepted Christ. I mean, she knows that there's a day that she prayed to accept the Lord, but she's always believed in him.

So she can't nail that day down. Maybe some of you are like that. You just don't know the day that you came to believe.

You've always believed. My wife has that testimony. She says, I've never lived not knowing Jesus.

Well, I lived not knowing Jesus. And between the two of us, we have two different testimonies. But both are valid.

Both are equal. Now I know the culture we live in. In fact, this is wrong.

Oh man, have you heard that guy's testimony? It's awesome. Well, why? Oh man, he was a murderer and he bit cats in half and he outran cars and he jumped over. What? And then when people hear stuff like that and probably who knows, most of those kinds of testimonies may not even be true.

I don't know. How are you gonna prove that? And then you see someone sitting in the church and they're going, man, I'm a loser. I don't have some wicked, horrible story.

You know what I'm talking about? You know, if that's you tonight and you're saying, well, my life wasn't, you know, I mean, I came to Jesus, but it wasn't all that, you know, humongously wicked. I mean, I didn't like rob any banks or anything. And you start to feel like you're some sort of a sub-Christian.

Well, Jesus kind of saved me because I wasn't all that bad like that guy. Listen, your testimony is amazing. Your testimony, if you tonight can say, gosh, you know what? The Lord pretty much kept me out of a lot of trouble and I've been a Christian and here I am.

You are an amazing testimony, which is pretty rare. And that is the testimony of the keeping power of God in your life. That's a big deal.

Anybody can say what God has delivered them from. It's pretty common actually. But the truth of the matter is, if tonight you can say, well, you know what? The Lord has just done this thing in my life and this is my experience.

Paul is saying to the church at Philippi, this is my experience. It's your life's experience that you would say tonight, you know what? It is and it has been a disability, Jack, my life. That's not what God says.

It's anything but common. And this is very important because in your experience, you have the literal calling from God to take your life's story. And some of you are young in here tonight and your story is being built right now.

And God will use you. You say, well, what do I do? Go look for trouble so I can have some big... No, trouble will come and find you. But be strong, have that testimony.

In Luke chapter 21, verse 12, Jesus said, but before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and persecute you and deliver you from synagogue and prisons. And you will be brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. But it will turn out for you as an occasion for testimony, to give a witness for Jesus.

Your life's experience, the hardships, the difficulties, the joys. There is nothing common in your life as a Christian, absolutely. As a non-Christian, absolutely.

God is at work in your life. Secondly, under this point, there's something to be learned and that is the situation. Look at verse 12.

He says that the things which happened to me, this is a tremendous statement. He's talking about challenges and urgencies that have come upon his life. This is the apostle Paul and he's in jail.

The guy is in a place where nobody wants to be. And he's in a first century jail. It's not like, you know, jails today or jails in California.

This is horrible stuff. And he's in jail and you know what he's in jail for? He's been found guilty of being a Christian, convicted of being a witness for Jesus Christ. How cool is that? Man, what are you in here for? Can you imagine? He's Paul.

He's just this little nerd of a guy student. All these big Burley Roman empire strikes back gladiator of Jedis. What are you in here for? Preaching the gospel.

Preaching the what? Can you imagine? He says, these things they've happened to me. And it almost like, oh Paul, golly, somebody sent us some chocolates. This is horrible.

Look what happened to him. Can you believe it? No, Paul was saying, wait a minute. Wait, you guys need to know something.

These things that have happened to me, he's talking about his situation. Every one of us have got a situation right now. Do we not? Man, if you don't have a situation, what are you doing? Or what are you not doing to not have a situation? And whatever your situation is, the Lord wants to be right in the middle of it.

And if you just say, Lord, yes, I want you in the middle of it. Oh, he loves that stuff. He comes in, starts moving things around.

He starts doing things. And Paul announces that his thing had not just happened to him. He said, oh, Pastor, life's been so difficult to me and it's been such a hard thing.

And I just feel so defeated. I feel so down. I feel so alone.

Wait, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. What book are you reading? He's with you. He's working and Paul's, he's chained to these incredible centurion guards.

And we know that from the book of Ephesians, he begins to state the armament of what it takes to be a believer. Because he saw what it took and what the Roman empire wanted out of a soldier. And Paul is saying, you know what? In your situation, here's the deal.

And he can say it with power. He's coming up to us right now and he's speaking to us from the word of God. The Holy Spirit is using his words.

And he's saying, I'm in jail. I know what it's like. And here's the deal.

This just didn't happen to me. This has been a plan of God. God's at work in my life.

You can't stop somebody like this. In Philippians 4.11, the Bible says, for I have learned in whatever state that I'm in to be content. You can insert California right there.

For whatever I've learned, he says, I've learned this, that I can be content in whatever situation, whatever condition, whatever's going on in my life. And what has happened in your life? What's going on right now? Is it pressure from within? Is it pressure from without? Is it evil? Is it danger? Is it threats? Are you being misrepresented? Is it a financial thing? What is it? He's there. He's with you.

Is it a relationship thing? Not knowing who likes you, who loves you? Does anybody? He's there. He's in the moment. Tonight, I just pray, man, if you're not a Christian tonight.

In fact, right before I came tonight, I was putting on my clothes, getting ready to come. I was watching the news and there was a commercial. There's a commercial out there.

And it's the humanist. Have you seen it? Yeah, it's the human, join the humanist movement or whatever it is. The humanist, the humanist atheist of America, whatever.

And they have a commercial and you can join. And I'm watching it. And by the way, they just don't say join.

They make fun of the Bible and they're quoting the Bible out of context in their commercial. You know what they're doing. By the way, if they, hey, if there's anybody watching from the humanist atheist movement, you guys are the most jumbo cowards in the world.

Here's the reason why you wimp. Here's the deal. No, here's the deal.

You pick on Christians because you know they love Jesus. And if they ever met you on the street, they would buy you a Coke. Why don't you do it to Islam? Make fun of Muhammad.

See how that goes. You atheist hypocrite, right? Think of that. Yeah, we're the atheist of America.

And Muhammad is this or Islam is that. They'll never do that. They'll pick on the Christian because they know that your God's real and we worship him.

And our God says, love boneheads like that. It just cracks me up. Everybody wants to pick on the Christian.

They think we're weak. Man, listen, we're trying to love you. Because in a moment of weakness, we'd love to lay hands on you.

But we're walking with Jesus right now. I mean, think about that. Think about it, man.

If Jesus wasn't real, think about how many murders there'd be in the world. You know what I mean? You know exactly. I'm hearing a lot of amens out there.

I can feel it. They can get away with making fun of Christians. Our situation transcends this world.

A lot of bad stuff happening. A lot of bad stuff. Listen, it could be worse.

And what if it gets worse? So what if it gets worse? We're gonna retire someday, okay? And Wall Street won't have a thing to do with it. It'd be Golden Street with God, retirement with Jesus. This world's not our home.

And it's a good thing. There's something to be learned in this situation that you're living through right now. The Lord loves you.

Maybe somebody's telling you they love you. If you love me, you'll do this. If you love me, that or the other.

Jesus says this, I love you. And the whole thing is, the Bible says, it's the goodness of God that leads a man to repentance. Isn't that amazing? You might be sitting here tonight saying, I don't need God.

My life's been so good. I'm doing great without God. You funny guy.

The Bible says, it's the goodness of God that's leading you to repentance. You look around at your empire and you go, wow, God's been good to me. You say, well, what if somebody doesn't come to Christ by goodness? Well, he has other means.

He's got a lot of tools in his toolbox. Many a time, seems like it's happening more and more. A woman will say, pastor, will you pray for me? Because my husband has left the home.

And I always feel a deep sense of satisfaction coming from them when I pray for them, because this is how I pray. So I'll say, where's your husband? I don't know. He left with some lady and he's, I don't know.

So I said, well, let's pray. What's his name? Billy Bop. Okay, let's pray for Billy Bop.

If your name is Billy Bop, you're in trouble. Here you go. And I'll pray with her and I'll say, Lord, wherever Billy Bop is right now, in his waywardness from you and his waywardness from his family, I'm asking you, Father, right now in Jesus' name, that you would do whatever severe mercy is needed.

You say, what is that? What is that severe mercy? That means, Lord, I'm asking you, Father, to use whatever leverage you would like, you need to, to get that guy to bow his knee. So what does that mean? I have no idea. I don't need to know.

Why are you asking God like to break his leg? Could be. It could be, it could be, you know, broken nose. Could be a thought.

I'm going home, I'm going back home. I just, Lord, get him. And then we pray, well, you know, he ran off with his, he ran off with his secretary.

Then we pray, Lord, the next time they even try to get together, and I'm not joking, I'm telling you right now, Lord, just cause him to throw up violently. Just get sicker than a dog. I'm dead serious about that.

She said, Jack, you don't mean it. I do, and it's biblical prayer, by the way. David prayed prayers like that.

David, David said, Lord, save my enemies. If you're not going to save them, break their teeth off in their mouth. David prayed prayer like that.

Okay, next, purpose. Disabilities are anything but common, you guys, in our lives because God is so in them. They're not something routine.

They happen a lot, but you know what? We start thinking, well, man, it's just, this happens to everybody. This is life, but you're just not anybody. God is God, and he's working in your life, which leads us to, this was a purpose.

There's something to be known in the purpose of what God is doing in our lives. God has a timetable, and his timetable drives me crazy. I'll prove it to you.

2 Peter 3.8 says, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord, one day is as 1,000 years, and 1,000 years is as one day. What does that mean? It means he lives in eternity. That's all it means.

Does that mean you count, and then you can figure out how many days in the 1,000 years, and then it's gonna be one? No, it means he is eternal. He's not, look, God's not going like this. We should hurry up down there.

There's no time where he lives. How freaky is that? You know, we've kind of had little hints of that stuff in life. Have you ever had that deja vu thing they call it? I don't know why they call that, but have you ever had that happen in your head? And you know, doctors will tell you that they don't quite understand it, but they think it's like a mini stroke.

They've talked about mini strokes. They've talked about other things as to why this happens. They don't know why it happens.

But it's like, hey, this is freaky weird. A red car is gonna go down the street in about three seconds. There it goes.

You know what I'm talking about? You ever been in a really bad accident? Anybody, car accident? I have. Have you noticed? What happens to time when you're in a car accident? Listen to this. Did you hear that? It's wild.

We got broadsided on PCH and Beach Boulevard. Boom. Some guy stoned on marijuana, had three pounds of marijuana in the car, stolen car, blows the intersection and T-bones us in the intersection.

Here's the freaky thing. We're going across and we see the guy coming and he is flying. And we're like, man, you know, okay.

It's gonna be a great day, man. Look at the beach. It's awesome.

Oh my God. You know what I'm talking about? And the car's coming and it feels like an eternity. And the car hits in the glass and everything's flying.

It seems like it takes forever. Does anybody remember when that's taking place? How fast your brain is processing everything? Super fast. I think that's God's mercy.

I think in an accident like that, you could have easily accepted Jesus Christ seriously in nanoseconds of time. I think that's a flirtation with eternity. I really do.

The purpose. There's something to be known about that. God is the governor of time and he may not be answering and coming to the rescue the way that you want him to in your disability.

God just fixes in my life. Why is Jeff gonna have brain surgery tomorrow? We will find out later as to why. God does these things.

He uses these things in a broken world. 400 plus years, Israel was enslaved in Egypt for having disobeyed God. 400 years, 400 years.

God wasn't waiting. I don't understand how he does that. And you don't either.

But there's one thing, it's always now with God. He's never late. He's never early.

He's always on it. Well, why doesn't he do this? You know, when we say that, those are, we say things like that because we're upset. We say things like that because we're upset because we're upset with the timing of it.

We get tired quickly. We get frustrated quickly. Why doesn't he do something about this? He's got a plan.

Will we trust him with what he's doing? Well, I want a man. And then you get a man and then you don't want the man. Well, if I just had a woman in my life, I'd be fine.

It's hilarious. Wait on God. Never makes a mistake.

Exodus 13, 16 says, for by strength of hand, the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt. I love that. At the right time, he called his people out of Egypt.

That's powerful. Number two is this, the discipline of disability is this, that disabilities become power tools to God. They really do.

I don't understand it. In Philippians 1, 13, our text this evening is this, so that it has become evident, circle the word evident, to the whole palace guard. Those are a bunch of Romans.

And to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ. Boy, are you here, Paul? Jesus wants me here. I'm in jail for being a Christian.

And how in the world, think about this. How does this make sense? Church, listen, was Paul a public preacher? Yep. Was he an evangelist? Yep.

Was he a church planter? Yep. Was he an apostle? Yep. Did he travel more than most of us? Yep.

On a donkey and camel and all that stuff. Crazy, huh? 2,000 years ago, that guy covered more ground. Look at that.

You gotta look at a map of the missionary journeys of Paul. Amazing. What's he doing in prison? If I would have been God's counselor, excuse me, Lord, you got a good man locked up there.

Why don't you put some bum in prison that doesn't get around? Let Paul go. He gets everywhere. And if you ask me, this is a bad use of resources.

God is so brilliant. Why would he take a man who is a public man like Paul and put him in prison for a season? Did you see that in the Bible? It has become evident. The word evident is the word to shine.

Can you write that down? To shine, to blaze. The word means to be ablaze, to spread around or to move quickly like a Southern California brush fire. You can't outrun them.

Look what he says. He said, it's become evident. The news that I'm in jail has spread like wildfire.

It's taken off. The Lord uses strange things, you guys. And they become power tools in the hands of God.

Accidents, injury, imprisonments. I don't understand it. I don't need to understand it.

But the news of Paul's imprisonment spread like wildfire that he was found guilty and in prison for being a Christian. What an honor. Jesus was using Paul's arrest to advance the kingdom of God.

You say, how can that happen? How can anything good come out of this thing? I feel like I'm shut down. I feel like I'm sequestered, like I'm in a box. You ever feel like that in life? You can be standing on a mountaintop and feel like you're in prison.

Maybe tonight you're saying, how does my life matter? There's nothing coming out of my life. How do you know? How do you know? Who's watching you? You don't know. So I only know three people in my life.

Hey, what if one of those people turn out to be the next Billy Graham and they're watching your life? Oh man, that's just so out there freaky. You know what? My God is out there freaky. He does amazing stuff that you'll never figure out.

Can you imagine Noah? He tells everybody, it's gonna rain. What's rain? The Bible says up until then, water came up from the ground. At night, dew watered the earth.

Gonna rain. What a dope, building a boat. In God's time, in fact, not only in God's time does he make things right, isn't it amazing, you guys? You've lived long enough to realize.

And what are we now? What century is this? The 21st century? All this debate about God. Listen, it's never gonna end until he comes back because man's heart's that way. But here's the cool thing.

As time goes on, if you're gonna be a non-believer, have you noticed it's getting really hard to be a non-believer? I'm gonna tell you, you know it's true because whenever there's an event in the world, every news channel in the universe turns to the Bible. They call in all the theologians. What's going on? What do you wanna know for? That's what I wanna do.

What's happening? Why should you ask? You don't care about me 364 days out of the year. All of a sudden, you know, there's a big earthquake or some attack in the Middle East and CNN calls. What's happening? I'll tell you what's happening.

Jesus, I'm dying on the cross for your sins. No, no, we wanna talk about the end of the world. No, you don't wanna talk about the end of the world because you ain't ready to meet the end of the world.

I don't wanna get into that religious stuff. We just wanna know what the Bible prophecy says. Isn't that funny? Bible prophecy is salvation, dude.

It's getting saved. Well, we wanna know about the meaning of the 10 toes on Daniel's statue. You need to know about the purpose of your life.

It's funny, it's amazing. God uses stuff. And when God goes to work, people will know it.

Verse 13 says, so that it has become evident, it's spread like wildfire. Galatians 6, 17 says, for now on, let no man trouble me, Paul speaks, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. You know what that means? You ever seen people getting tattoos? I mean, I haven't seen people get tattoos, but I've seen tattoo places.

I don't know why you do that. You put ink in your skin, in a needle. It's a needle, isn't it? What's wrong with you? I see a needle, man, I run the other way.

As soon as you get a tattoo. It's a man. So what was it? And it says like mom on there or whatever.

I've been to prison to preach the gospel. Thank God I've never been to prison. I spoke to a bunch of guys condemned out in Ironwood prison in the desert.

Like when it, Blythe area, you know, like it's like a hundred in the winter. And I was terrified. I was terrified because they took my clothes away.

I had to wear a suit, like a jumpsuit, like everybody else is wearing. So wait, wait, wait, wait a minute. They have my, the guards have my wallet.

They have all my ID. I'm wearing an orange suit. Here's your Bible.

And man, you walk out there and it's, I can't talk about some of the stuff that's going on. It's, let me tell you, you do not want to go to prison. And everybody looked at me and I said, it was a God moment.

I said, let's get something straight right now. Dear Jesus, God of heaven and earth, help me. Let's just get something straight right here, right now.

The only difference between me and you is that I have not been caught. Right? See, what do you mean? You guys, I actually was going a hundred miles an hour once in a 45. Any police officers in here tonight? You should have taken me straight to jail.

It was a CHP officer. He found me, he caught me. I was working three jobs.

I was a young idiot. And I was racing from one job to the next job, trying to sleep in between stoplights. And I got busted.

And according, I guess, according to the law, I don't know this stuff, but I was told by that guy, I can take you in right now. You are absolutely insane. Think about it.

In God's court, we all got caught. God knows everything. You say, yeah, but what about the tattoo and the mark and Jesus? Listen, Paul says, I bear the marks of Jesus in my body.

You know what he's talking about? Exactly. The beatings, the scars, his back had been ripped open. The Bible says that Paul was stoned by his adversaries and left for dead.

I think he died. I actually think, I think God brought him back. Can you imagine? You can go online and watch people being stoned to death.

Oh, you should. I'm not joking. You want to get your eyes and your brain clear about Islam? Go look at Islamic countries and what they do.

You should see it. Wake up, America. Paul had been stoned and whipped and laid open and his body was scarred.

Probably a little bit deformed from all the stuff he had gone through. Paul says, I bear, I don't, Paul says, I am not worrying about how this all turns out in the end, because you know what? I bear the scars of Christ in my own body. Think of that for a minute.

How committed, how committed are we to what Jesus wants to do, to what Jesus is doing? Man, when we get this down, you know what? All of a sudden, all of my weaknesses, all of my frailties, it becomes a power tool in the hands of God because Paul the apostle had weaknesses. He had frailties and God grabbed him like a plane. Think about it.

Grabbed him in the head, grabbed him maybe like in the rump and went like this. Come on, Paul. I'm going to build my church.

Imagine if every Christian had a handle sticking out of their back wherever we went. God just says, I need something done right now. We should look at each other like that with handles sticking out of our back.

God can grab us anytime and use us. In Philippians 1 20, he says, for I live in eager expectation, verse 20, Philippians 1, and hope that I will never do anything that causes me shame, but that I will always be bold for Christ as I have been in the past and that my life will also honor Christ, whether I live or die, for to me to live as Christ and dying is even better. Wow.

You say, man, isn't that kind of fatalistic? No way. It's impossible to be fatalistic when heaven's your target and you have a purpose to live now. Also this, when God goes to work, people will be affected.

The whole palace guard, look at verse 13. The whole palace guard. How in the world? Can you imagine? What if you had a burden of witness to the secret service right now? Say, man, I wanna reach out to the US secret service.

What are you gonna do, knock on their door? Hey, can you let me in? I wanna tell you about Jesus. They wouldn't even open the door. Can you imagine going to Langley and knocking on the door of the CIA? Hey, can I come on in and tell you about Jesus? So how do you do that? How do you get to share with people like that? You get yourself arrested.

Paul's preaching Christ. God in his infinite wisdom winds up having the situation be so that Paul was taken away and he shares Jesus with the palace guards. You guys, I really, truly... Have you ever watched the White House when the helicopter lands? That's called Marine One, HMX One.

I got to be on that thing three times. I got to sit in the president's chair. You know the phone like in a movie and you pick it up and it says Moscow, Tel Aviv, Cairo.

It's really there. I picked it up. I'm not kidding.

I have stuff in my office from that helicopter. They gave it to me. I didn't take it.

And I sat in that chair, had the presidential seal on it, prayed for the president. Pretty awesome. I didn't get to see the president.

So how would I have gotten to see the president? Probably would not have gotten a chance to see the president on that helicopter. Unless I'd maybe done something illegal, I don't know what. But how do I get to Leavenworth or wherever they take people? You would be carted away under that entourage to that location for that punishment or for that jurisdiction.

Paul was taken to the Roman palace guard and he preaches Christ. And guess what? We know from other portions of scripture that even those of Caesar's household had gotten saved. My friends, you may not know what's going on.

Jeff may not understand. And maybe his family's saying, Lord, why? Maybe someone in the hospital tomorrow will hear about Jesus. And at Christmas will share with his mother-in-law and she's got a neighbor who doesn't believe in Jesus.

And that neighbor knows the trash man who, and I'm serious. That's how it works. Can't he make it easier? It's what he does.

But you become a power tool in God's hands in all of our weaknesses. He's amazing. Philippians 4.11. Now that I speak in regards to need, he says, for I've learned in whatever state to be and there were to be content.

I know that, listen, to be a based, Paul knew how to be absolutely poor and he knew how to handle himself when he had stuff. Everywhere and in all things I've learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. What's he saying? Verse 13, Philippians 4. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

That's a great verse. That's an awesome verse. And then also this, when God goes to work, people will be encouraged.

Look what it says there. He says that everybody's now found out that my chains are in Christ. You know what they began to say? That word means people began to talk.

Hey man, the Lord put Paul in jail. The Lord put Paul in jail. He stood for righteousness.

He got put in jail. He wasn't speeding with his donkey. He didn't like cut some camel off.

He's in jail for preaching Christ. And people began to talk about what's he in jail for? Preaching Jesus. His chains are in Christ.

What a great thing. Think of that. What's he doing? Oh, he's doing time.

For what? He was preaching Christ. He witnessed a Nancy Pelosi or somebody, I don't know, got arrested. That's an honor.

That's amazing. It'd be encouraging. The very reason, the explanation, it was about Jesus.

And Paul said in second Corinthians that in all of his weaknesses, the Lord had used them. That God had become more grand. Listen, church, we're almost done.

God had become more grand and more glorious in the minds of people because of weakness. It's amazing. So that the power of Christ would rest upon him, says the scriptures.

In second Timothy four, it's one of the most moving chapters, in my opinion, of the entire Bible. Second Timothy chapter four, I remember when we did our study in the book of second Timothy, that part, that chapter moved me to the core because Paul now is older. He's in prison for the last time he's in Rome.

We've been to that prison. And the next morning, his head was gonna get cut off. And Paul says in second Timothy four, six, he says, for I am already being poured out as a drink offering.

Listen, if you're Jewish, you get it. Paul is saying, I'm a dead man. I'm not getting out of this one alive.

I'm checking all my bases. I got everything settled. Tomorrow I die.

I'm being poured out. When that drink offerings poured out, it hits the coals of the altar, the steam rises. And what was you goes up.

And he goes, that's me. He says, for my departure's at hand. I have fought the good fight.

I finished the race. I've kept the faith. And finally, there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day.

And not only me also, but to all those who have loved his appearing. That's a great statement. And in Romans 8, 26, the same man, Paul wrote to the Italians in Romans 8, 26.

And he says, likewise, the spirit also helps our weaknesses. Did you guys know this? Did you know that the Holy Spirit prays for you? I don't understand that. But the Bible says that the Holy, in fact, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit prays for us.

That's weird. I don't think about that. The Holy Spirit talks to God the Father for us.

And the Bible also says Jesus intercedes for us. Though, are you with me? The Holy Spirit and Jesus talk to the Father for us. The Bible says wherever two or more are gathered.

How about this? In the hearing of two witnesses, the truth shall be established. The Holy Spirit and the Son is talking to the Father about you. Not about you.

I'm just like, oh man. For you. Romans 8, 26, likewise, the Holy Spirit, capital S, also helps our weaknesses for we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.

But the Spirit himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to

those who are the called according to his purposes.

Final point. Disabilities will cause us to become dependent. That's a very good thing.

To be dependent. Number one, this way, we are unable, church, to provide for ourselves. Did you know that? We're unable.

It says in verse 14, now for most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Very quickly, we're unable to provide for ourselves truly. God has promised to take care of us.

And Paul says, guess what? Not only is God using these chains, but he's using it in the lives of other people. Are you willing tonight, church, listen, are you willing tonight to say to the Lord, Lord, use my life so that whatever you wanna do, your will be done? Are you listening? Your will be done, Father, that in my life you would infuse into others that they might be confident. Are you willing to pray that prayer? Now you need to say, Jack, I'm scared to pray that prayer.

No, no, listen. I don't understand it. But when you pray that and you say, Lord, I wanna be used by you.

You cannot live a more blessed life. And I can't explain it. See, but what if it's like Joseph who gets sold out by his brothers and thrown into a pit? And he gets carted off to Egypt.

Yeah, you know what, Joseph, that's a big deal. I can't think of anybody who had, outside of Jesus, Joseph, I mean, his life, he was constantly misrepresented, lied about, forgotten about, ripped off, cheated by his family, by the Egyptians, by the caravan of Ishmaelites. It was horrible for him.

You wanna have, anyone have the right to complain? It's Joseph. And you never see him complaining. And the poor guy, he was born an absolute physical stud, incredibly handsome.

And Potiphar's wife keeps hitting on him. And he, and a man of integrity. And what happened? You think, oh man, surely God's gonna really totally defend him because he's a man of integrity.

God did defend him in God's time and in God's way. But he wound up going to jail because this total jaguar or cougar woman kept coming on to him. Lying with me, lying with me every day.

It said that she cast longing eyes at him. You know, what does that mean? Take me, take me, get me, get me. What is that? And he kept running from her.

So then she ripped him off, had him thrown in jail because he wouldn't go for it. Joseph. Joseph grew up in that horrible time being radically dependent upon God.

What about Job? Joseph did nothing wrong. Job, Job was minding his own business. Satan says, you know what? God, you've blessed that guy so much, makes me sick.

And God says, I know that guy. There's nobody on the earth like him. And Satan says to God, you know what? You let me take him to an inch of his life and he'll curse you to your face.

His faith in you is all because he's rich. You've blessed him. He's got kids galore.

He's got all kinds of donkeys and stuff. I'll kill them all. God, who knows all things, says, you can touch him, but you can't take his life.

You say, man, that's mean, that's mean. Look, the Bible says in Genesis, or book of Job, excuse me, chapter 42, that in the end, Job is restored with wealth and children more. And his life was more blessed in the end than it was in the beginning.

I can't explain it. Just like you can't explain the things going on in your life. But my friend, you'll either hang on to Jesus or you'll bail like a lunatic and jump in jail.

Or you'll jump out of the boat into the raging sea. And you're gonna make that choice. And I highly recommend that you stay with Jesus all the way through.

You know what, real quickly? Jonah, Jonah goofed up and brought almost everything upon himself. He said, Jonah ran from God. Jonah knew the will of God and ran from God.

Maybe you're a Jonah tonight. You know exactly what God's telling you to do. And you're running from God.

Yeah, it's funny because I see you running down the street and you're like this big and behind, there's these giant feet coming behind you, it's God. Hey, where are you going? And you're running. We were talking before service and Lisa and I remember Ashley.

She's really little. We're at Mervin's. She's so tiny and a little stinker.

She would go hide. And we're shopping. I thought you had Ashley.

I thought you had Ashley. Where have you been? I was in that area of the store. Where were you? I was in that area of the store.

When's the last time you saw her? Like a half hour ago. You ever had that feeling? You ever had that happen? Instantly, instantly, I ran to the front of the doors of the Mervin's and stood there and I would have killed anyone coming out of the building because my daughter's lost. And the worst thoughts enter your mind as a parent.

You ever been there as a parent? And man, get on the announcement. You announce shut down this store. Her name's Ashley.

She looks like this. She's about that big. It's a horrible feeling.

Where are you? She's inside of the rack hiding the whole time. Hang on, I thought it was great. Can you imagine the gut feel? Can you imagine the gut feel when God said, where are you, Adam? Eve, where are you? Can you imagine the gut feel of God when two of his kids had run away? Where are you? Think about that as a parent.

He's calling you back. We're unable to protect ourselves. We need to come to him.

The Bible says in Psalm 103, verse 14, for he knows our frame and he knows that we're just dust. Isn't he kind? And then we end with this, we're unable to promote ourselves. You say, what does that mean? When I say promote, it says in verse 14, and we end with this, that they were much more bold to speak the word without fear.

That word without fear means this. They were much more bold because Paul's imprisonment. Here's what, watch, here's what happened.

Wake up, we're ending. It's time to wake up and go home. Here it is.

They looked at Paul and they kind of like, imagine they poked him. How you doing? I'm fine. But you're chained and you're in jail.

Yeah. And you know, everyone's talking about you being in here. And even some of the guards, man, we got the guards over there now, they're singing little Jesus songs.

Yeah, I know. It's been amazing. I've been sharing with everybody.

Wow, well, you know what? People outside started thinking, if you can preach the gospel chained in prison, then we ought to be able to preach it free outside. Right? And that's what's been going on. And we've seen your faithfulness, Paul.

And it's made us, here's what the word means. It's made us fearless in the face of men. How cool is that? By your witness, we're not afraid of anybody anymore.

You guys, that is the answer to any disabilities we might have. Lord, whatever I am, what I have and what I don't have, it's yours. Use it.

And he will. And in this case, the witnesses became fearless in the face of men. That's what we need in this day and age.

The church needs men and women fearless. The Bible says that the fear of man is a snare, but the righteous are as bold as a lion. That's cool.

Luckily for you, my voice is done. Father, we pray tonight, oh Lord, our God. Blessed are you, Lord, who brings forth everything that we need.

Father, we pray tonight that as your people, we would revel in your presence that you've made possible through Jesus to simply speak, talk, commune with you, to talk with you. And Father, that tonight, if there's a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, that they don't have that. They don't know that.

Very religious maybe, but no personal moment-by-moment interaction, no keen awareness that you're ever before them, that that would change. And my friend, maybe that's you tonight. And I highly, highly beg and plead with you to say yes to Jesus right now, right where you're at.

Ask him to forgive you of your sins. He can't wait to do that. He's so excited to do that.

He died on the cross for you, for us. And to join the family of God, not this church, but by faith right now to say, Lord, I wanna be in this forgiven family. I wanna be in this saved house of people.

And you would tell them right now, Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for me on the cross and being risen from the dead to shatter the grip of the grave, to blow the lid off the ground, to roll the stone away. Lord, will you do that for me in my life? Will you fix my life? Will you fix my home? My friend, please do that right now, right where you're at, while you have the time. This world is so, so precarious right now.

You don't even know if you have tomorrow. Say yes to Jesus now. Father, we thank you in Jesus' name, all God's people said.

Amen. Church, let's stand as we close in this song.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/21/SID21847.mp3>

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