



Do you sometimes find yourself making excuses for why you can't do something that God has asked you to do?

I had never really "pondered" the short New Testament book of Philemon but decided I would study and prepare a lesson for the small group I teach. I was amazed at all the "meat" in Paul's letter to his "dear friend" Philemon!

In the first verse, the apostle Paul identifies himself as a "prisoner of Christ Jesus."

"Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother," Philemon 1

It is believed that Paul wrote his letter while in prison for the cause of Christ. We may think this would be Paul's situation: no teaching the Word, no sharing the Gospel, no planting churches! What good to God could Paul be? What good came from Paul being in prison and how would God work in a dank, dark prison cell among the clanking of chains?

Paul, the prisoner, was having a Romans 8:28 season of life.

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." (NIV)

On the surface, it would seem there was no good in Paul's situation, but God continued to work in and through Paul for His ultimate plans and purposes. Thus, Paul's time in prison was not wasted!

How tempted I am to make excuses for why I can't do what God has called me to do! And yet, Paul, even in chains, continued to pursue the cause of Christ passionately. He was determined to continue in the calling God placed on his life. Even in his undesirable circumstance, Paul was "other-focused" and thought of Onesimus rather than self. His desire was to help and encourage the new believer. Reading Paul's letter, I was quickly convicted and challenged.

What situation do you find yourself in now? Is it a situation you feel is problematic and non-productive?

Here are some truths we can apply from "Prisoner" Paul's greeting to Philemon:

- No matter where you are, keep doing the task God has given you to do.
- Whatever your situation, keep Christ as your utmost priority.
- Even in the middle of your most challenging dilemmas, your mind should be "Jesus



Heart Moment From Philemon: Don't Make Excuses!

full.”

- Always think of others before yourself.
- Remember, God's work is unstoppable, and His character is unchangingly good. He is always at work for your good and His purpose.
- Share The Gospel. It is for anyone, anywhere, in any situation or circumstance.

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