

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## Living in Lockdown

*Philippians 1:12 'Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.'*

We are living in extraordinary days. The things we so often take for granted – our health, our freedom to move around and meet people, our jobs, our future – are suddenly on hold, suspended for who knows how long.

And for the first time since the thirteenth century (when King John was excommunicated by the Pope) churches will not be meeting for the foreseeable future.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the believers in Philippi, he was facing an uncertain future. He was in prison, chained to Roman guards. He was not sure whether he would be executed or not.

Paul knew what it was to be in lockdown. He was not able to meet with God's people, he couldn't go to the synagogue or marketplace to preach. He couldn't even livestream a sermon from his prison cell. You could have forgiven him for feeling sorry for himself.

But that's not the picture we get from what he says here. One of the most repeated words in the letter is 'joy'. Paul rejoices because he knows that God is able to work out his purposes even in the most uncomfortable and uncertain settings.

A couple of lockdown lessons to take away from Philippians:

First, whatever else has to stop, the work of prayer goes on. Paul prays with joy for the Christians in Philippi (1:4), he prays for their growth in love and knowledge and character (1:9-11).

Whatever we can't do in these days, we can give ourselves to prayer. As we are called to make today a day of prayer, may it be that God uses this present crisis literally to bring us to our knees: to confess our powerlessness and our great need of his Spirit to be at work in our lives and our churches.

Second, whatever else happens, the important thing is that Christ is proclaimed (1:12,18). Times like these have a way of reminding us of what's really important in life. I think it was Corrie ten Boom who said: 'When Christ is all you have, you realise that Christ is all you need'. When Christians live – and die – with this conviction, the world takes notice.

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

Let's pray in these dark days that the light of the gospel of Christ would shine brightly in our communities as we seek to see them transformed for him.

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