

# Living as if God is in control

## 19/01/25 - Philippians 1 (part 2)

- How much do you think you allowed God to be in control of your life in the last week? (1-10)
- Did anything happen where you had to remind yourself that God is in control?

It's easy to say that God is in control ... but often the way we live and respond to situations does not reflect that belief - in the way we prioritise our lives, the way that we drive, in the way that we interact with people, the way that we pray, the way that we work with others, in our thoughts, in our homes, in our church activities. As followers of Jesus we should have a different attitude and respond differently to struggles, than those who don't know God or understand that He is in control.

In Philippians 1 Paul shows that he believes that God is in control in 4 ways.

### 1. Prayer for others:

Paul was in prison, he had every right to be depressed and angry - it was not fair, he was obeying God, he was spreading the gospel and now was in chains. But he concentrated on others and did the only things that he could ... pray and write letters! But what is more interesting is what he prayed for the church in Philippi ... they were obviously struggling a bit and I'm sure that Epaphroditus had told him all the gossip, good and bad. Paul doesn't pray for their situation ... he prays for their character while in the situation: **Read vs 9 - 11**

Paul knows that God is in control of the situation and is teaching the Philippians through their trials. He wants them to learn how to love, to have knowledge, to have discernment, to be pure, blameless, filled with the fruit of righteousness and to give God glory. When we get down, we often start to 'self-medicate' to make ourselves feel better - we often use food or drink and do activities to numb the pain - but Paul knows that people going through hard times need GOD ... and they need to pray for others in the right way.

- Is there anything that we need to change about how we pray for others in tough times?

### 2. Put God's priorities first:

- Discuss these statements: 'My comfort and happiness is God's priority'  
"God doesn't love me if things don't go my way"  
"Pain and suffering are signs that I have done something wrong"

**Read vs 12 - 14** Paul was in prison - he had every right to drown in self pity, but he saw that God was using his situation so that the gospel of Jesus was heard where it was not known. God brings good out of every situation - we have to change our mindset from avoiding the tough times, thinking that they are signs that we are out of God's will, or have done something wrong .... the gospel is the priority and it should be ours, regardless of what is happening.

People in countries where it is illegal to have a Bible or to talk about Jesus see their inevitable prison experience as "Theological training" because it is where their faith is tested and their trust in God and His will are struggled with, and their godly character is formed.

- How do you feel about the statistic that most arguments at church are over the colour of the new carpet or paint and not how to preach Jesus?
- How do we, as a church, get a balance between what is important without letting it get in the way of God's priorities?

**"The goal of the Gospel is not to affirm you, celebrate you, and accept you.**

**The goal of the Gospel is to rescue you, transform you, and redirect you."**

### 3. Trust God for the outcome:

Paul said last week that “the outcome is more important than the events that happen” to bring it about. There is always a ‘Big Picture’ that we are ignorant about as we focus on the present.

#### **Read vs 20-21**

The Apostle Paul tells us that he does not want to be ashamed, that he wants to have courage in his situation - it's a far cry from wingeing and whining - he doesn't even care if he dies! He trusts God's plan - the outcome that God is working towards - he sees that as being important, not his chains which have already proved to have encouraged the gospel. He sees the exaltation of the Almighty God as being the end result and his suffering is nothing in the light of that outcome - even if it means death, because that was better for him.

- Do we live as if there is no ‘big picture’ outcome?
- Do we live as if our happiness and pleasure is the outcome?
- Do we live as if we know better than God what should happen?
- How can we be better co-labourers with God for HIS glory and His Kingdom?

### 4. Unity in difficulty:

#### **Read vs 27 - 30 and Romans 5: 1-5**

Paul is concerned that people show godly character even while going through struggles. Tough times can bring out the best or the worst in us. Our reaction can show our heart and our character and our level of trust in God. This should not condemn us, but make us aware of what God might want to sort out in our lives, to bring healing, to correct a false belief or expose something that needs to be surrendered to God.

- What comes out of us when things don't go our way, when we are stressed, struggling, sleep deprived, or under pressure?
- Is there something or an area of our lives that we need to surrender to God's control?
- How can we express love to others who may also be struggling?



Paul encourages us, by his words and his own example, to actively live as if God is in control, not only of today but of the future outcome, regardless of what happens.

Pray for each other, that we might each continue to surrender to God in all aspects of our lives and live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ - for His glory and His Kingdom.

Song “Even If ” by Kutless.

Frontman Jon Micah Sumrall: "It directly addresses the question of 'what do we do when the answer to our prayers is no?'

I have grown to realize that while we often pray for temporary or immediate comfort, **God is doing a work on an eternal scale that far exceeds anything we could have ever imagined.**

He never promises that life will be easy, only that He will be faithful to never leave us or forsake us, and **He promises that the end of the story will be glorious."**

## Breakthrough doesn't come without surrender.

Sometimes, the breakthrough we're praying for doesn't come from striving—it comes from letting go. Surrender isn't defeat; it's an act of trust. It's saying, *'God, I trust You to do what only You can do.'* The breakthrough starts the moment we've fully entrusted it to His hands.