

Introduction:

“Sometimes the shortest distance between two points is a ‘zig-zag’ line.”

–Don Sunnuikian

Restatement:

God’s ultimate purposes for our lives are often achieved by circumstances that seem to make no “apparent” sense to us.

Review:

- $C + P = E$
- Key #1 = _____
- Question #1 = _____ ?

Key #2 = _____

Question #2 = What's My Purpose?

A Second Lesson from the Life of Paul

- **Paul's Report = His Thesis** - v. 12 (NASB)

¹²*Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel...*

- **How God Used Paul's Difficult Circumstances** = vs. 13-18

Exhibit A = The _____ Goes Forth

¹³*so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else...*
(v.13a)

Exhibit B = The _____ Grows Strong

¹⁴*and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.* (v.14)

Exhibit C = The _____ Grows Deep

¹⁵Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; ¹⁶the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. (v.15-18)

3 Purpose Statements for Every Believer

1. I am an ambassador/messenger of the Gospel.

- Purpose: _____.

2. I am called to encourage God's people; to help them grow to full maturity in Christ.

- Purpose: _____.

3. I am a servant of the Living God.

- Purpose: _____.

Questions to Ponder:

1. How could God use my difficult circumstances to advance the Gospel?
2. How could God use my difficult circumstances to encourage other believers?
3. What might God want to do "in" me through my present circumstances?
4. Whose purpose or agenda have I been most eager to see fulfilled . . . **God's** or mine?

Discussion Questions:

1. Review the divine formula [C + P = E] and share how your "P" was altered by your "focus" last week.
2. What was Paul's thesis in vs. 12? How did his view of his purpose transform his perspective?
3. What "good" came out of Paul's adverse circumstances? Why could he be joyful when his life seemed so difficult and unfair?
4. Talk through the four "Questions to Ponder" with a close friend or your small group. What would it look like to act on questions 1, 2, and 3?