

# The Power of Perspective

## A Study of Philippians: Philippians 1:12-26

“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.”  
Philippians 1:12

Is the cup half empty or half full?

Sometimes perspective can make all the difference. This is just as true with children as it is with adults.

My son is a very active boy. He likes to run and play every minute of the day. There was one particular day where he continued to run through the kitchen around into the living and back through the kitchen chasing his little brother. I was not feeling well and the noise was not helping so I finally had to say, “Please, stop running around the house!” He stopped for a moment to say, “Okay, dad!” and then started running up and down the hallway chasing his brother. I had had enough. I sat him on a chair and told him I was not happy that he disobeyed. He started crying and proclaimed,

“But dad, I stopped running around the house and stayed in the hallway.”

Perspective is everything and I seem to remember another little boy doing the same thing years ago.

How can seeing things from a different perspective affect your life?

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Once you saw something “from a different point of view”, how did it change things?

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A lack of seeing things from different perspectives can cause conflict, frustration, and heartache. Many times we are convinced that an event or situation is one way until someone helps us to see it differently. Perspective can sometimes even make or break us.

Many of us have the perspective that water is harmless. We drink it, bathe in it, and use it on a daily basis. The thought does not cross our minds that water is dangerous, but a lifeguard or maybe the coast guard may see it differently. They might have a perspective that water can easily destroy life. A fast moving river can sweep away a swimmer. A flood can carry away cars and houses.

It is not as if one person is right and another wrong, but it is a matter of perspective.

How has a lack of perspective done damage in your life?

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Paul is a man who understands perspective. We have already seen how he opens his letter with a prayer as he sits in prison. His perspective is amazing, but it does not stop there.

Read Philippians 1:12-26.

*"...so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, 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."  
Philippians 1:13-14*

Paul takes some time to tell the church what is going on in his life. The church has heard that Paul was imprisoned and sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul's needs. They cared for Paul and wanted to know what was going on, so Paul lets them know.

Perspective can make all the difference.

As we read through this section it is hard to see where Paul is complaining. He mentions nothing about the smelly guard sitting next to him. He does not complain about the prison food. There is not a peep about the sleeping conditions. No, Paul says things are better now that he is in prison.

By now, most of us would respond with, "WHAT!?!"

Why do we so easily defend and protect our perspective?

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It boils down to self. Have you ever caught yourself saying, "They just need to see it from my perspective!?" We often demand our perspective without first seeing another's perspective.

Here is what we might see:

Paul is in prison for no real reason. He has been unjustly arrested.

He is being jerked around by the authorities.

His followers finally step up to the plate, but even then they are fighting about it.

Paul is ready to die.

As Paul gives his report we can see how he looks at things from a more eternal light. Here is what he sees:

Paul sees that he is in prison simply because he is a Christian. – verse 13

Paul knows he has done nothing wrong. He realizes that he is being persecuted, and happy are those who are persecuted. No doubt, Paul thought of Jesus' words in Matthew 5 and Paul realizes his reward is in heaven and it is no different than the rest of Christ's saints.

How can seeing his imprisonment from this perspective be an encouragement?

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How would you have handled it?

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Paul sees that he has had the opportunity to preach to nobles. – verse 13

Paul would not have had the opportunity to reach some of the highest courts in Rome if he had been free. He mentions in verse 13 that the entire palace is becoming familiar with him. Luke explains how Paul had many opportunities to share with Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa. There are also the guards that are chained to him. Paul took opportunity to share with them and with anyone else that would have listened. Paul did not try to complain about being jerked into different courts just so people could be entertained by his preaching. He did not complain about being chained to a guard. Paul took every opportunity to share

and his sharing reached throughout the Roman kingdom.

Paul sees that the brethren had been stirred up. – verses 14-18

Paul could have complained about how he was doing all the work and it took jail to get others to preach, but he didn't. Instead, he was excited to see that many people stepped up to carry on the ministry. Even though some were doing it to cause him harm, he still was glad.

How have you responded when others step up only after you are gone?

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It is amazing to see Paul's perspective. He has no problem with other people preaching and spreading the Word even though some are doing it with the wrong motives. Paul rejoices that Christ is preached.

Have you known a church to be bitter towards another church because of growth?

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Why do we have feelings of bitterness, resentment, and maybe even hatred towards others who are prospering (like in the example of the church)?

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I have at times heard some people, even pastors, complain about how a church is growing. Some will try to figure out what is making a church grow and then copy it. It is sad to see pastors upset when another church in the same city is growing.

It is all a matter of perspective – and Paul had the right one.

Paul knew the story of Joseph and remembered Joseph's words to his brothers, "What you meant for evil, God meant for good!"

Paul sees that God is still using him. – verses 18-26

Why are you still alive? Why are you here?

It is a thought provoking question and brings us to truly resolve within ourselves why we exist. A small few think we are here by chance. If this is true then it does not matter what we do and in the end, life does not matter. It sounds very depressing.

Paul had a different perspective. He understood that we are created beings with a purpose. Our Creator desires to draw us close to Him and proclaim His truth. Paul believed that as long as he still drew breath, God still had plans for him. We see this as Paul discusses the whole life and death issue. He sees death as an opportunity to be with Christ, but knows that if he is still alive then he can serve Christ. Paul knows it is not his choice to choose, but it is God who gives him life.

Why is understanding your purpose important?

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*"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose."  
Philippians 1:21-22*

How will knowing God's purpose help you in life?

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Paul knows God has a plan for his life. He may not know the details, but he knows that God is still using Him. The same is true in our lives. As we come to understand the passion and heart that God has placed within us, then we will be able to be fixed and focused. It will be more difficult for other ministries and opportunities to pull at us. We will know what to say no to and what to say yes to.

Paul sees things in a different light than maybe we would have. Which one would you have had the hardest time with? Why?

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Paul did not have this perspective instantly. He did not wake up one day and say, "You know, I'm going to have the right perspective all the time." Paul had to learn to embrace a godly perspective. We see this in verse twenty. He says that in the past he has worked at this mindset and even today there is still effort. It is a daily thing. We must daily be in the Word and in prayer seeking to see life through the eyes of Christ. Then and only then will we be able to see his perspective.

Perspective is everything.

How's yours?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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