

QUESTION 6

- We saw earlier that Paul's imprisonment put him in contact with the lost.
- This is something that we might see in our own lives. When we feel that our circumstances restrict us from doing what we want to do for the Lord, they can give us opportunities we would not otherwise have (E.g. Joseph in prison: **Genesis 40-41**).
- These can be positive and negative things.
- This might be connected to our health or having to care for others. It might relate to work; our families; or some aspect of need.
- We need to learn that whatever our circumstances, there are opportunities to serve God and to advance the gospel. Opportunities we might not necessarily have, or see.
- Spurgeon's wife became an invalid early in their married life. It looked as if she wouldn't be able to do much to help her husband's ministry. However, God gave her a burden to share her husband's books with Pastors who were not able to purchase them. She started the 'Book Fund'; a work of faith. Thousands of pastors were provided with tools for their work; all supervised by Mrs Spurgeon from her home. It was a pioneer advance of the work of the gospel and many were blessed through it.

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES – STUDY 3

QUESTION 1

- a) It is clear that the Philippians were concerned about Paul's welfare and sent a message with Epaphroditus (see. **2:25; 4:10**).
- b) However, Paul is more concerned about the progress of the gospel than his own well-being.
- c) In response he writes more about the gospel, than about himself.
- d) Even in prison he is looking to see how his circumstances will further that gospel.
- e) He knows that this is all God's will. That God had a better plan that he did.
- f) His attitude to pressures is to see how they help spread the good news of Jesus.
- g) Later we see that it gladdened his heart to know that Christ was being preached; regardless of his circumstances and even despite less than perfect motives.

QUESTION 2

- a) The word 'advance', means to make headway, despite obstacles.
- b) The idea is that of 'pioneer advance'; and is a Greek military term used for engineers who went before the troops to open up the way into new territory.
- c) Paul saw his imprisonment, rather than holding back the advance, as opening up new areas of ministry.
- d) Verse 13: Paul's restrictions gave him contact with the lost. Those who are guarding him are hearing the gospel and seeing the power of it. They were no doubt passing it on to others in the barrack room. It was then spreading throughout the royal household.
- e) Verse 14: Contrary to what might be expected; persecution is giving ordinary believers more boldness to speak about the gospel. In **2 Timothy 2:9** Paul writes about suffering and being chained like a criminal. But adds that "*the word of God is not bound*".
- f) Verse 15-16: Paul's defence of the gospel is urging others to come forward to bridge the gap. He is only one part of the work and he does not see his restrictions in terms of spoiling everything.

QUESTION 3

- a) Verse 13: He is in prison for preaching the gospel. That isn't fair.
- b) Verse 15: There is opposition towards him; not just from those outside the church, but also within it.
- c) Verse 17: There are those who want to bring more suffering on him.
- d) He could have been tempted to ask why God was allowing him to be in prison when he would be much more useful as a free man.

QUESTION 4

- a) It wasn't that there was a false gospel message being preached. The issue was more about motivation than message.
- b) Some were filling the gap left by Paul and doing so out of love.
- c) Sadly, there were others who had other motives: envy and rivalry. Those who did not agree with all that Paul taught and did. Paul did face opposition from inside the church.
- d) Some were jealous of Paul and selfishly ambitious to promote their own ministries.
- e) They saw it as an opportunity to make things worse for Paul; by turning the authorities further against him.
- f) It is hard to see why this should happen. However, there are times when we can be negative towards those who are fellow believers, but do not always agree on everything with us.

QUESTION 5

- a) He is not concerned for himself.
- b) What matters is that the gospel is preached. It is not always done for the right motives.
- c) What matters is that God uses even these people. God uses flawed individuals for his work.
- d) As far as Paul was concerned; the gospel must be preached. This is what he rejoices in.
- e) He also rejoices that others are being given boldness to spread the gospel.
- f) The church is growing.
- g) One of the early church fathers Tertullian famously wrote that "*the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church*". As in our passage, that can seem to be a contradiction. However, through history we have seen the church grow through persecution and martyrdom.