

Captured to Capture

Philippians 3:12

Introduction

1. Circa 62 A.D., the great apostle Paul sat in house arrest and penned 4 epistles of the New Testament – one of which was the epistle to the Philippians.
 - a. His chains were made obvious to be in Christ – **Philippians 1:13**
 - b. He had come a long way since his life's drastic change – persecutor to persecuted.
 - c. He left all for Christ – **Philippians 3:4-7**
 - d. This he abandoned, embraced the sufferings of Christ, all that he might attain to the resurrection – **Philippians 3:11**
2. Paul continues – **Philippians 3:12-14** – despite all he had sacrificed, accomplished, and suffered for Christ, he had not yet reached his goal (**v. 11** – the resurrection from the dead).
 - a. Yet, he knew that all he did under the direction of Christ which led to such pain, and his imprisonment, was for his own good.
 - b. (**v. 12**) – He knew that Christ had laid hold of him that he could lay hold of the reward.
3. Lenski comments, “but see the paradox: the one who got captured does steady pursuing so that he may eventually also get to capture.” (Lenski, Philippians 3:12)
4. The Christian must never forget His Lord's purpose in making him His slave.
 - a. It is not a bitter reality.
 - b. But it is a blessed anticipation, and pursuit.
- I. We Have Been Captured by Christ
 - A. Those in Sin are Christ's Enemies
 - a. Christ died for His enemies – **Romans 5:6, 10**
 - i. **Philippians 3:18-19** – those who serve their own appetite are not neutral in the great spiritual warfare but are enemies.
 - ii. None are independent as they claim – **2 Timothy 2:26** – they simply serve another master.
 1. **Romans 6:16** – slaves of sin leading to death.
 - b. Everyone reaches a point where they face Christ – **Luke 14:31-32** – we are the ones opposed to the matchless King who must determine whether to be destroyed or join His cause. (must count cost)
 - i. The conflict is unavoidable.
 - ii. We must decide one of two things – **1 Peter 2:6-8** – build our lives on the cornerstone or allow that stone to be our destruction. (**cf. Matthew 21:44**)
 - B. Christ Liberates by Capturing
 - a. The apostles of Christ were part of a campaign (and still are through the written word) to bring souls into the captivity of Christ – **2 Corinthians 10:4-5** – with spiritual weapons.
 - i. Defeating things exalted against **“the knowledge of God.”**

- ii. I.e. error, but also worldliness and sin in general.
 - iii. Through persuasion – **Acts 17:2-4** (at Thessalonica) – reasoned, explained, demonstrated, some persuaded.
 - iv. Captivity of honest hearts – **2 Corinthians 2:14-16; 4:3-4** – for some the powerful truth will not sway because of obstinacy.
 - 1. Men are drawn in, or not – **John 6:44-45** – by teaching.
 - v. Therefore, the capture is still a matter of free-will.
 - b. This spiritual capturing Christ performs by His word requires our cooperation – **John 8:31-32** – abide in word. (cf. **1 John 2:5-6** – keep word/commandments)
 - i. Our willingness to surrender is based on the enlightenment of our current condition – **Acts 26:17-18** – open eyes, darkness to light, etc.
 - ii. **John 8:33-36** – slaves of sin. Jesus frees us by capturing us.
 - c. Such happened with Paul. The evidence of the resurrected Christ was compelling, and he was captured by Him to do His will – **Philemon 1:1; Galatians 2:20**
- II. That We May Capture Eternal Life
- A. Christ's Restraints are of Love
 - a. Christians need constant reminding of why Christ has captured them, lest they resent the captivity of Christ.
 - b. Some resist the direction of Christ – **1 Thessalonians 5:19-22**
 - i. This is foolish.
 - ii. One cannot lose sight of why the Holy Spirit is restraining us – cf. **Galatians 5:17, 21** – keeping us from destruction.
 - c. Christ is not keeping us from a fulfilling life like some mistakenly think – **Psalm 2:1-3; John 11:47-48**
 - d. We must not break these bonds and cast away these cords but recognize them for what they are – **Hosea 11:3-4** – gentle cords, bands of love.
 - i. The commands of Christ are expressions of love – **Mark 10:21** – like with the rich young ruler.
 - 1. **(v. 22)** – don't react like the young rich man.
 - 2. Recognize where Christ is coming from.
 - ii. **1 John 5:3** – they aren't burdensome.
 - iii. **Matthew 11:28-30** – they take away our burden of sin!
 - e. Knowing this, we should learn to cherish God's word – **Psalm 19:10-11**
 - i. We should not view the "shall nots" of God's word as "I don't get to," but "I don't want to."
 - ii. We should not view the "you must" of God's word as "I have to," but "I get to."
 - f. His direction is an immense blessing – we have been captured to capture – **Philippians 3:12**
 - B. Christ's Restraints Produce Holiness, and End in Eternal Life

- a. Christ has captured us that we may capture, or attain to the resurrection – **Philippians 3:11-14**
 - i. All will be raised, but only some will be raised to life – **John 5:28-29** – it must be pursued.
 - ii. Thus, Paul lived in Christ so as to pursue and capture this prize.
 - iii. **Philippians 3:17-21** – such was manifested through living not for earthly things, but heavenly.
- b. He willfully submitted to the direction of Christ knowing where it was leading him – **2 Timothy 1:12; 4:6-8**
- c. The direction opposite of the word of Christ leads back to sin – **Romans 6:13, 16** – slaves to sin.
 - i. **Romans 6:19** – this compounds lawlessness.
 - 1. **Some wonder why it's so hard to be a Christian.**
 - 2. **Often, they are those who resist Christ's control, and therefore burden themselves with sin.**
 - ii. **Romans 6:20-22** – this ends in death.
- d. Christ's word is what we were delivered to when we were freed from sin – **Romans 6:17**
 - i. Still language of a slave/master relationship.
 - ii. **"doctrine to which you were delivered"** – i.e. delivered to it to be its slave – **(v. 18)**
 - iii. This leads to righteousness – **Romans 6:16**
 - 1. **Romans 6:19** – it is also progressive, leading to holiness. (separation from sin)
 - 2. **Romans 6:22-23** – it ends in everlasting life.
- e. This is work that Christ will complete in us, but we must let Him – **Philippians 1:6**

Conclusion

1. We must acknowledge the authority of Christ and submit to it always.
2. However, we must always maintain perspective, remembering why we surrendered in the first place, allowing Him to take us captive.
3. In doing so, we were freed from sin, and will only remain free by presenting ourselves as slaves to Christ.
4. He has taken us captive to do His will that we might seize the heavenly prize!