



## Opportunity for Chains



Can you imagine being in prison with Paul? He never missed an opportunity to share Christ with those around him. This was Paul's key to evangelism. He shared Christ in any circumstance, believing that those gathered around him were there by Christ's hand. Yes, God knows that human nature brings us together in comfort and that is not always the best environment for evangelism. However, when forced together in times of weakness, we often demonstrate the power of Christ to those who are most in need of **hearing** and **seeing** His message.

## Good People - Bad Things

Its been a hard year on most churches. Accidents, illness, even death touches each congregation and the economy has worn even the most sturdy soul down. Is seems so unfair doesn't it? Here we all are, volunteering our time, pouring out our hearts in support of our faith and things still go wrong. Why does God respond to us in this confusing way?

In Daniel 11:35, we are told that one reason for God allowing us to stumble is so that we *"may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end."* Now most of us will agree that when it comes to faults, everyone is in need of some refinement. However, there are times that even the most detailed self-examination does not uncover a clear reason for the problems encountered in daily life.

Paul can be found in 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, praying for the removal of *"a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."* Paul's thorn was thought to be some type of eye trouble effecting him both physically and emotionally. What could God be trying to

refine in Paul? Didn't God do the job completely on the road to Damascus? Paul's attitude is wonderful. He states God gave him the thorn to keep him from getting too proud. His weakness was his gift from God.

The real point here, however, is to reflect upon the unexpected problems of life and to draw some conclusions:

⇒ Spiritual blessings are more important than physical ones. Paul thought he would be a better Christian if he were relieved of his weakness. Just the opposite was true.

⇒ Unanswered prayer does not always mean the need is not met. Sometimes, the blessing is greater when it seems that God does not answer.

⇒ Weakness is strength if Christ is in it.

⇒ There is sufficient grace to meet every need.

⇒ We are promised never to be given a burden that is more that we can bear.

**The problems that affect church goers and those their families are all part of God's wonderful plan. To withdraw is to admit defeat. These are the times God has given us. Let us make the most of His many blessings.**

### Check List✓

**Pray for each other and for the benefit of the Church.**

**Spend time in the fellowship of others during times of high stress and turmoil.**

**Remember, God may have placed someone in your proximity for the express purpose of learning how to rely one one's faith in a crisis.**

**Believe that even the unexpected problems, the times of high anxiety are all part of God's plan for you.**

**Share your faith openly.**

While Paul was in prison, we can see the attitudes and actions of a productive witness (**Colossians 4:2-6**):

*"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful."* Look for opportunities to share the Gospel.

*"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity."* Those moments of sadness, pain and discomfort may very well be God's gift for the day for someone.

*"Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt..."* No Bible thumping is necessary.

**Your tip: Effective evangelism can be simply a visible reliance upon one's faith.**