

Introduction: A Tale of Two Stories

- The Divine Equation: C+P = E

Circumstances + Perspective = Experience

Living above my circumstances occurs when my perspective interprets my circumstances rather than my circumstances determining my perspective.

- The Fundamental Question: How can we develop the kind of **perspective** that transcends our circumstances?
- The Answer: Four Keys & Four Questions

Key #1: **Focus**

Question #1: Where is your focus?

A Lesson from the Life of Paul:

Philippians 1:1-11

Paul's Circumstance –

¹Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:1-2 (NASB)

Paul's upward Focus

³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:3-6 (NASB)

Paul's outward Focus

⁷For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:7-8 (NASB)

Paul's inward Focus

⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11 (NASB)

How to Develop an Upward Focus:

Philippians 1:3-6

- A Choice = gratitude

How?

- An Action = prayer

How?

- An Attitude = confidence

How?

Summary: Our feelings always follows our focus!

Three Observations about an Outward Focus:

Philippians 1:7-8

- Difficult circumstances reveal our true affections.
- Living above our circumstances occurs when our hearts are so full of people, there is no room for self pity.
- Sometimes God allows adverse circumstances to realign our affection!

Summary: Our focus always follows our affections!

How do You Pray with an Outward Focus When Times are Tough?

- The request Philippians 1:9
- The reason Philippians 1:10
- The resource Philippians 1:11

Summary: Our affections always follow our **thinking!**

Application: Three timeless principles...

...when you find yourself living below your circumstances:

1. Our **feelings** always follow our focus.
2. Our **focus** always follows our affections.
3. Our **affections** always follow our thinking.

Conclusion: C + P = E

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the most “pressing” or difficult circumstance you are facing in your life right now?
2. How does your circumstance compare to being held in prison and awaiting possible execution?
3. What specific steps could you take today to develop an upward and outward focus even in the midst your difficult situation?

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 = focus
- Question #1 = where’s my focus?

Key #2: purpose

Question #2: What’s my purpose?

A Second Lesson from the Life of Paul:

Philippians 1:12-18

- **Paul's Report: His Thesis**

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

Philippians 1:12 (NASB)

- **How God Used Paul's Difficult Circumstances:**

Exhibit A: The gospel Goes Forth

...so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else...

Philippians 1:13a (NASB)

Exhibit B: The church Grows Strong

...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 1:14 (NASB)

Exhibit C: The man 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.

Philippians 1:15-18 (NASB)

3 Purpose Statements for every believer:

1. I am an ambassador/messenger of the Gospel.
 - Purpose: reach the lost.
2. I am called to encourage God's people; to help them grow to full maturity in Christ.
 - Purpose: build up believers.
3. I am a servant of the Living God.
 - Purpose: become like Christ.

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” in the previous lesson.
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?

Introduction:

“Vantage” = a) a position or situation more advantageous than an opponent’s. b) a position that allows a clear, broad view; understanding - i.e. **vantage point**.

Review:

- $C + P = E$
- Key #1 = Focus
- Question #1 = Where’s my focus?
- Key #2 = Purpose
- Question #2 = What’s my purpose?

Key #3: Hope

Question #3: Where is my hope?

A Third Lesson from the Life of Paul:

Philippians 1:18b-26

Paul's View of the Future – Joy!

. . .and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.

Philippians 1:18b (NASB)

- Reason #1: His **deliverance** is certain

¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Philippians 1:19-20 (NASB)

- Reason #2: His source of **hope** is unshakable

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² 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. ²³ But I am hard pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; ²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵ And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

Philippians 1:21-26 (NASB)

A summary of Paul's source of hope:

1. Paul is joyful because he is certain that he will be delivered "through" this time of personal testing and be found a faithful witness.
2. Paul's confidence rests in the supernatural enabling God will provide through the prayers of the Philippians and the empowering of the indwelling Holy Spirit.
3. Paul's major concern during this time of testing are how his failure to be faithful might reflect (negatively) on the person of Christ.
4. Paul's primary motivation and goal in his testing is that Christ's reputation would be greatly enhanced; regardless of what means God would chose to accomplish this goal (life or death).

Application:

1. Personal situation you need to see from an eternal vantage point:

2. Corporate situation we need to see from an eternal vantage point:

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a vantage point? How does our vantage point impact our perspective?
2. How did an **eternal vantage** point impact Paul's perspective, even amidst extreme adversity?
3. What "resources" (v. 19-20) gave Paul such hope and confidence? What's the difference between being delivered "out of" our circumstances and being delivered "through" them? Which of these does God promise us?
4. Discuss verse 21. How does Paul's hope in Christ by life or death provide a basis for unshakable joy?
5. Where is your hope?

Introduction: Understanding Expectations

- A Personal Experience
- A Practical Picture
- A Principle to Remember

Review: C + P = E

- Focus = Upward/Outward, Not Inward!
- Purpose = God, "Use" My Adversity!
- Hope = Look Through An Eternal Perspective

Key #4: **Expectation**

Question #4: What are my expectations?

A Final Lesson from the Life of Paul:

Philippians 1:27-30

“Clear Expectations”

• **What does God expect from us? Consistent Conduct**

²⁷Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸in no way alarmed by your opponents-- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.

Philippians 1:27-28 (NASB)

• **What can we expect from God in a fallen world? 2 Gifts**

²⁹For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Philippians 1:29-30 (NASB)

- **Gift #1:** To believe on Him.

- **Gift #2:** To suffer for Him.

