



## **The Advantage Of Disadvantage**

**Philippians 1:12-14** -- *“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;” “So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;” “And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”*

### **I. INTRODUCTION -- DISADVANTAGES**

#### **A. General**

-We live in a world of disadvantages. We live in a world that often holds the upper hand to our dreams, our desires, and ultimately to our destinies.

#### ***Doors of Daring -- Henry van Dyke***

*The mountains that inclose the vale,  
With walls of granite, steep and high,  
Invite the fearless foot to scale  
Their stairway to the sky.  
The restless, deep, dividing sea  
That flows and foams from shore to shore,  
Calls its sunburned chivalry,  
“Push out, set sail, explore!”  
The bars of life at which we fret,  
That seem to prison and control,  
Are but the doors of daring, set  
Ajar before the soul.  
Say not, “Too poor,” but freely give;  
Sigh not, “Too weak,” but boldly try;  
You never began to live  
Until you dare to die.*

#### **B. Biblical**

-And so it is with the general scope of life. Often times men allow their entire minds to be set at doubt and discouragement because of the seeming disadvantages the life seems to bring.

-Their disadvantages become their entire focus. They rob the joy of a walk with God, these troubling perplexities stifle any spiritual relationship that one might desire to have with God, and the seeming disadvantages of life will remove

our vision.

-Often the enemy would like for us to believe that there are a world of physical, mental, and spiritual disadvantages fighting against the Church. He would have men to believe that these disadvantages would prevail against the Church and disarm her efforts at evangelizing and discipling a lost world. But that is not in the plan or purposes of God.

**Isaiah 33:23** -- “. . . then is the prey of a great spoil divided; the lame take the prey.”

**1 Corinthians 1:27-29** -- “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;” “And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are:” “That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

**Isaiah 29:14** -- “Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work among this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.”

**Psalms 113:7-9** -- “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;” “That he may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people.” “He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.”

-When one looks at his own poverty, his own burdens, his own trials, his deficiencies of life and understands that they are nothing more than the thing that shapes the heroes of God, a new perspective is taken. *The Advantage of Disadvantage!!!*

### **C. A New Look at The “Disadvantages” of Life**

-Perhaps if we were to venture into the annals of history for a moment, we could understand just how much that physical disadvantages are not a liability to men but rather an asset to them.

- Homer who wrote the Odyssey and John Milton who wrote Paradise Lost was blind.
- Beethoven was deaf when he composed some of the world’s greatest symphonies.

-Don’t let the enemy rob you of your own spiritual advantages. God has not filled us with the Spirit just to wait on a Rapture, he has filled us with the Spirit to bring us to a place of radical evangelism and apostolic revival in our cities.

## **II. THE LIFE OF PAUL**

-If there was a man who could speak to us, who could tell us that disadvantages played a crucial role in his accomplishments for the Kingdom of God, it would be the Apostle Paul.

### **A. The Text**

-In our text in Philippians, he very clearly states:

**Philippians 1:12-14** -- “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;” “So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;” “And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

-The “things” of verse twelve are the sufferings for Christ. They have done nothing but further the cause of the Gospel (II Corinthians 11:22-33 for his enduring abilities). It has provoked others toward a greater zeal for the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **B. Paul’s Disadvantage**

#### **1. A Thorn**

-There was a great prevailing disadvantage in the life of Paul. It was a thorn. His thorn had come because of his own revelations of the mysteries of God. There is always a price to pay for a man who desires the depths of the riches of God.

-In II Corinthians 12, there is a desperation in the heart of Paul as he cries out to be released from the burden of the thorn.

-One of the great paradoxes of Scripture is understood that it is when I am weak that then I am made strong. My disadvantages (not to be confused with sin) can work to the advantage of revival. The Advantage of Disadvantage.

-The constant attendance of the thorn in Paul's life reminded him that God is the One who directs the desires and hungers of men.

-In Paul's life:

- There was no stretching without weakness.
- There was no reaching without weakness.
- There was no heights without weakness.
- There was no depths without weakness.

-That troubling thorn in the life of Paul kept him constantly dependent on the grace of God.

-In II Corinthians 12:7, we find the reference of the "thorn." The Greek word (SKOLLOPS) gives the implication that the thorn was a stake, an impaling object, a spike, or a nail. There was a definite spiritual understanding in the life of Paul that he would have to bear the Cross for God to effectively use him.

-His thorn marked him but it was more than just a marking. Paul went on to write to the Galatians that there was something different about his walk with the Lord.

**Galatians 6:17** -- *"From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."*

-The word "marks" comes from a Greek word (STIGMATA) that indicates that there was a certain stigma that had to be carried. Paul's thorn, his disadvantage, his deficit, had worked to his own advantage. He effectively states: "From now on, no man can trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus. His marks are those gotten at a place of crucifixion. You can't trouble me anymore, I am a dead man."

-Therefore, one understands that unction, anointing, and spiritual power will have their troubling thorns as long as there is a contention with flesh.

## **2. Paul's Imprisonment**

-Another great disadvantage in the life of Paul was that he was a prisoner. He was a prisoner of the Romans. But Paul's whole mind set concerning his "disadvantage" was one of spiritual triumph. His chain was to him nothing more than links of great spiritual pearls.

-In Philippians 1, Paul goes on to say that the things which had bound him, actually had caused others to be energetic in their attempts to reach the lost. It was the old, "If he can, then I can" attitude. If he can preach in fetters, then I can preach in freedom. (We must realize that there was a dark side to this picture too. There was those who preached Christ out of different motives, some less than desirable, but there was still that pressing to reach the lost.)

-Paul identifies himself as a "prisoner" of the Jesus Christ five times (Eph. 3:1; 4:1; II Tim. 1:8; Phm. 1:1; 1:9). Numerous times he gave the reference that he was the "servant" of the Lord.

-The Philippians looked at his imprisonment as a calamity. Paul was quick to assure them that his imprisonment was an investment into spiritual prosperity (not material prosperity, to the dismay of the charismatics). Our own estimate of men and their holdings in this life depends on the angle of our heart (Instead of being interested about where they live, how much money they make, who they are friends with and what they drive, etc. Rather, do they know how to pray, fast, touch God, witness, preach, etc.?)

-It is all in what angle your heart has on this life. To Paul, "ruin" at Philippi meant "crowning" at Rome. Paul is behind bars but the Gospel has been set free. He was not at a disadvantage, God had the advantage.

## **III. AN ILLUSTRATION -- YMOT**

There was a young man who grew up in the backwoods and as his years lengthened, he was sent to school. At first, school was fun to him. He enjoyed being around those children his own age and found great excitement on the playground. Little by little all of this soon was to change.

This young kid, could not seem to catch on to reading or to writing or to 'rithmetic. When the teacher would try to get him to read it seemed that the words were gibberish. When he was asked to write his name, there in the characteristic scrawl of a first-grader, came the letters Y-M-O-T. Ymot. So it was that Tommy soon became christened Ymot by all of the kids in the class. On the playground, "Ymot, throw the ball." "Ymot, catch the ball." "Ymot, hand me the jump rope." Because that Ymot was so humiliated by his lack of understanding in the classroom, he reverted to becoming very inattentive in class. Losing interest in his class work, he would turn into a disciplinary nightmare. He would be sent to the hall to sit in the chair. In fact his first two years of school, he spent more time in the chair in the hall than he did at his desk. It became known as Ymot's Chair. The teacher, when correcting other children, would send them to the hall to sit in "Ymot's Chair." This humiliation continued in the mind of this child until he began to feel worthless. There were numerous days that he was ordered to stay in at recess to clean up the cloak-room and to sweep the floor and to empty the ashes of the pot-bellied stove. He almost dreaded recess.

At the end of his second grade year, the teacher sent home a letter to Ymot's family. It was even addressed not to Tommy's parents but to Ymot's parents. The effect of the letter was that Ymot would not be allowed to attend school the following year because he was unteachable. Therefore, keep him at home. Use him in the fields and in the barn because that is all he is good for. But there was just one problem with the letter, Ymot could not read and neither could his parents.

So with the school year beginning, Ymot traipsed back to the little schoolhouse. Out of frustration, his teachers had merely passed him despite his inabilities to learn. The third grade school teacher was an old spinster. She dressed in long black dresses with high collars. She wore tie up black shoes that went from toes to mid-calf. Stern, authoritative, and old maid. But there was one thing that separated her from Ymot's earlier teachers. She had an incredible love for children.

On Ymot's first day, when the children were told to write their names on the top of their papers, Ymot's heart sank. He labored again with his first grade scrawl Y-M-O-T. The old spinster was walking around the room as the children were writing and she noticed this third-grader writing backwards. She understood that he was dyslexic. So with a gentle smile and a pat on his hand, she told him to stay in at recess. Tears welled in Ymot's eyes, it couldn't be, it was just the first day of school, and he would have to stay in at recess.

At recess, he silently waited in his desk. The teacher walked up to his desk and sat down in the one in front of his. She looked deeply into his little eyes and said, "Tommy, you have one of the most brilliant minds of any child that I have ever seen." Tommy was astonished. Here was someone who really cared about him. Someone who would call him Tommy. Without that, Tommy's entire educational process turned into a new direction.

There were at least a couple of days every week that Tommy would spend during that third grade year inside at recess with this elementary teacher. It was over a process of time that she taught this young man that his disadvantage could work to his advantage. From his fourth grade year all the way through the college years, Tommy never made anything but A's and B's.

-How long has it been since you really felt that God had a purpose for your life? There are times when he keeps me in at recess, he pulls me away from the bustles of life, and informs me that life is about serving Him.

-For too long the enemy has played to the point of causing disadvantages to keep men in the ruts of life. In the business world, the man who cannot calculate his figures will lose his business. In the sports world, the man who has some debilitating injury has to lay the sport down. In the world of medicine, the man who cannot remember the facts about anatomy is tossed out of a practice. In the world of law, if a lawyer cannot win in court, he is tossed aside.

-But in God's World, in God's book, in God's dealings with men, the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong. God has a fascination for weakness. That is why he robed Himself in flesh and came to the world to save men from their sin. Those who lose all to this world are the ones who come out on top with God.

(STOP FOR A MOMENT AND ASK THE CONGREGATION TO EVALUATE IN THEIR HEARTS WHAT THEIR DISADVANTAGES AND HOW GOD CAN TURN THAT AROUND.)

#### IV. CONCLUSION -- TWO FORGOTTEN SWORDS

-In the Old Testament there is a story tucked away about two forgotten swords.

-It was a time in the history of Israel that the Philistines had come in and taken everything from them. They had taken their grindstones and left them without resources to do anything but farm. Their mistake: Leaving two swords behind. They left the swords of Saul and Jonathon.

-There came a time that Jonathon and his armor-bearer met trouble in the Philistines. They made some decisions. They remembered a God who could work with disadvantages. They remembered that in God's great picture of things that the only thing that matters is whether God is with you or against you. They forgot about the odds and waded in with two forgotten swords.

**1 Samuel 14:13-15** -- *"And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him." "And that first slaughter, which Jonathan and his armourbearer made, was about twenty men, within as it were an half acre of land, which a yoke of oxen might plow." "And there was trembling in the host, in the field, and among all the people: the garrison, and the spoilers, they also trembled, and the earth quaked: so it was a very great trembling."*

- It is a trick of the enemy to have men to believe that they have no purpose in the Kingdom of God.
- It is his trick to get you to doubt the power of the Spirit that resides within the Church.
- It is his trick to get you to question whether or not you can win souls.
- It is his trick to get you to doubt his ability to sustain you financially when you support the Church by tithes, offerings, Foreign Missions, Sheaves For Christ, Save Our Children.
- It is his trick to get men so involved in tearing things down instead of building them up.
- It is his trick to get men focused on their world instead of the lost world.
- It is his trick to get men doubting their spiritual leadership that comes through pastors, elders, and even district leadership.
- It is his trick to get men self-sufficient and efficient enough to work without God.
- It is his trick to get men focused on old wives fables and doctrines of devils.
- It is his trick to rob you, to keep you down, and to hinder everything that God is desiring to do in your life.

-But when God steps on the scene:

- Jail Cells become worship centers.
- Lion's Dens become the throne rooms of heaven.
- Fiery Furnaces become places that burn with the fires of revival.
- Jehoshaphat's Battleground's becomes places of untold victory.

-That is God's plan: To take Disadvantage and make it Advantage.

**James 1:9** -- *"Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted:"*

**Hebrews 11:1** -- *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

**Hebrews 11:13-16** -- *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." "For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." "And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."*

