

GO Sermon Series – Part 1

“Get Out of Jail Free Card”

Pastor Dale Campfield - November 7th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 “Go and make disciples of all nations...”

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Intro:

We’ve stepped up, realizing the plan of God for our lives: The Great Commission and the Great Commandment; to love God and others, making disciples of all. We’ve learned how to STAND, against the enemy, making the decision to not bow. Now, it’s time to GO. It’s time to practice what we preach.

Key Verse: Mark 16:15 “He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”

Have you ever played “monopoly”? You throw the die to see how many spaces you get to move. And if you are like me you always land on the one you don’t want, then draw a card and it reads “Go directly to jail, do not pass go, do not collect two hundred dollars, and it never fails someone else has the get out of jail free card. It means that they don’t miss three turns nor do they need to pay \$50-00. By simply possessing this little card they can affect an escape from prison.

Without the card and without the \$50-00 you are simply required to do the time.

The main phrase used in this popular game is, “Go directly to jail. Do not pass go, do not collect \$200.00.” The enemy would try and tell you, “Stay locked up where you are in life right now. Do not pass GO. Do not collect the blessings of God.” Or, “You can’t GO, you’re not good enough, smart enough, Godly enough, pure enough, old enough, mature enough, respected enough – you can’t GO – and you certainly can’t collect \$200.00 in the process.” He wants to keep you locked up in Jail for the rest of your life. He wants you to be satisfied with where you are in your walk with God now, and just sit back and relax.

The reality is, it’s time to GO! It’s time for our obedience to God to kick in. It’s time to GO out and make this thing happen!

We have GOOD NEWS! It’s time to GO! It’s time to get out of JAIL, Pass Go and collect the Blessings of God!

Here's the deal, you can have the card but choose to stay in prison. Each of us do have the card; it was given to us the moment we accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and asked Him to take control of our lives. The freedom that is provided for the Christian is available when we are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:5 ...goes on to describe - How we can live in that freedom and how to enjoy all of its benefits.

"It is for freedom that Christ has set you free."

The reason that God has thrown us the - "Get out of jail free" card is so that we might live in freedom.

Our lives are to be pervaded by a deep sense of freedom and peace.

ACTS 16

--Doors for ministry in various parts of Asia were closed. God's Spirit would not permit Paul and his companions to preach or minister in certain areas.

*They were continually walking in obedience to what God wanted them to do.

--Paul receives a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come over and preach. Feeling led by God's Spirit, Paul and his companions are obedient and go to Macedonia to minister. This spreads the gospel to a new area.

--They eventually come to Philippi which is the chief city of the area of Macedonia which they were in at that time. They spend several days in that area. Philippi is a predominantly Gentile area where there is not even a Jewish synagogue.

*They were right in the middle of God's will for their lives at that time. They found themselves exactly where God wanted them to be.

(Jesus had sent the disciples across the lake in a boat and the storm came when they were in the middle of the lake.)

--During a Sabbath prayer meeting, Lydia is saved and begins to operate in the gift of hospitality. According to her profession as a "dealer in purple cloth", Lydia most likely dealt with wealthy individuals and thus carried a certain level of influence. She was the first one to be saved in Macedonia.

--A young lady in the area who was possessed by an evil spirit brought wealth to the area through her divination and psychic abilities. She was well known and in high demand.

*Her declaration that Paul and his companions were servants of the Most High God may originally have seemed like a flattering compliment, but Paul being grieved in his spirit realized it was a mockery of God Himself.

(Jesus never allowed a demoniac to declare His Deity openly.)

--When Paul rebukes the spirit and it comes out of the young lady, the masters of the lady become enraged. They bring false accusations and stories against Paul and his companions.

- a. They are accused of causing trouble in the city. Being referred to as Jews who were causing trouble in a Gentile city stirred up lots of problems.
- b. They were accused of introducing unlawful customs. The enemy doesn't mind when you have your own little religious circle, but he gets real ticked if he thinks you're trying to introduce Christ in his circle.
- c. Paul and Silas are not given an opportunity to defend themselves.

*The nice little "kingdom" that these spirits had established had been attacked and weakened.
--As a result, Paul and Silas are badly beaten and thrown into the inner prison—the deepest, darkest, dirtiest, dreariest, etc.. part.

*At about midnight, Paul and Silas begin to pray and sing praise unto God.

Allow me to give you this mini-sermon in the midst of the sermon. I will not have preached this part on Sunday at Eastgate Community Church, but I think it's worth you reading it here.

1. Praising at midnight brings freedom to you and to those who are in bondage with you.
*All of the other prisoners heard and when the earthquake took place all of the prison doors were opened and everybody's chains came loose.
2. Praising at midnight brings life to those the devil is using to keep you bound.
*The prisoner and his entire family are saved that night.
 - a. Paul and Silas were not in a hurry to leave their midnight.
 - b. Paul and Silas were willing to allow God to use them in their midnight.
 - c. Paul and Silas continued to praise through their midnight.
3. Continuing to praise through your midnight brings release.
*Freedom came when they praised at midnight, but release came when they praised through midnight.
"Free"=no longer fastened; having liberty
"Release"=free from confinement; discharged
*In the morning they were released. The enemy who had arrested them and put them in prison was forced to release them from prison. Knowing that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, the magistrates came with fear to release them.
*THE ENEMY AND HIS CO-HORTS FEAR THE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN AND IT PAINS THEM TREMENDOUSLY WHEN A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN PRAISES THROUGH THEIR MIDNIGHT AND THEY ARE FORCED TO RELEASE THEM!

*PAUL PLANNED TO MINISTER IN ASIA, BUT GOD WOULD NOT PERMIT HIM TO DO SO. GOD'S PLAN WAS THAT PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS GO TO MACEDONIA

AND END UP IN A PHILIPPIAN PRISON. AFTER THE RELEASE FROM PRISON, PAUL DID GO AND MINISTER IN ASIA & ALL OF ASIA HEARD THE GOSPEL DURING THAT TIME (ACTS 19:10.)

So, what I really want to talk to you this morning is about how to escape life's greatest prisons...

It could be **The Prison of Fear, Doubt, Depression, Low Self Worth...**

Listen to this quote: **“It’s not so much what happens TO you, as what happens IN you that matters in life!”**

What that statement is primarily talking about is... ATTITUDE!

Question: “What is attitude?”

Answer: “Your attitude is the way you choose to interpret the events of your life.”

- **You can either interpret them negatively or positively.**
- **You can interpret them as destructive, or constructive.**
- **You can see yourself as the “victim” or as the “victor”!**

You can believe as **Rom.8:28** states, *“That all things are working for my good”*, or, for some of you, you take it like this... *“That all things are working against me!”* It’s your choice!

The bible tells us in **Phil. 2:5** to, *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...”* In other words, being a Christian is really the process of taking on the attitude of Christ. Thinking and acting as Christ would think and act. It’s seeing life from HIS perspective.

And it all starts with attitude. See, in life... check out this quote (though over used), **“Your attitude determines your AL-titude! How far you GO in life.”**..., the success you have in your marriage, in raising your kids, at work and home... ALL in a large part have to do with your attitude.

How To Have A Winning Attitude

Take a look at what Paul wrote in Philippians 3:8-14

I think we need to understand that the same victorious life that was enjoyed by the Apostle Paul is available to every believer. It really is possible for common folk like you and me to become mighty in spirit and experience the same triumphant lifestyle the Apostle Paul experienced. In this passage of scripture we will discover some of the secrets of Paul’s spiritual power. I think the secret of Paul’s victorious life was a winning attitude. He was a high achiever. The word

retreat was not in his vocabulary.

He had developed the heart of a champion. In the verses we have just read, the Apostle Paul reveals his driving determination to win.

I think we need to understand that the same victorious life that was enjoyed by the Apostle Paul is available to every believer. It really is possible for people like you and me to become mighty in spirit and experience the same triumphant lifestyle the Apostle Paul experienced.

I. IN ORDER TO HAVE A WINNING ATTITUDE YOU MUST HAVE A DISSATISFACTION.

Many in our churches today have become satisfied in their walk with God. They are no longer moving forward with God. They Just SIT, SOAK, and SOUR. Not Paul, he had a winning attitude, he knew that there was more to be gained by drawing closer to the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul was expressing his dissatisfaction. Satisfied with salvation yes, satisfied with the progress in my walk and growth, no.

He said I made some progress, but I'm not there yet. Paul was aware of his need to go deeper in his walk with the lord.

1. Paul never permitted himself to become content or satisfied with his spiritual attainments.
2. The apostle was satisfied with Jesus. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..." But he was dissatisfied with his own spiritual progress.
3. The first essential to progress in the Christian life is a sanctified dissatisfaction.

A salesman came out of his sales manager's office with a discouraged look on his face. The secretary said, "What is wrong, Harry? Have you been fired?"

He said, "No, it's not that bad. But I sure got chewed out about my sales record. I can't figure it out. For the last month my sales have been high. I thought he'd compliment me--instead he ran me out!"

Later the secretary questioned her boss about the situation. He laughed and said, "Harry is one of our best salesmen, and I'd hate to lose him. But he has a tendency to rest on his laurels. He becomes content with what he has done and satisfied with his past performance. If I didn't get mad at him once a month or so he'd never produce."

4. As Christians, we often have the same tendency. We tend to become too easily satisfied and content with past accomplishments.

5. Many Christians become self-satisfied because they are comparing themselves to other Christians.

6. We must learn that our standard as a Christian is not other Christians; our standard is the Lord Jesus Christ.

7. We must never be satisfied until we are "conformed to his glorious image."

II. IN ORDER TO HAVE A WINNING ATTITUDE YOU MUST HAVE DEVOTION.

This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark...."

1. Paul was devoted to one thing--serving Christ and growing in Christ.
Jesus said to the self-righteous, rich, young ruler-- Mark 10:21 ". . . one thing thou lackest....
Jesus said to busy Martha-- Luke 10:42 "One thing is needful. .
David said in the Psalms-- Psalm 27:4 "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after...."

2. Most Christians are rendered ineffective because they are involved in too many things.

NOTE: Satan's deadliest trick for keeping you from doing what God wants you to do is to distract you by getting you to do many "good things." We must not allow ourselves to be distracted in our service to God !!!

Let's be like Nehemiah 6:3 ". . . I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down....

III. IN ORDER TO HAVE A WINNING ATTITUDE YOU MUST HAVE A NEW DIRECTION.

Paul had a past life just like us. But he said I forget those things that are behind me. What was Paul really saying? He was saying I refuse to be influenced and controlled by my past.

You can't move forward if you are always looking backwards.

1. Let me tell, the devil would like to get you to live in the past.
 - a. He would like to remind you of all your past failures, sin and mistakes.
 - b. The devil would like to accuse you over and over of sins of which Christ has forgiven.
 - c. Don't let the devil discourage you by accusing you of sin which Christ has forgiven !

If you have unconfessed sin in your life confess it, put it under the blood and move on. Don't waste valuable time fretting over it confess it, repent of it and forsake it and go on with Lord Jesus.

Far too many Christians are shackled by events in the past I've talked to tons of people who refuse to attend church and serve God because they've been hurt by someone, somehow in the

past.

2. Listen--if you want to win this race you can't live in the past. Forget those things that are behind you.

3. If you want to be a winner in this spiritual race you have to keep gazing in the right direction. The right direction is the future!

In order to have a winning attitude,

IV. IN ORDER TO HAVE A WINNING ATTITUDE YOU MUST HAVE DETERMINATION.

v. 14 Paul said "I press toward the mark...."

NOTE: The verb "I press" comes from a Greek word which means literally "to follow after." The Greeks used it to describe a hunter who eagerly and relentlessly pursued after his prey. You see, a person does not become a winning athlete by listening to lectures, watching movies, reading books or cheering at the games. He becomes a winner only when he gets into the race with a determination to win.

1. The Apostle Paul had a steadfast determination

He would not quit

He would not turn back.

He would not give in.

He would not throw in the towel.

He would not slow down.

He pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

2. If you want to be a winner in this race of Christianity you must have a spirit of determination. Sometimes you have got to put some energy and effort in what you are doing for The Lord Jesus Christ. Victory doesn't come easy. It takes a little sweat no, let me rephrase that, It takes a lot of sweat.

In order to have a winning attitude

V. IN ORDER TO HAVE A WINNING ATTITUDE YOU MUST HAVE DISCIPLINE.

1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. 25 And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. 26 I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 27 But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

It takes a great deal of discipline to run this race called Christianity.

The very word means "disciplined one." The word discipline is a foreign word to our lifestyle of instant gratification and push-button pleasures.

If we are to be winners then we must discipline ourselves to study God's word, To pray, and to attend church. It takes no effort or energy at all to fail. All you Have to do is sit there.

Conclusion:

Let me ask you--Do you have a winning attitude as a Christian? Do you have dissatisfaction, devotion, direction, determination and discipline?

Could it be that the Holy Spirit is trying to get you back into the race for God? Could it be that the Holy Spirit is trying to get you to excel in the things of God?

This morning, I'm inviting you...

- (1) First of all to come to Christ to be saved,
- (2) Secondly, to enter the race for Christ--determined to win.

And as you do... You Watch, You Wait, You'll See!