

**Devotional Thought**

**Week of April 20, 2008**

***THEME: Advancing the Gospel***

**THEME: I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really**

**served to advance the gospel.**

**Philippians 1:12**

Being a Christian does not require us to become another person's door mat. Christians have the option to suffer wrong, but they are not required to take abuse in order to be true disciples. Paul wisely asserted his right to appear his case to Rome rather than endure death at the hands of a mob.

However, we must remember that the manner or method we use to maintain our rights is very important. Arrogant hostility or haughty resentment is never appropriate. It is impressive how Paul assessed his situation and calmly looked beyond himself and to a higher good.

To be sure, there are times when we should not press for our rights; indeed, sometimes it is better to surrender our rights than to push to have them recognized. Paul gave up his right of compensation so that the church of Corinth might prosper. *"I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you"* (2 Corinthians 11:8). He also gladly pre-empted the right that superior knowledge gave him to eat meat sanctified to idols in order not to offend a brother who did not share this understanding. *"Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall"* (1 Corinthians 8:13)

In our scripture text, Paul is speaking very emphatically to the brethren in Philippi. When they heard that Paul was in prison, they sent him a message by their pastor, Epaphroditus, and it probably read something like this: *"Brother Paul, we are so sorry to learn that you are in jail. Now that you are in jail, it is impossible for you to continue on your missionary journey and the gospel will not be going out!"* Paul answered: "I want you to know that the gospel is going

out, and the things that have happened to me have not curtained but have actually furthered the gospel.

There are times when we should stand fast for our rights, and there are times when it is wise and gracious to defer. It requires wisdom and discernment to know when to do each.

**Prayer:** Father in Heaven, we thank you for your love for each of us. Bestow upon us enough wisdom to discern the appropriate time to stand and demand our right and when it is better to surrender them. **Amen.**

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