



## For a time such as this – week three

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The Apostle Paul was a man accustomed to being in control of his life and at home in the world of travel and energetic leadership. But he discovered that even as a disciple of Jesus, not all of his own hopes and plans would succeed. Much to his frustration he found himself confined to prison, first in Caesarea, and then under a form of “house-arrest” in Rome.

The Church at Philippi learned that Paul was imprisoned and sent Epaphroditus to support him and his work, and to bring gifts to help out with his material needs. But Epaphroditus became desperately ill and after his recovery Paul sent him back to his home congregation earlier than planned. Epaphroditus took back with him a letter of thanks and encouragement addressed to the church. It was the “Letter of Paul to the Philippians” that we know so well from the New Testament.

Paul felt conflicted about the situation in which he found himself. He knew that he was playing a valuable role as a witness to Christ to those around him. At the same time he wanted to be freed from his confinement in order to be more useful to the wider church on the outside. He didn’t know whether it would be better to live in fruitful labour for Christ or to die and be with Christ. Yet it was while he was imprisoned that he wrote his joy-filled letter. It includes the magnificent hymn/poem about the humility of Jesus. This poem, together with his hope-filled words of encouragement and challenge, have sustained Christians for almost 2000 years.

Some of the restrictions on our own movements might soon be lifted. It is a good time to reflect on our experience of the past few weeks. What have you found most difficult or frustrating? Are there events or circumstances that have brought out your crankiness or your tears? Have there been unexpected gifts or moments of surprised joy? What are you learning about yourself and your faith during this time? You might wish to journal your reflections and bring them before God in prayer. Why not also take the time to read and ponder the letter to the Philippians, especially chapter two.