

GET ME OUT OF THIS BARREL

When I was in Nurses Training one of my first patients was a former schoolteacher named Lucy Drake. Miss Drake was in a bed, immobilized with side rails up, and frightened and angry. Miss Drake would yell all day, especially when someone would enter her room, "Get me out of this barrel," I could imagine how she would think she was in a barrel. She had no view but from side to side and the ceiling and that was limited. I walked in one day and called her Lucy. A big mistake! She began yelling at me that students do not address their teachers by their first name and that to me she was "Miss Drake." I remembered after that to always address her as Miss Drake. Gradually Miss Drake grew quiet and unresponsive, and I had gone to a different floor and a different patient. I often think of this woman, once a schoolteacher, once given respect by her students, and then a helpless elderly lady. When days are bad and the aches and pains are bad, I turn my eyes to God and simply say, "Lord get me out of this barrel." Then I remember Paul in prison. In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he is writing from prison and in chains.

Philippians 1:12-14 Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

There is a lesson here for all of us. When life puts you in a barrel, take advantage of it, use it for the good of Christ. How can we do this? Well, I could stop with the pity parties and appreciate what I do have and not cry for what is lost and what will never happen. I can share my love of and my faith in Christ. He has lifted me. I was thinking about prevenient grace not long ago. This is the grace we received from God before we knew him. I can see that grace in my life. He took a 3-pound infant and made her thrive. He put people in her path that helped her see possibilities. He did this before I came to him, before I knew him. "He loved me ere I knew him and all my love is due him." God has a plan for all of us. This time, this place, these circumstances are okay because God has planned for just such an occasion and he will not desert us. Thanks be to God.

Lord there are times in our lives when we feel lost, alone, confused. But you are there! You send your angels to help us. You use family and friends to lift us up and we are reminded of your grace and love. Help us Lord to be worthy of such a love. Be with our church, guide us and may we offer a path to you to all who enter our doors. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry, grant him safety, and be with his family. We thank you for his service to this church and to all of us. Bless all who enter our doors, may they find you waiting.

Grace Epperson