

What do you do when it seems like your life has been “locked down”? What’s still true when life comes to a standstill? Paul should know, since he spent a lot of time unable to go where he wanted. Still, he was able to thrive in his faith and his ministry. In this series we will examine his prison epistles to unlock truths that remind us that no matter what the believer is going through, there is still life!

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 Rick began by reminding us that the first half of this year has been unlike anything we would have imagined (and we are still isolated in the midst of a pandemic). As you reflect on this season of life what are some things that you had hoped would be different by now? Follow up: what is something God has been showing you during this time?

2 STILL... Jesus is still Lord! *In crazy times we especially need to think about what we think about. When life comes to a standstill, what's still true?* What is significant about that statement and question? Follow up: **Read Psalm 46.** In what ways is the message from this Psalm relevant to our situation today? How has being still helped you to know that God is still God and Jesus is still Lord?

3 Rick mentioned that “*the pandemic has exposed our idols.*” The temptation is not so much to deny Christ as to dethrone him. How has this pandemic tempted you to do that? Follow up: **Read Colossians 1:15-20.** What words or phrases stand out to you from this subversive poem? How do they provide you hope and encouragement?

4 JESUS IS... still maker of all. *Everything was created through him and for him.* Why is that such an important truth to remember? Follow up: *Jesus is not just the source; he is the glue.* How can

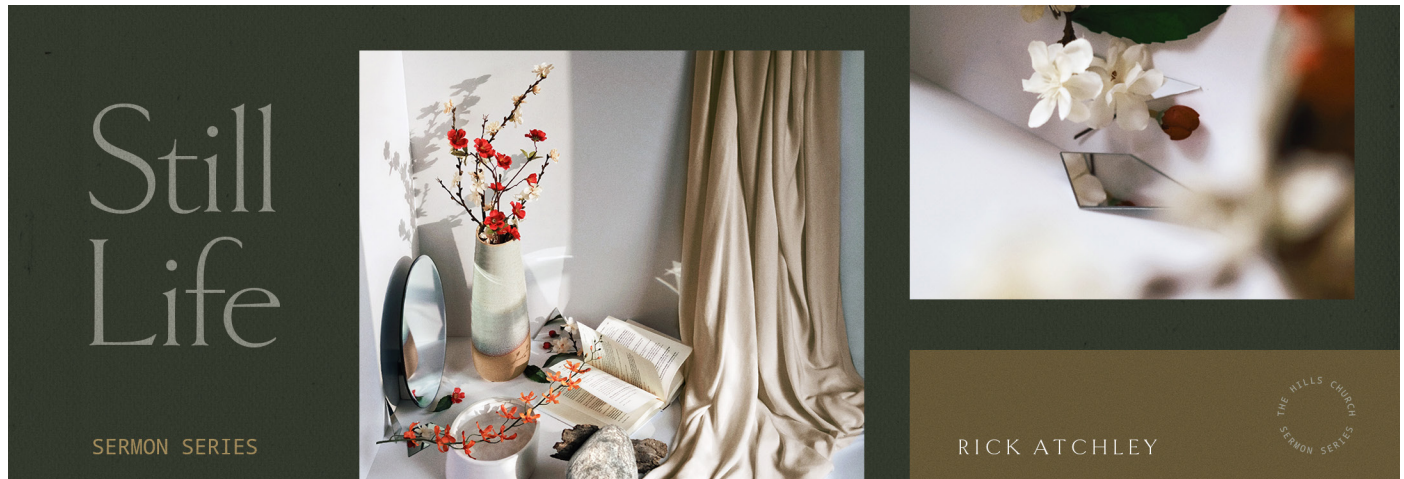
remembering that “*He holds all creation together*” help you when life comes to a standstill? Share some practical ways you’ve experienced this recently.

5 JESUS IS... still ruler of all. *Thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world.* Rick pointed out that “*There is no sphere of existence over which Jesus is not sovereign.*” What does it mean for you to know Jesus is ruler of all? What patterns or attitudes need to change for you to experience the full benefits of His rule in your life?

6 JESUS IS... still savior of all. *Through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross.* How does it make you feel to know that God loves you enough that He sent His Son to reconcile you to Him? Follow up: Why is it important to remember that Christ's victory is cosmic (see **Ephesians 1:10**)?

7 WORSHIP still helps! *When life comes to a standstill, remember what's still true.* How does worship help you, especially, in times like these? Why is it important to keep worshipping even when you don't feel like it? Follow up: **Read Colossians 3:16-17.** What psalm, hymn, or song have encouraged you the most recently?





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1 Rick began by reminding us that in times like these *“It is tempting—and deflating—to focus on what we’ve lost...”* (*The enemy wants us to traffic in fear and develop a scarcity mentality.*) However, *“What Paul chose to do when he was in lockdown was focus on his abundance in Christ.”* How have you dealt with this tension the past few months (name some of the things you’ve lost)? Follow up: How can what you have in Christ reframe the way you deal with what you’ve lost?

2 WE STILL have blessings the enemy cannot steal. Paul opens his letter to the Ephesians reminding all Christians that we are richer than we think. **Read Ephesians 1:3.** Take a moment to share some of the blessings you are experiencing in Christ today. Follow up: Why is it significant to remember that what Paul is talking about is in the past tense?

3 WE ARE... still chosen and cherished. God made the first move, deciding to save us in Christ before we ever decided to make Christ our Savior. **Read Ephesians 1:4-5.** What resonates with you the most from these verses? Follow up: Why is it so revolutionary that God made the first move? How has that impacted your relationship with Him?

4 WE ARE... still forgiven and freed. Adoptions are not free; they typically come at a high price. **Read Ephesians 1:6-7.** What stands out to you

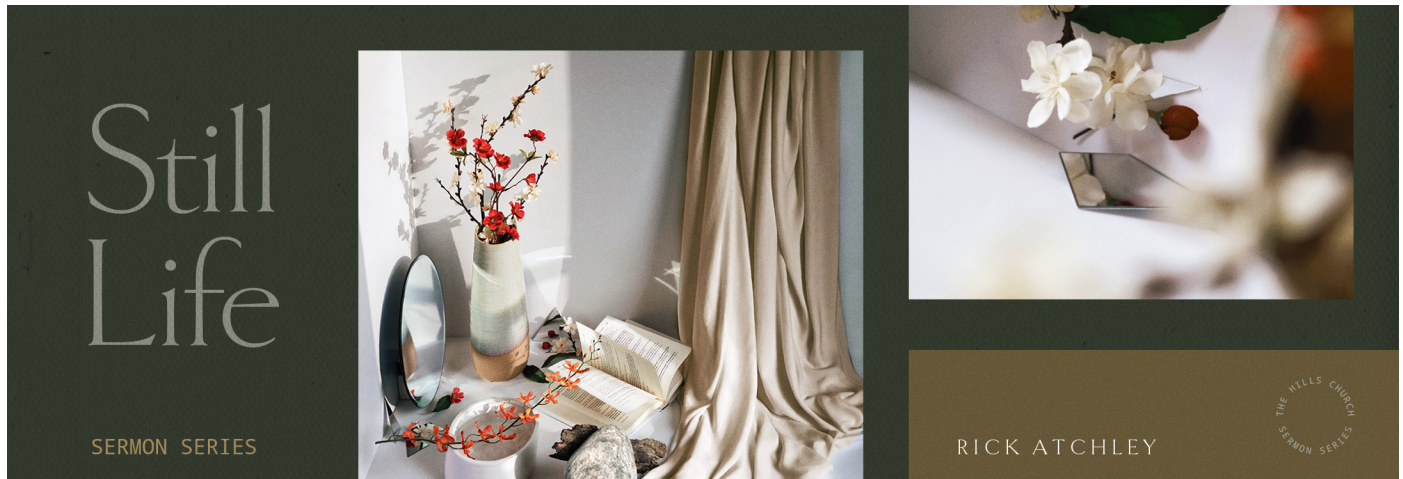
in these verses about the price God paid and the action He took? How has that transformed you?

5 Rick went on to say, *“We need to stop allowing the enemy to lie to us about the forgiveness and freedom Jesus was willing to die to give us... God will never haunt you with the memory of a sin He has forgiven.”* How does being reminded of this make you feel? Follow up: How can knowing you’ve been released from your past, help you walk in freedom today, and into the future God has in store for you?

6 WE ARE... still informed and indwelled. *One of the greatest blessings we have as children is revelation. The Father has let us in on what He is up to.* **Read Ephesians 1:8-14.** What stands out to you the most from these verses and how does that impact the way you live? Follow up: What role does the Holy Spirit play in all of this? How does the Spirit guide you to live a holy life when contrary thoughts are all around you?

7 So nothing should still our praise. Rick closed by reminding us that Paul is sharing this will with us from prison. *Yet four times he specifically mentions praising God.* With that in mind, share some examples of how you’ve experienced this to be true in your own life and/or how you’ve seen it demonstrated by other followers of Jesus recently. As you close, read **Jude 24-25** and spend some time in prayer thanking God for God.





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1 Rick began by pointing out that when Paul was in quarantine he took his thoughts captive (he affirmed that Jesus is still Lord and we are still blessed). *But perhaps his most surprising assertion, in view of his own difficult circumstances, was **joy is still available**.* How have you experienced that to be true in your life? Follow up: **Read Philippians 4:4**. Why is it important to see that “rejoicing” is a command?

2 I STILL have response-ability. *Life will not allow you to drift in the direction of joy. But you and I are free to choose how we will respond to circumstances we did not choose. Why is “outlook” more critical to joy than “outcome”? Which one do you tend to focus on more? Follow up: Paul didn’t just write this from prison; he lived this in prison. **Read Acts 16:23-25**.* How does being reminded of this help you take “response-ability”?

3 REJOICE BECAUSE... God is still worthy of praise. *Worship doesn’t need the right place; it needs the right perspective. Have you ever heard a song of praise in a place where you did not expect it? How did that experience change you? Follow up: Praise should not be seen as rooted in our circumstances but as grounded in God’s character. What attributes of God’s character do you lean into the most when you are in a tough season?*

4 REJOICE BECAUSE... There are still reasons to be thankful. *We live in a culture designed to*

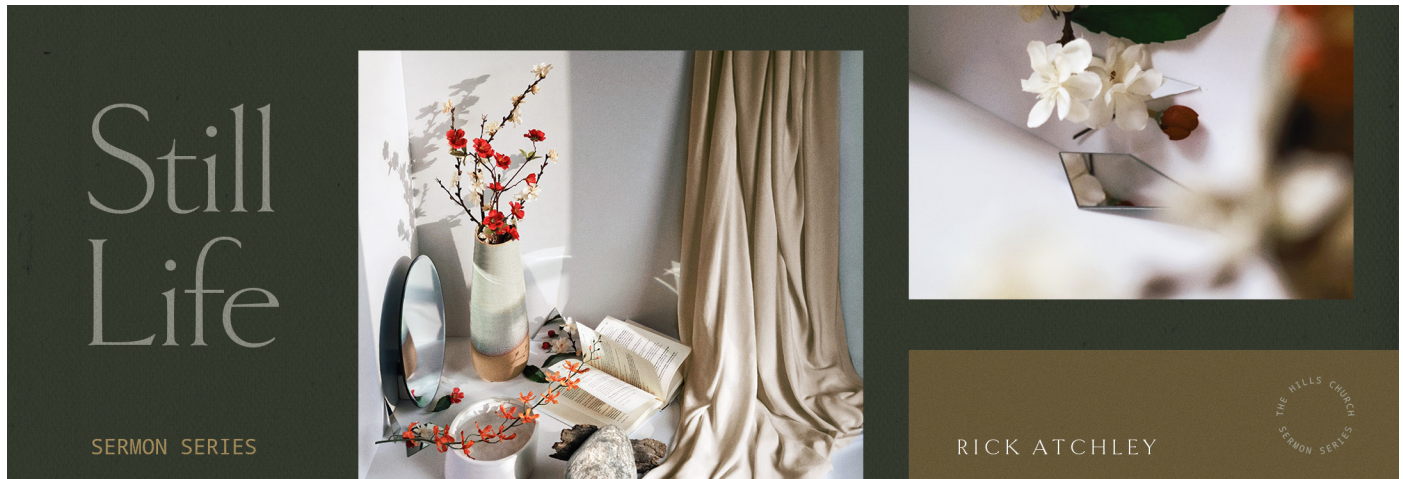
*produce discontent because it says joy can be driven, worn, remodeled, deposited, or consumed. What is the key difference between that worldview and Paul’s words? Follow up: **Read Philippians 4:6**. Why do you think Paul prefaced the command “do not be anxious” with the command to “rejoice in the Lord always”? How might rejoicing in God help us combat the worry that plagues us? What role does prayer play?*

5 Rick went on to ask a pivotal question, “*Will this ‘lockdown’ steal your thanksgiving, or will you still be thankful?*” How has that been going for you (be honest)? Follow up: What can you thank God for right now (share 3-4 things you’re thankful for)? Practice: spend the first few minutes each day this week telling God what you are most thankful for.

6 REJOICE BECAUSE... Witness is still possible in this moment. *Singing in the pain always gets attention. **Read Acts 16:25**.* What do you imagine was going through the minds of the other prisoners? Follow up: The outcome of this story leads to the conversion of the jailer and his family and it says they “*were filled with joy*” (**see Acts 16:26-34**). What are some recent examples of how you’ve seen joy spread?

7 Rick closed by reminding us that “**Joy still brings freedom.**” **Read Philippians 4:7**. Why is it significant to realize that finding joy leads to freedom instead of thinking that getting free leads to joy? How has this been the case in your life?





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1 Rick began by reminding us that one thing the pandemic has taught us is that “*love is essential.*” Even when so much has been lost, diminished, or locked down, followers of Jesus know that **love is still powerful!** How have you experienced that to be true in your life recently?

2 Read **Colossians 4:7-9** and **Philemon 1-3** to get the context for Philemon. What stands out to you about Paul’s relationship with Onesimus (a runaway slave of Philemon who was a leader in the church in Colosse) and his relationship to Philemon?

3 **IN ANY SITUATION... Christians still love.** *This story reminds us that we should never stop praying for runaways, asking God to find them and send them to a safe place where they can find Jesus.* Read **Philemon 4-21**. What does it appear Paul wanted Philemon to do, based on these verses? Why do you think Paul appealed to Philemon on Onesimus’ behalf? What was the basis of Paul’s appeal to Philemon?

4 How is slavery in the NT different than the type of slavery practiced in our nation’s past (and at the same time still a serious problem)? With that in mind, how is what Paul is doing in this short letter “*a revolutionary ask*”? Follow up: what impact should that have on all of our relationships today (see **Matthew 5:23-24**)?

5 **WE CAN... still decide to love.** *Being in Christ changes the way we see all people—no longer in the way that determines their status in the world.* Share some examples of how you’ve seen this played out in our world. Follow up: In what ways does being in Christ change the way we see **all** people or put another way what does seeing people through the lens of the gospel help us realize about **all** people?

6 **WE CAN... still provide for love.** *Love is most powerful when its cost gets real personal.* Read **Philemon 15-19**. How does this section illustrate the gospel of grace? What is so significant about Paul’s willingness to take on the debt of Onesimus so that he could find freedom? Follow up: What implications does Paul’s example have on “*a complicated relational mess*” in your own life right now?

7 Rick closed by reminding us that “*In any situation Christians still love, and in every situation love still works. This is the way of the kingdom.*” How is choosing “*the way of the cross*” and remembering “*that sacrifice is mightier than self-interest, and that love is greater than hate*” radically different from the ways our world normally operates? Follow up: Is there someone in your life right now God is calling you to radically love? What next step do you need to take to build a bridge in that relationship?

