

SCRIPTURE: PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2, 12-18

MAIN TAKEAWAY

God uses our suffering and trials in remarkable ways both for His Name and for our joy.

Context: In our passage today, Paul is assuring the Philippians that his imprisonment has not stopped the mission; it has actually advanced the gospel even further!

Read: Philippians 1:1-2, 12-18

Reflection: What stands out in this passage? What do you remember from the message about this passage? Humanly speaking, why might the Philippian church be anxious for Paul?

Message Connection: The message focused on how God can use our suffering (pain, conflicts, losses, failures, etc.) for His name and for our joy. This can enable us to suffer well and face any trial or difficulty with courage and faith. Let's walk through this passage and see what God does with our suffering. **How does God use our suffering?**

Message Point 1: He flips the script.

Read verses 12-13 again. Paul says that what happened to him "*actually served to advance the gospel*" (v.12). Paul's imprisonment would have been seen as a hindrance to the gospel mission. If Paul is in prison, how can he do his work of spreading the gospel? Surely this would be a devastating setback to the gospel! Actually, God used his imprisonment to spread the gospel through the whole Roman palace guard and Caesar's household!

Discussion: How have you seen God take difficult circumstances and bring good? Did you doubt or question how God might do it? How did this impact your faith? What are you possibly "chained to" right now that you are asking God to bring good from?

Message Point 2: He uses your story.

Read verse 14 again. Because of Paul's suffering ("my chains") the other believers in Rome became bolder in their faith. His suffering emboldened them to take the gospel to their city. It was as if they said: "If Paul can proclaim Jesus in there, surely we can proclaim Him out here!" This is what can happen in our suffering. God can strengthen other believers as we faithfully endure and trust Him in our suffering.

Discussion: How have you been strengthened by the endurance and joy of other believers in their suffering?

Message Point 3: He increases our joy.

Read verses 15-18. These verses are difficult. Paul identifies a group of believers who are preaching the gospel with the aim to cause Paul trouble in prison. We are not sure why or how this is happening. It is possible they want to one-up Paul in his absence. Whatever the case, the remarkable thing about Paul is that he is not bothered. He is simply rejoicing that Christ is being preached. Suffering helps us remember what truly matters. Things that might have upset us before, no longer do. God purifies our joy and makes us immovable. We become resilient. We become optimistic and charitable toward the most impure motives.

Discussion: How can suffering impact our joy? How can it direct our gaze to what truly matters?

Conclusion: Paul's attitude toward his suffering only makes sense in light of what he says a bit further down in his letter. "For to me, to live is Christ" (1:21). When Christ is our life, we can endure anything and God will use it for His name and for our joy and good.

Close in Prayer.

ADDITIONAL NOTES:
