**SUPRISING RESULT OF our TRIALS AND SUFFERING – (Philippians 1:12-14)**

**Fish Lake Chapel – Pastor Mike Thompson**

**Sept 22nd, 2024**

**READING THE TEXT**

**Philippians 1:12-14 Ministry as a Prisoner**

**1:12I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[**[**p**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201&version=NET#fen-NET-29358p)**] that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel: 13The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ, 14and most of the brothers and sisters, having confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment, now more than ever dare to speak the word fearlessly.**

**INTRODUCTION**

How many times have we faced trials, suffering, stress and great problems in our lives? Many times, when I have faced hard things, my first reaction was not good. We often react to trials, persecution or losses with self-pity, blaming others, complaining and anger. We desperately search for someone to blame, like parents, bad churches, God, doctors, or government. Paul had every reason to complain and show contempt and anger. He was falsely accused of many things. He was beaten, shipwrecked, rejected, slandered and more.

Today we get to see Paul’s reaction to being imprisoned for his faith. He does not treat himself like a victim, but he searches for and finds the purpose and long term good of his present suffering. James suffered many hardships like Paul. And James said;

 [***James 1:2Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,***](https://www.bibleref.com/James/1/James-1-2.html)[***3for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.***](https://www.bibleref.com/James/1/James-1-3.html)[***4And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.***](https://www.bibleref.com/James/1/James-1-4.html)

[***5If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.***](https://www.bibleref.com/James/1/James-1-5.html)

We will face hardships, and perhaps Paul (and James) can model for us how to go through difficult times in a way that strengthens our faith and helps our mindset. Perhaps there is a way to count it joy when we face trials and tests of all kinds. Part of facing hardships with faith is looking for the purpose in the pain. Let’s see how Paul models that while he is in prison for his faith.

**PREACHING THE TEXT**

**Philippians 1:12-14 Ministry as a Prisoner**

TURNED OUT TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL

**1:12I want you to know, brothers and sisters,[**[**p**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%201&version=NET#fen-NET-29358p)**] that my situation has actually turned out to advance the gospel:**

A quick google search reveals the following:

*“Many of the guards were touched by Paul’s message and become followers of Jesus. The news spread from guard to guard, to their families, and eventually to Caesar’s household. Paul even mentioned in his letter to the Philippians that “’all the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.’” (Philippians 4:22)*

This begs some questions: would these guards and people in Caesar’s household have heard the gospel if Paul was not imprisoned nearby? And how did Paul think about his imprisonment? The next part of our text tells us how Paul viewed his imprisonment.

IMPRISONED FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST

**13The whole imperial guard and everyone else knows that I am in prison for the sake of Christ,**

I don’t think Paul is saying that he is in prison because people objected to his faith in Christ. “Hey, they threw me in jail because I believe in Jesus!” No! I think in this passage Paul is saying that he is in prison because it was a calling from God. The context indicates this clearly. Paul sees himself not as a victim, but he sees his prison time as a call from God to prison ministry. He is focusing his mind on the truth that he can reach people from prison that he would not be able to reach outside the walls.

Applying This Mindset Broadly To Our Lives

 What might that look like in our everyday life? Here is an example (one I shared before):One of the leaders of a church where I served as Pastor got brain cancer and he saw this as a gift so he could reach the people at the oncology department with the gospel. He affected many in his visits to the hospital.

 During neck surgery two years ago, my vocal cords were damaged. One vocal cord did not even show up on the scope. After 4 months of not being able to speak, the doctors believed I would never regain my ability to talk. One day I woke up and felt a sense of urgency to go communicate with the residents and leaders at the house of hope where I was the Executive Director. I told them in a barely audible, painful whisper; “I am not a victim, and I will not give in to self-pity. This ailment is a calling from God to show you that a person can have faith even when things are going wrong. And if I should never speak again that simply means God has another first best calling on my life.”

The men in the sober house said they were strengthened in their faith. And I woke up the next day and my voice was back. The doctors were amazed as one of my vocal cords was totally missing on their scans only days before this happened.” But the loss of my voice was call from God and an opportunity to show what faith looks like.

I can’t say I usually act with faith when things go wrong. Mutterings and hollering at inanimate objects are all too common for me, especially in the workshop. But God gave me a gift of faith to go through that terrible time. When I ask God during the trials, he will give me faith and wisdom and peace more than I have on my own.

 One person told me after the loss of their child; “our pain and loss are real, but hers is not.” She could have experienced so many tragic things in life. She could have got temped and swept away by drugs or alcohol. She could have been abused. She may have had a wonderful life here. But she has the best life with Jesus for eternity. Our loss is her gain. And one day, if we continue to follow Jesus, we will see her in heaven and be with her forever.” Yes, they had tears and great sorrow and loss, but it was loss and grief that was accompanied by wisdom and hope in God.

 As one of my dear relatives recently posted; *“you are exactly where you are supposed to be.”* God has you in blessings and in trials for a purpose. If we don’t look for that purpose and plan of God in our hard times and losses we will sink into despair, self-pity, and anger. That often leads to dulling our sorrows with alcohol, drugs, bad relationships and preoccupations that will kill our soul and sometimes our bodies.

 But if we keep our eternal perspective and our faith in the hard times, we will walk out the truth from **Romans 8** that; ***“…we know that in ALL THINGS God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purposes.”*** ALL THINGS!

So how did it impact those around Paul who saw him keep his faith even while in chains?

RESULT OF IMPRISONMENT = BUILT CONFIDENCE IN OTHER BELIEVERS

**14and most of the brothers and sisters, having confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment,**

 Paul’s faith was not given to him by God just to make him feel better about things. No, his faith affected the people around him. And this is worth remembering. Our attitude and faith and the way we handle hard times affect those who see the way we react.

 Paul’s reaction to hard times was to boldly continue to share his faith. He was in prison for his faith, but you could not shut him up. It was his new calling and new pulpit. Paul remained confident and bold in his faith, and this affected everyone near him. His continued faith, even in chains, gave confidence to other believers. They had confidence because they saw that even prison could not extinguish Paul’s faith. Perhaps they could face hardship too.

Believers grew confident in their faith because of Paul’s example. And they put their faith in action in the following way.

OTHER BELIEVERS NOW PREACH CHRIST FEARLESSLY

**…(vs 14 continued)…now more than ever dare to speak the word fearlessly.**

One voice was stopped, (Paul’s), and many rose up to multiply his message. But that is the way it has always worked in God’s church. Persecution of believers has been happening all over the world and continues today. When the gospel first went to China there were only hundreds or perhaps thousands of believers. But when China began to persecute Christians and oppose gospel preaching churches there was an explosion of evangelism and conversions. Faith was no longer an intellectual exercise; it was a matter of life and death. And in the trenches our faith holds. In persecution God does incredible work to sustain people who would lose all hope on their own.

**SUMMARY / APPLICATION**

Note: Let your suffering and trials draw you closer to God (as a witness of hope to others) rather than being consumed by self-pity and cursing). Whatever you are going through know that you are exactly where God wants you to be. If it is a calling to show that there is hope even in trials and difficulties, let your faith shine into a dark world that is limited to circumstantial happiness.

Specific Things to Do In Trials and Challenges

1. Quote **Romans 8:28 *All things work together for the good of those who love Him*** and **Romans 8:38,39 *Nothing can separate us from the love of God***
2. Ask God for wisdom, endurance and godly perspective. “God, help me to see the purpose behind the pain and give me an eternal perspective.”
3. Pray that God would use your attitude in suffering to strengthen the faith of others.
4. Take whatever action you know is wise. (don’t avoid doctors or counselors, God gave the talent to them and uses them)
5. Let people minister to you. This is one of the ways God’s love is felt in difficult times.

If you are in a time of blessing and peace, remember it is a gift from God. Count your blessings and lean into Jesus as you enjoy his good gifts that we have not earned.

**TAKING IT HOME**

1. When you go through challenging times do you see yourself as a victim, or do you see these challenges as a calling from God?
2. Is your example causing others to be bolder in their faith?