

A Greater Purpose Series

February 1, 2023

Scripture: Philippians 1:12-14

12. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;

14. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Summary: Part of an extensive study in Philippians, we are reminded here that God has a greater purpose for our trials.

Content in Christ: A Study in Philippians

A Greater Purpose

Phil. 1:12-14

Illus. Old mule fell into a ditch. “Shake it off and step up”.

What do you do when the “stuff” of life piles up on you?

Phil. – Content in Christ. Review (love, encouragement, prayer) Memorize?

Up to this point, Paul encourages them by sharing how he is praying for them.

Now he addresses possibly the biggest concern on their minds – his imprisonment.

Please turn with me to Phil. 1:12-14.

The Philippians were naturally concerned about Paul’s welfare.

- What about his physical needs (they had sent money already)?
- What about his legal needs (would he be released or killed)?

In this passage, Paul sets their concerns at ease.

I.THE IRONY OF HIS ORDEAL v. 12

12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

God loves irony. Here's a perfect example.

The Philippians were probably sad and grieving over Paul's bondage.

- His imprisonment would certainly hinder the spread of the Gospel, wouldn't it?

12. NOW I WANT YOU TO KNOW, BROTHERS, THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME HAS REALLY SERVED TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL.

God took something bad and turned it into something good!

Rather than hindering the Gospel, it was actually advancing it!

-Paul's imprisonment served to promote the Gospel.

ADVANCE - to cut forward, to clear the way, like pioneers "cutting their way" forward.

Illus. Western settlers faced all kinds of trials in their advance to the West.

Just as the pioneers cut thru/advanced in the West, Paul was pioneering/advancing the Gospel in Rome.

Nelson SB "Paul's imprisonment was a strategic advance in the kingdom of God because it was clearing the way for the gospel to penetrate the ranks of the Roman military and even the royal house."

Black History

Notice that Paul doesn't dwell on his hardships/doesn't complain about his captivity.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME, not bondage, false imprisonment, beatings, shipwrecks, etc.

- Instead of complaining, he saw the greater purpose.**

Paul was perfectly content in Christ.

- He saw everything as an opportunity instead of an obstacle.**

How many times do we look at hardship/tragedy with grief, depression?

- Instead of looking at it as an opportunity to know/share the love/grace of Christ.**

BKC "There are no accidents with God."

"Don't pray for rain if you're going to complain about the mud" (Zingers).

Paul prayed for opportunities and God answered his prayer.

What trials in your life have you seen God work out for good?

II. THE RESULT OF HIS ORDEAL v. 13-14

v. 12. would naturally raise an eyebrow among his readers, so Paul explains what he means.

13. AS A RESULT (of his imprisonment), IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE PALACE GUARD AND TO EVERYONE ELSE THAT I AM IN CHAINS FOR CHRIST.

There are 3 different responses/results of his ordeal.

A. People saw that his ordeal was on account of Christ.

His imprisonment had become known for what it really was.

He wasn't a criminal/rioter; he was in prison because of his faith/preaching in Christ.

Does your neighborhood know you're a believer?

Countless stories have been told of Christians who were arrested, beaten, and even executed simply because they professed Christ.

It's still happening today.

These soldiers/people knew the truth about why he was there.

•Unfortunately, it wasn't up to them to decide his fate, but they knew the truth.

PALACE GUARD (the official residence of the governor/emperor/Pretor)

•They were handpicked and the highest paid in all the Roman military.

Apparently, it was this palace guard that had been assigned to watch over Paul.

Paul had been in prison at least 2 years, guarded continually by shifts of these soldiers.

•He had probably become known to most of them.

Here's another great irony: because he was chained to them, he had a captive audience!

•Paul couldn't go to the world, so God brought the world to him!

B. Paul saw his ordeal as an opportunity to preach Christ.

These soldiers couldn't silence him or beat him because he was a Roman citizen.

(Nelson SB) "In an ironic twist, they were the captives and Paul was free to preach."

Illus. SSMH ER – Dr. Sayre suturing a patient and discussing theology.

How “convenient” that these soldiers who guarded the Emperor would be able to hear the Gospel.

In fact, it’s quite possible that the Gospel would never have reached the Roman palace apart from Paul’s imprisonment.

Not only was Paul able to preach to the soldiers, he was also able to preach to others.

AND TO EVERYONE ELSE...

Apparently, he had visitors or word of his situation spread.

Everyone knew why he was really there – because of Christ and for Christ.

13...IT HAS BECOME CLEAR THROUGHOUT THE WHOLE PALACE GUARD AND TO EVERYONE ELSE THAT I AM IN CHAINS FOR (in) CHRIST.

(Vincent’s Word Studies) His very captivity proclaimed Christ.

There’s something else here that we need to understand.

The Greek and stoic philosophers of that day typically argued that imprisonment, like death, was not necessarily a bad thing. (IVP Bible Background)

- It was one’s attitude in the midst of imprisonment that mattered.**
- Not the circumstances of suffering, but our response to the suffering.**

What was Paul’s attitude? Joy, contentment, optimism, opportunity.

Paul’s attitude determined his action. He could have easily given in/up.

He saw his imprisonment as an opportunity to preach Christ.

What ordeals in your life have been opportunities to preach Christ?

C. Believers saw his ordeal as an inspiration to preach Christ.

14. BECAUSE OF MY CHAINS, MOST OF THE BROTHERS IN THE LORD HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED (persuaded, gained confidence) TO SPEAK THE WORD OF GOD MORE COURAGEOUSLY AND FEARLESSLY.

BROTHERS IN THE LORD - Better, “most of the brothers have been encouraged in the Lord”.

They saw Paul taking advantage of his situation and the Lord encouraged them to do the same thing.

Amp. “most of the brethren have derived fresh confidence in the Lord because of my chains and are much more bold to speak and publish fearlessly the Word of God.”

These brothers could have easily ended up in the same place as Paul.

•In fact, there were still some who held back.

Paul rejoices because he sees even his imprisonment as an opportunity to share Christ and to encourage others to share Christ!

(BKC) Paul’s hardships made him better, not bitter. Can we say the same thing?

History has shown us countless examples of this happening in the Church of Christ.

Adversity in the cause of Christ is perhaps the greatest motivator for the cause of Christ.

How has other people’s faith encouraged you in yours?

III. THE CHALLENGE THROUGH OUR ORDEALS

Paul encouraged and challenged the Philippians through his suffering.

•But he also challenges us as well. Let me give you 4.

A. We need to have an attitude of optimism.

Paul didn’t complain about his circumstances.

- He saw the greater good, the greater purpose.

Illus. I know several people who have learned to suffer graciously.

- They look for the positive, no matter what. You probably know some people, too.

God always has a greater purpose.

When we face adversity, instead of asking “why”, we need to ask “for what purpose”.

B. We need to see adversity as opportunity.

When Paul was chained to a soldier, he thought, “Great! Another captive audience!”

- When life gave him lemons, he made lemonade.

- When they tried to bury him, he simply shook it off and stepped up.

No matter what situation you are facing, God can use it for good.

What Satan plans for evil, God can use for good.

People who have endured suffering are often the best people to encourage others going thru the same thing.

If it wasn't for adversity, we wouldn't really have any need for God.

Vance Havner (Leadership Vol. 4, no. 1) “God uses broken things. Broken soil to produce a crop, broken clouds to give rain, broken grain to give bread, broken bread to give strength. It is the broken alabaster box that gives forth perfume. It is Peter, weeping bitterly, who returns to greater power than ever.”

C. We need to take advantage of opportunities.

It's one thing to see the opportunity, but it takes a bold step to seize the opportunity.

(Wiersbe) “The single-minded Christian does not allow circumstances to overcome him; he or she turns those circumstances into opportunities to magnify Christ and win souls.”

How we handle adversity is a great example and encouragement to others.

D. We need to advance the Gospel. No matter what!

Paul used every opportunity to cut forward/clear the way for the Gospel.

His endurance and optimism gave him many opportunities to share Christ and encourage others to do the same, even though they too would face persecution.

Handling adversity is one of the best ways we can demonstrate our faith.

What would we be willing to risk for the sake of the Gospel?

•Our reputation, ridicule, our friends, promotions?

There are people suffering and dying today because of their faith.

Illus. Columbine. Rachel Scott. Gun to her head. “Do you believe in God?”

What would you have said? What are we willing to risk for the Gospel?

Paul risked everything. He looked at adversity as a great opportunity to share Christ.

Illus. 1987, Michael Uber death/funeral.

God can work all things out for good, if we recognize the opportunities and boldly and fearlessly take advantage of those opportunities.

•And after all, He’s more than worth it, isn’t He?

The Bottom Line: What we call adversity, God calls opportunity. (Zingers).

How can you turn adversity into opportunity?

Hymn God Will Make a Way