

The Gospel Unfettered

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[0 : 00] Well, now we turn to the preaching of God's Word. Today we're going to continue our series looking at the letter of Philippians, Paul's letter to the church at Philippi.

So we'll be looking specifically in chapter 1, verses 12 through 18 today. And as you turn there or look on the screen behind me, I wonder how many of you have heard of or seen the TV show, *The Deadliest Catch*.

Now, I don't know if it has quite the same following here in the UK that it's had in the States for nearly two decades, but it's a reality show that follows these crab fishermen in the Bering Sea off the coast of Alaska during the crab season.

And so as the title of the show shows, this is dangerous work. It's known as one of the most dangerous jobs in the world. And if you've seen the show before, you'd know why.

Because as these fishermen go out into sea, we see these raging waters, these torrential storms that they encounter. They're dealing with these huge heavy equipment on their ship that they cast into the sea in hopes of collecting crab in a few days or weeks or however long they're out there.

[1 : 07] And we see that because of the temperatures and the storms, this deck is solid ice. They have to deal with this equipment as the boat is tossing to and fro.

And so while this may provide great entertainment for some of us, some of us are left asking, why in the world would these guys care to do this? Because even though there may be some money in it, if you're lucky enough to have a good season, who would want to risk life and limb just for a few dollars or a few crab?

Well, this morning we're looking at a passage where Paul may offer a similarly bleak view of Christianity. We know that he is sitting in jail. He's awaiting trial that's eventually going to lead to his own death.

We know that he's been stoned and flogged and beaten and imprisoned. He's been shipwrecked himself. And we may think, man, this seems like a really bad recruitment strategy for the New Testament church to have Paul as your leader spreading the gospel.

And yet he sits in jail. He's continually the focus of persecution from both Romans and Jews. And so we may think, man, that's a hard sell.

[2 : 21] That's a hard sell back then. That's a hard sell now to think that coming to Christ means you're going to face persecution. That coming to Christ, you should expect to die. And so we need to recognize that this calling, though this was a calling on Paul's life, this was a calling for the New Testament church, this is also the calling for our church today.

And so it's a sobering reminder, especially in the Western world where we live in relative comfort and ease, where we see the world tell us to seek your own comfort and security, to secure your own physical blessing and wealth.

And unfortunately, those feelings and those desires and that call can start to permeate the church. And so the call to suffer is something that may be unfamiliar with some of us.

It may be something that's uncomfortable for many of us. But we're going to see in our passage today, this is not how Paul responds to suffering. Rather than complain or focus on his own hardship, we see that he rejoices.

And so because of his rejoicing, through his suffering, he recognizes that God is at work. Not only in his life, but in the lives of others. Through his suffering, the gospel is being advanced.

[3 : 31] Through his suffering, God is ultimately going to receive the glory. And so let's turn to our passage then. Philippians 1, verses 12 through 18.

I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. So it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my

imprisonment is for Christ.

And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill.

The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And in that I rejoice. Pray with me again.

[4 : 30] Lord, as we turn to your word, we pray that we may receive your truth. And as we struggle with the topic of suffering and figuring out what it means for us and thinking about why we suffer and how we should suffer well, Lord, we pray that we'll be able to submit to you to recognize your goodness and your worthiness.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, if you've been with us the last few weeks, we know that we've taken three weeks just to move through the introduction that Paul gives at the beginning of the letter, where he introduces himself, he addresses in church, the encouragement that he has seen within the church at Philippi, and a prayer that he has for him, for the church.

And so now we see a natural turn where Paul is giving a personal report of sorts. This is a church that is longing to hear from Paul. They want to know what's going on in his life.

And so we see in this brief report two things that stick out. One is Paul's own persecution. And two, the gospel proclamation. And so we're going to see today how one actually leads to the other.

So I want to focus on them individually. First, Paul's persecution and then the gospel proclamation. And so let's consider this persecution. We've talked about how the church at Philippi was one of the very first churches to support Paul and his missionary journeys.

[5 : 58] They provided him with finances. They actually set Epaphroditus to be with him, to deliver this money, to care for him. And so this letter was coming back with Epaphroditus. And the church would then be excited to know, Paul, what's your condition?

What's been going on? We've heard rumors or short stories about your imprisonment and your persecution. We want to hear it from you firsthand. But if the church might have been hoping for some sort of sensational story from Paul about all that's happened to him, it would have been really disappointed because Paul really doesn't say much about his suffering at all.

He sums it up by just using the phrase, all that has happened to me. He doesn't give any more details. There's no more specifics regarding his imprisonment, regarding his flogging, regarding his shipwreck.

And so if you're not familiar with Paul, obviously this letter in Philippians says very little about Paul's effort to see the spread of the gospel. But we only have to turn back to the book of Acts a little bit earlier in the New Testament where it's documented.

Paul's missionary journeys, the sufferings that he endured. And so if we were to move back to Acts 21, we know that Paul has just returned from his third missionary journey. He's back in Jerusalem. He's worshipping at the temple.

[7 : 04] And these Jewish leaders recognize him. And they immediately grab him and throw him out of the temple and begin to beat him. It's only because the Roman guards interfere. They chain him up.

They drag him away from the crowd who most certainly wants to kill him. And as the guards are about to do a flogging of their own and interrogation as to who this person is, Paul reminds them of his own Roman citizenship, which grants him certain rights that wasn't available to others.

And so we know that then he is put in jail temporarily when there's this word about the Jews who want to ambush him and kill him. And so the Romans decide, well, we need to take him to Caesarea, to the governor, and he can consider his case.

And so that's what they do under armed guards. Paul's taken to Caesarea, goes before the governor, and we see that Governor Felix, he decides, well, I'm going to hear your case.

But actually, he never decides his case. And Paul is thrown in prison where he sits for two years, forgotten, until a new governor comes in place, Governor Festus. He says, yes, I'll consider your case as well.

[8 : 08] Let's go back to Jerusalem where we have your trial. Paul says, no, I'm appealing to Rome. And so then he gets sent on a ship to Rome with other prisoners. And on that ship across the sea, we know he hits bad weather.

He's shipwrecked on the island of Malta where he's stranded for three months, finally rescued, brought to Rome where he's put in under house arrest. And that's how the book of Acts ends. And so you may think, man, if this was a modern day missionary, had a story like this, his, I mean, would Christian publishers not be banging down his door in order for a book deal that they can share with others?

I mean, if we have a story like this of our own, some sort of harrowing experience, we want to share it with other people, right? We want people to know what experience we went through, whether to gain their sympathy or maybe to be a little prideful and say, look what I've overcome.

Paul wants none of that here. He deflects all attention away from himself. In doing so, he refuses the opportunity to receive any sort of sympathy, any sort of praise from the church.

[9 : 10] And so even though he doesn't go into details about his suffering here, we know that he has suffered. He sums it up for us. There's really two truths that I think we can take away when we consider Paul's suffering.

One is that suffering is normal for believers. There's doubtless, there were many people within the church who would have thought that Paul's imprisonment was a bad thing.

They might have wondered, is God really in control? I mean, what's going to happen if Paul is killed or if he's left in prison? Is the gospel going to continue in advance? What's going to happen to me and my family? Are we going to receive the same persecution that Paul has?

They may question God's providence and his sovereignty. But Paul in this letter consistently, both in Philippians and his other letters, he's trying to normalize suffering.

We already know when we've gone over at the beginning of this book, Paul says he refers to himself as a servant, as a slave of Christ. And later on, we're going to see in chapter 3, verse 10, he says, I want to know Christ, yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his suffering, becoming like him in death.

[10 : 21] And so Paul is willing to suffer for Christ because he knows that Christ willingly suffered for him. And he understands that his suffering for Christ is going to bring him into greater knowledge of Christ, greater appreciation for all that Christ has done for him.

And because we know that Christ comes and fulfills prophecy of what it says in the Old Testament, not to come and set up an earthly kingdom, not to come and rule and reign and subject others under him.

No, he comes as a suffering servant. As it says in Isaiah 53, he was despised and rejected by mankind. A man of suffering and familiar with pain, he was despised and we held him in low esteem.

And Isaiah goes on to say this, he says, He took our pain. He bore our suffering. He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities.

And so what a wonderful truth this is, to know that Christ has suffered for you. To know that because of Christ's suffering, we may receive his salvation.

[11 : 28] And so Paul, in wanting to participate in his suffering, isn't saying, I need to help God out here. I need to participate in such a way that I am contributing to my salvation.

No, that's not Paul's point here. He's responding out of a heart of gratitude, recognizing that the God of the universe subjected himself to the torture of man in order that we may be saved.

And so therefore, we should be willing as his followers to do likewise. And so as believers, I think oftentimes we may come to Christ and think, you know what? If I'm willing to follow Christ, then maybe my life's going to be okay.

Maybe I'll experience physical, blessing, financial comfort and success in this life. But nowhere in the Bible does God promise that to us. In fact, if we go back to the words of Jesus over and over again, he says just the exact opposite.

He tells his disciples to take up their cross and follow him. He says a servant is not above his master. So if Christ was willing to suffer and die for us, what should we expect and be willing to do also?

[12 : 39] Jesus made it very clear to his disciples when he sends them out. He says, the world is going to hate you because of me. And so if we think of Paul's own conversion, we know this dramatic conversion story of when he's going on the road to Damascus.

He himself is a Pharisee. He himself is persecuting the church. He wants to see the spread of the gospel fizzle out. But we see God confront him on the road to Damascus.

We see him turn to Christ and receive salvation. But what happens also is the direction and instruction that Jesus gives to a disciple in Damascus, a man named Ananias.

And so listen to what he tells Ananias. He says, go for he, talking about Paul, says go for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name. How is that for an introduction into the family of God? You know, there's none of this, hey, welcome into the family.

[13 : 43] Make yourself comfortable. Have a cup of tea. No, he says, praise the Lord. He has saved you. Now prepare to suffer. And so how does that strike us?

Are we willing and ready in the same way to suffer for Christ? And not that we should purposely seek out suffering or make light of suffering, but it's something that we need to expect as believers. I think unfortunately, though, this idea of suffering is something that's so foreign within the Western church. Like we were saying before, society tells us to build up your own kingdom, to seek your own comfort, to make sure that you are secure financially, that your family is well off, that troubles won't come to you.

And so when we experience suffering within the church, I think we often tend to grumble. I think we often ask, why? God, why? Have you allowed this to happen to me? We ask, when?

God, when is this going to stop? We see oftentimes that suffering, more so than many other circumstances in our life, can reveal to us where our hope and where our trust truly lies.

[14 : 58] Because suffering exposes the idols in our lives. What are we relying on more than Christ? What, when it's taken away from us, is going to be so painful? And so Paul is saying here, no.

Not to follow the things of this world, but to be willing to suffer. So what does this mean to us? Are we willing to ask difficult questions?

To ask, what's the value of the gospel in our lives? Are we willing to forsake our comfort for the sake of Christ? Are we willing to put aside possessions and security and our future for the advancement of the gospel?

While this may seem radical to some of us now, it certainly seems radical to those outside the church. But what Paul is saying here is, no, these are normal questions to ask. This is the normal life of a Christian.

This is the essence of a Christian life. And so then that second truth, if we know that suffering is normal for the believer, we can also trust that God is still in control in the midst of our suffering.

[16 : 05] We looked just a few weeks ago at chapter 1, verse 6, where Paul says, he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. And so Paul is able to say this in the midst of suffering.

He's writing this letter from prison. And so he's acknowledging that it's Christ who has saved him. And even though he is experiencing suffering, that Christ is continuing to work on him and that Christ promises to bring that work to completion.

And so Paul understands that suffering, it doesn't interfere with God's work. It's actually a part of God's work. And so he was able to have confidence in God's sovereign plan for his life, to continue trusting in the ongoing work of Christ.

And so Paul didn't need to highlight the circumstances of his suffering. He didn't need to talk about his shipwreck or talk about how many times he'd been flogged or how many days he's been in prison. He's not focusing on himself or his own welfare.

He's fixed on Christ. And so that's why he can say in Romans 8, for I consider the sufferings of this present time are of no worth compared to the glory that he is to reveal to us.

[17 : 13] And so Paul can endure temporary sufferings because he knows of the internal glory that is to come. And so what does that mean for us?

Likely none of us will experience the same physical chains that Paul does here. But certainly if we're called to suffer, if that's an expectation of believers, there's certainly going to be suffering that we endure.

And so what does that look like for each one of us? Is it an overbearing boss? Is it a marriage that's on the rocks? Is it a rebellious child?

Is it that diagnosis of cancer? Is it an ongoing struggle with anxiety and depression and loneliness? Whatever it may be, are we going to be willing to respond to the Lord with confidence, to know that God is still in control, to recognize the purpose of our suffering?

Because that really brings us to our next point. We don't suffer just for the sake of suffering. God's not the kind of God who just wants to see us in pain. There is reason for our suffering. And that's why Paul refers to his suffering here.

[18 : 28] But when we talk, thinking back about that TV show, The Deadly Catch Again, there's lots of interviews after seasons or after certain episodes where some of the captains either come together or are interviewed individually about their experience.

And one of the common questions that's always asked is, why do you do this? And the answer that is always repeated among all the captains is usually one, for the money, if you get lucky enough to have a good catch, and two, for the high that it gives you, for the excitement that you receive that you can't get doing other regular work.

And so their goal in doing something that seems outlandish to us is their own personal profit, is their own personal experience. It's all about self.

But we see Paul give a very different answer here. Why does he suffer? It's for gospel proclamation. It's for the advancement of the gospel.

And so it's probably safe to assume that the church in Philippi had heard reports that Paul was maybe not doing well, that he'd be in prison, that he may have been shipwrecked. They might have not had all the details, and that's what they were expecting they might receive through this letter.

[19 : 47] They might have expected that, you know what, we may get a bad report here. We may hear that Paul's in prison, and his gospel work is hindered, and the advancement of the gospel is not going like we hoped. But that's not the message that Paul gives.

He gives the exact opposite message, that even though I am suffering, the gospel is advancing. Verse 12, Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced, has actually served to advance the gospel.

And so I think there's something very important to notice here, how Paul talks about suffering. He doesn't say the gospel is advanced in spite of my suffering. He said the gospel has advanced as a result of his suffering.

And so he recognizes that it's his suffering, that it's his adversity, that's actually aided the advancement of the gospel. One of the things that my family loves to do around Edinburgh that we've enjoyed doing that's really close to our house is just being able to hike up Blackford Hill. And while there's some certain ways that kind of most people go up the steps on one side or drive up to the observatory on the other, what my kids like doing is kind of blazing their own trail. And the problem is when you do this, you're going a very narrow path that a lot of people don't go on that are just overrun with gorse.

[20 : 57] If you know what gorse is, it's that beautiful, has that beautiful blossom, yellow blossom in the spring. But if you're up close to these bushes, they are awful, just filled with thorns. It's not something that you want to brush up into or kind of have to navigate through.

But inevitably, this is what the kids want to do and they're a little smaller than me, can make it a little easier than I can. But every time we go up these trails, I think, man, I just need to bring some shears or clippers with me to kind of clear out these trails and make it a lot easier to go up.

Well, Paul here in verse 12, when he uses this word advanced, the gospel, it really gives a military connotation of soldiers that are blazing a trail for an army to follow behind. Like they're clearing a path for easy advancement.

And so if we think about climbing a hill with all this gorse, we may think, if we try to analogize it to our lives, we may think, well, the gorse is the suffering that we have to endure that we need to push away in order to advance. But Paul's saying, no, it's the shears, it's the clippers that we have that are actually the suffering.

That's what pushes away the things so the gospel can advance. And so that's what Paul wants to show us here is how the gospel advances. It really advances in two forms, through the suffering.

[22 : 07] At first, he says that the gospel has spread throughout the whole imperial guard and beyond. And so the imperial guard would have been 10,000 or so imperial soldiers that worked in Rome, that would have been under the rule of the emperor, would have served as some form of police force in Rome.

And so these would have been the ones that were responsible for guarding Paul while he was under house arrest. 24-7, Paul would have been chained up to a Roman guard. And these guards would have shifted with time, whether a three-hour shift or a six-hour shift, they would have

changed up.

So certainly, Paul would have had a lot of face time with a lot of different soldiers. And so if you ever want a captive audience with anyone, Paul certainly had it here. There's nothing else for these soldiers to do but to spend time listening to Paul, talk to his visitors, listen to Paul write letters, and certainly have personal conversations with Paul.

And so we know that these soldiers interacting with Paul, he certainly would have been any different than any other person they would have guarded before. You wonder what kind of conversations they had.

You wonder what kind of conversations those guards then had with other guards about their time with Paul. And we know through that that everyone knew who Paul was. But not only the guards, it says that the governors knew of him.

[23 : 26] He testified before Governor Felix, Governor Festus, before King Agrippa. How in the world would Paul have had such an audience if he wasn't in chains? And so there's great blessing that we see through Paul's persecution.

The Jews were hoping to silence Paul. The Jews wanted to kill Paul to hope that the spread of the gospel would fizzle out. But we see the exact opposite happen here. Because of Paul's imprisonment, people know him from Rome to Jerusalem.

They know what he's preaching and that gospel is spreading. And so it's really interesting language at the end of verse 13. It says that in most versions it's talking about everyone knew Paul's imprisonment was for Christ.

But actually in the Greek it's not for Christ it's in Christ. That Paul's imprisonment was in Christ. And so it's really one of Paul's favorite phrases.

To be in Christ. We see it repeated throughout his letters. What does it mean to be in imprisonment in Christ? Well Paul's making clear here that he's not doing something for God by suffering for him.

[24 : 29] As if he's receiving credit or as if this is of his own doing. Paul is linking himself not only to Christ but to Christ's plan. So he's standing in solidarity with Christ.

He is empowered by Christ in order to suffer. He's making clear that the only reason that he sits in prison is because of his union with Christ. And so we see then that his testimony not only affects Roman soldiers and leaders in Rome but it also affects the believers as well.

In verse 14. It says this and most of the brothers having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment are much more bold to speak the word without fear. And so we might have expected that the opposite would have happened.

Those Christians in Rome when they see Paul begin to brought in and imprisoned persecution beginning to happen you may think God these guys are going to just go into hiding.

They're going to scatter just like Jesus' disciples did when he was arrested. But we see the opposite have an opposite effect happen here. I mentioned a few weeks ago how my wife and I lived in China over a decade ago.

[25 : 38] And when we lived there we worked in close connection with a local house church. There were several points of the house church in our city. There was one very close to where we lived because there was a lot of university students there.

And it was one Sunday that that house church was meeting to worship and it was raided by the police. And the pastor was arrested and the elder was arrested. They spent several days in jail. All the students that were there were taken into interrogated and they were threatened that you ever come back here. Whoever hear of you doing this again you're never going to graduate from university. And it was amazing to see the effect that that had on the church.

Because you may think these students are going to be scared out of their mind. they're never going to meet together again in public or in private. But you know what happened?

Those same students were the ones who were doing ministry that very next week. Those were the same students who were back at church the next week. They were the ones who encouraged others in their faith. And so to see the solidarity of the church in that city.

[26 : 44] To see their boldness grow because they had heard the stories of persecution of their fellow brothers and sisters. believers. And so that's what's happening here. Believers in Rome see Paul imprisoned and rather than cower in fear they grow in confidence.

And not of their own strength not of their own resolve it says they grow in confidence in the Lord. It's the Lord that they're trusting that Christ is working through Paul and in Paul it is Christ who is

responsible for the fruit that is coming through his suffering.

And the church in Rome says I want that too. And so it's really good that we familiarize ourselves with suffering. So often we're so opposed to suffering it's something that we want to avoid we even want to avoid hearing about it.

But we see here the benefit of familiarizing ourselves with suffering not just so that we can know about others who are suffering we know how to pray for them and encourage them but that we too can be encouraged through the suffering of others.

And so this is why it's good to read biographies of the saints of missionaries of those who have struggled for the gospel. This is why it's good to keep up with current events to know how the church is being affected globally in political situations and social situations.

[28 : 04] This is why it's good for us to know of our brothers and sisters in this church who are suffering and so that we can care for them yes but that we can also grow in confidence as we see God work in them and through them.

Because we see the result of this confidence it says at the end of verse 14 they were much more bold to speak the word without fear. And so this isn't talking just about elders it's not talking about deacons or other leaders or disciples it's talking about the whole church that's how the verse starts by saying most of the brothers so this is really a church-wide effort to proclaim the gospel.

And so if we look back in Acts 14 the disciples have received the Holy Spirit we know that Peter and John have been sent out they've been preaching the gospel boldly and as a result they've been arrested they're released a couple days later and they come to the church and the church surrounds them and this is what the church prays they say Lord grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness and when they prayed that the place in which they were gathered together was shaken and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Now notice what it doesn't say here it doesn't say they continued to perform miracles boldly it doesn't say they boldly cared for the physical needs of their community it says they boldly spoke the word of God maybe you're familiar with the phrase that gets thrown around a lot in the church sometimes to preach the gospel at all times and when necessary use words right it's a cute little phrase but it's not in the Bible and it's not biblical we are commanded to speak the word of God our good works yes they must correspond with our words but our good works are not a substitute for our words and so I think this can be really the scariest part when we think about suffering for our faith in our context is the fact that God calls us to share our faith using words to speak the gospel we're so concerned by avoiding awkwardness we're so concerned by offending other people we're so concerned about not having the right answers or wondering how people will respond to us that we just clam up yeah we'll we'll do something to meet someone's physical needs we'll join a program or a ministry but speak the gospel to somebody how do we do that well think about your own conversion story who are the people in your life that ministered to you how was your heart softened for the Lord did people pray with you or for you did people point out verses in the scripture as encouragement to you did they actually walk through the Bible with you what are the things that we need to do in order to speak the truth of the gospel to those around us and be able to do that in the midst of our suffering that's what this is what Paul is pointing to here to use our suffering for the proclamation of the gospel and so what does that mean for us when we have an overbearing boss how we may share the love of Christ with him how do we use that that cancer diagnosis when we know we're going to be in the midst of doctors and nurses and other patients who don't know the Lord what does it mean for that student who's been ridiculed at school over and over again to be able to shower grace on their classmates what about the person who's struggled with depression and anxiety for years how in the world can they speak confidence of the gospel to friends and family who don't know them what about those who've lost a loved one to be able to have confidence in the hope of eternity and be able to speak that truth to family who don't know the Lord there's opportunity all around us to speak the truth of the gospel because this is the ultimate desire that Paul has here that the gospel may be proclaimed that Christ is proclaimed and so that needs to be our desire too and so he goes on to say in verses 15 through 18 we get this picture of the gospel being preached and it's not being done perfectly some are motivated by authentic love for God for a desire to see the gospel spread and Paul also identifies those who do it out of envy and rivalry and selfish ambition and so we don't really get a clear picture of why these people are doing this we don't know how why they're so offended by Paul and his ministry but we know it's happening here

but what's surprising perhaps is how Paul responds to these individuals who are preaching the gospel out of envy and rivalry he doesn't specifically identify them he doesn't even condemn them he's excited that the gospel is still being proclaimed and so we know that Paul doesn't pull any punches when there's those who are delivering a false gospel we see that in his other letters so we know that's not happening here we are confident that the gospel is being preached and so that's why Paul rejoices that doesn't mean we can push aside all the motives why someone preached those are still important but that's not Paul's main focus here doesn't care whether he is the one who is mistreated from people outside the church or whether he's mistreated by people that are inside the church what he cares about is the proclamation of the gospel because he recognizes that [33 : 39] God in the same way that God can advance the gospel through his chains God can advance the gospel through the bad motives of others in his church and so that's good news for us that's good news for me that's good news for each one of us who proclaim the gospel to recognize God can use broken sinful people who often preach out of selfish ambition and know that he can still accomplish his purposes that God's will and God's work cannot be thwarted by bad intentions of man and so we see in this in these few verses that Paul's joy is not rooted in his circumstances it's not rooted in his reputation it's solely seeing the gospel advance and so is this our desire is the gospel so beautiful in our lives that we desire to share it with others is the gospel so valuable in our lives that we will abandon all else to see that it's advanced is the gospel so trustworthy that we can recognize that even though suffering and sorrow comes we can rely on Christ and his work in our lives is our gaze so fixed on the future of glory of Christ that the sufferings on this world pale in comparison there's nowhere in these verses that

Paul says suffering is easy but we can be confident that God does not abandon us in his suffering we can be confident that our suffering doesn't interfere with God's plan it is a part of God's plan and so we can have joy just with the same way that Paul does in knowing that it's God who is ultimately working in us and through us for our good for the spread of the gospel and ultimately for his glory let's pray God it's difficult to pray but we thank you for suffering because we know that it doesn't come apart from your perfect sovereign will and so Lord we pray for those who are suffering in our midst physically spiritually emotionally that you may meet them may we not pray why oh Lord or how long oh Lord but may we pray Lord use us may that be our desire God that you receive the glory that your gospel be advanced give us great boldness and being able to work through our own suffering that you give us and being confident in the suffering we see in others that you love us and that you care for us God may we rely on our suffering servant Jesus who paid the penalty for our sins that we may have life eternal we thank you for your love we pray this in Jesus name amen now we're going to sing our final hymn of the morning facing a task unfinished will you stand with me to sing about a a a