

# Joy in Suffering

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 February 2023

Preacher: Brady Owens

[ 0 : 00 ] Alright, so let me start us with a question. And actually, let me start with the passage today. This is Paul the Apostle to the church at Philippi, chapter 1, verse 12.

Here's what Paul says. Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and to everyone else.

That most of the brethren trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from goodwill.

The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel, and the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than pure motive, seeking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. And in this, I rejoice.

[ 1 : 18 ] Yes, and I will rejoice. Now, the NASB puts a comma there. I think there should be a period. I think that the very next verse starts in a sentence.

So I'm stopping there. And that's just my take on it. So this is Paul. And if you haven't, you know, we started into this just looking, you know, without a lot of background to the book of Philippians, you can tell that Paul is in prison.

Your translation may use the word bonds. If it uses the word bonds, it means the same thing as imprisonment. And so this is where he is. And so this brings up the big topic of suffering.

That's what this brings up. And I just want to ask for a second. There are all kinds of things out there that bring suffering to us. What are some of those things that come at us that bring suffering?

Loss of a member of family. Yes, loss of a loved one. Illness. Illness. Job difficulties. Job difficulties.

[ 2 : 28 ] Financial difficulties. Financial difficulties. There's so many. There are. I mean, you can just begin to just line out your relationships and say, you know, marriage, children, and grandchildren.

You can talk about neighbors. You can talk about work. You can talk about cousins and aunts and uncles and grandparents. Politics. Government. That's right. I mean, you can go all the way from state to local.

Now, so we all have an idea that there's lots of different kinds of suffering in the world. Here's my second question. As you look out upon the world and you watch the way lost people, lost people deal with suffering, what are some of the ways that they deal with their suffering?

Drinking. Okay. Drinking. Drugs. Withdrawal. Ignoring it. Wait, what? Withdrawal. Withdrawal.

Ignoring it. Ignoring it. Anger. Anger.

Shopping. Shopping. Yes. Shopping. I guess so. That's true. Shopping. All right. You said that and I immediately thought to myself, ice cream.

[ 3 : 41 ] I'm not exactly sure why. I think you have enough wine. Yeah. Eating more than you should. Yeah. Yeah. Eating more than you should. Here is, here's what I want you to understand.

I am convinced that what we think affects our behavior. Theology matters.

In other words, what you think about suffering, what you think about where suffering comes from, what you think about suffering is supposed to do, what you think about whether or not you should be in suffering, suffering, all the theology related to suffering will then affect your behavior.

And you can take this and apply this to any subject. We could even then be talking about what you think about marriage and what you think about parenting, what you think about work, what you think.

So we have what I would call the theology of the mind, what we say we believe, but then we have the theology of the heart, what we truly believe.

[ 4 : 46 ] I had a friend of mine. He was an elder in a church. His name was Bill. Bill actually was the owner, founder and owner of Piggly Wiggly's. And Bill was a very godly man.

Got saved later in life. And he went on a Thanksgiving trip with his family. Everything was fine and dandy. And he was at the gas pump and he tripped over the hose and fell up against the gas thing and broke his arm right here.

And he was like, that's so weird. I just fell up for it. So he goes to the doctor and finds out he's got bone cancer. And the bones had become brittle. And it was very interesting because I got to sit down with Bill for a very lengthy time because he was leading a small group and they asked me to take his place and kind of be his substitute.

And he started talking about it. He says, you know, I know all this stuff. I know all these things. He says, but there's nothing like suffering that helps to reveal. You say you believe this, but your heart is doing this.

And so what we want to do as we learn things with our minds, we want to pray and ask the Lord to take these things and put them towards our heart because it's then that we will start acting in ways that are appropriate to what the scriptures say.

[ 6 : 01 ] And Paul here gives us this great illustration of his own suffering and shows us how we ought to think about it. And so I want us to look then, we're breaking it basically in two parts.

Verses 12 through 14. We have suffering from outsiders progresses the gospel. And then we have 15 through 17, suffering from insiders progresses the gospel.

And then we have verse 18, which is a summary statement of what Paul is trying to say in these few verses. So let's take a look then. Verses 12 through 14.

He says, now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and to everyone else.

And that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. So let me just ask a few questions then.

[ 7 : 02 ] And you look at the text and see if you can answer to me. Some of this we already know. We've already sort of said it. So what is the condition that Paul is in while he's writing this letter? He's in prison.

He's in prison. As a matter of fact, if you can look at Acts chapter 28, it shows his imprisonment in Rome. This was probably about 63 A.D. This started way back in chapter 21 for him.

Why does Paul say he's in prison? For the cause of Christ. Exactly. So this happened back around the church of Philippi a little bit afterwards.

As he's there, he's gone back to Jerusalem. They think that he's trying to reject the law. And there's a whole argument there. We just won't get into that.

So they arrest him. He begins to speak. He ends up telling them that he's a Roman citizen. And they start to flog him. And he ends up being in prison for a long time. He gets forgotten in the change of leaders.

[ 8 : 05 ] And then finally, because he appealed to Caesar, he's on the ship and heads to Rome. That's where you read chapter 27, 28, the whole shipwreck and all this kind of a thing.

So his whole reason that he was put into prison was because he had been preaching Christ. And it seemed as though that he was rejecting the law of Moses to the Jews. That's where it started.

So he discusses the progress of the gospel due to his imprisonment. So he's saying, my imprisonment has made the gospel progress.

So here's my question. In these verses, which phrases prove that point? The whole palace guard. You're chained to Paul.

You're chained to him for four hours and he's going to be preaching. So you've got to listen. Right. Yep. You have it being well known by the guard and everyone else.

[ 9 : 03 ] That's one. There's two more. There's two more. Mine says, so it has become evident to the whole palace guard and to all the rest that my chains are in Christ.

So who's all the rest? Yeah, I'm not exactly sure who all the rest are except wherever Paul is currently. And those who are outside the palace guard, it's probably going to be other people there in Rome.

That's just the conclusion I'm drawing from that. And most of the brethren in the Lord. Yeah. Yeah. Mine says, everyone else. Right. So what you have then is you have this first layer here of that it's well known.

Here we go. Well known throughout the whole Praetorian Garden to everyone else. That's the first thing. Then the next statement, he says, and that most of the brethren trusting the Lord because of my imprisonment have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

So the brethren, what's happening there is everybody's hearing about it and the brethren are becoming emboldened to go preach the gospel. So both of those help us see the progress of the gospel.

[10:20] But the other evidence we have is his direct statement. Right? It's turned out for the greater progress of the gospel. Paul is saying, my suffering in prison is, wow, that is really loud.

My suffering in prison is a good thing. I get to speak to a lot of people and go back to Acts chapter 21 through 28 and get the sense of that. Everyone knows why I'm in prison.

And the brothers are fearless. They're fearless. They're fearless. They're trusting. Right? He says, trusting in the Lord. Here's what's interesting about this word trusting.

We normally think of the word trusting and the way we normally use it. It's a particular Greek word. This is a completely different Greek word. What this word means, imagine that you're afraid of flying.

Okay? Some of you love to fly. Some of you hate to fly. But just imagine you're afraid of flying. And then someone comes up to you with stats and figures and they convince you that flying is safe.

[11:28] And then you, being convinced that flying is safe, go on a crusade and say, flying is safe. You become persuaded and an advocate. That's what this word trusting here means.

They trust the Lord. They are persuaded of the Lord and then become someone who then is an advocate for the Lord and for his gospel and preaching the gospel.

So what we get then is all this pressure from the outside. It's making the gospel progress. And what Paul would have us to understand is that suffering is a good thing because it helps us to see the gospel progress.

Now, it can't be that way if we don't think of it that way. We have to understand suffering rightly. And there's just a brief sort of thought that I wanted to share with you concerning suffering and where it comes from.

Suffering and why it's here. Because I think there's so much to this, but I just want to give you a sampling of a couple of things. In Philippians chapter 1, verse 27, Paul says, It has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.

[12:46] It is a gift from God. That's what that word granted means. That granted means a gift. It is a gift from God to suffer for his sake.

Here's another verse. 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 21. For you have been called for this purpose since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in his steps.

The Christian life is a life of suffering. Now, everyone suffers because we live in this world. And we can get into the book of Ecclesiastes and see how this world is subjected to futility.

It's what the Hebrews called the habel. The habel, habel, everything is habel. And because of that, we have the suffering that everyone enters into. But as Christians, whatever our suffering is, whatever comes to us, is to be thought of us, thought by us, as from the hand of the Lord, for our good, and for the expansion of the gospel.

Now, that's a very hard thought. That's a very hard thought. If you're in the middle of suffering, it's the last thing you ever want to hear. If you're in the middle of suffering, it's not something that sometimes you can even grasp with.

[14:02] That's why when you're not in the middle of suffering, you've got to learn the truth. You've got to understand and get your mind put to right so that your heart can be put to right so that when that day of testing comes, you can live it out.

Now, there's another verse that shows us the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. In Acts chapter 2, in the sermon that Peter preached, he says, Men of Israel, listen to these words. Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through him in your midst, just as you yourselves know, this man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put him to death.

The example of the Lord Jesus Christ is that him having to take on flesh, which was a condescension of his own person, his living among sinful people who would question his motives, his being denied, betrayed, rejected, and abandoned, his being beaten with a cat of nine tails, his crucifixion upon the cross, was the predetermined foreknowledge plan of God.

God brought the suffering to his own son. And if we think to ourselves that God doesn't allow suffering in our lives, then we don't understand really who God is.

He's a sovereign king of all things. And there's nothing that comes into our lives but that comes from his hand. And it is, and you have to believe this, even though it doesn't feel this way, it is for our good.

[15:52] What does Romans chapter 8, 28 say? God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him and are called according to his purpose. That does not mean that God causes all things and it's really easy for us to walk through it.

That verse doesn't say that. But suffering is good because it helps to progress the gospel. Look at his suffering further from insiders, people that he should be able to get along with, people that should be on his side.

He says here in verse 15, Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy, strife, but also from goodwill. Or some also from goodwill.

And the latter do it out of love, knowing that I'm appointed for the defense of the gospel, and the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

So, there's two groups, right? Paul's basically talking about two groups. What's one thing that the two groups have in common? Suffering. Do what?

[17:02] Suffering. Suffering? Okay. They both are looking at Paul's suffering. That's right, they have Paul's suffering. What's another thing they have in common? That he's appointed to defend.

So, Paul's appointed to the fence, and that's about him. But one group is preaching the gospel this way, one group is preaching this way. What's their similarity?

I just said it while I was describing it. They're preaching. They're preaching. I don't know how to hide the answer sometimes. They're both preaching the gospel. That's right. They're both preaching the gospel. Okay?

So, think about the bad group. Okay? Look in the text and tell me, what are some descriptions about the bad group? What are some things about them? Selfish ambition. Okay, we've got...

Where's that at? Selfish ambition. What else? Envy and strife. Envy and strife. Anything else? Adding affliction.

[17:58] Right. Distress in my imprisonment. So, there we go. We've got that they're envious. This word, envy, sounds like our word, like ophthalmologist.

It's a Greek word that's got that ophthalmologist. Sort of sound to it. So, it's... They see with their eyes. It's an envy. It's having an evil eye. You know, like I...

That's what I want. You know? So, they're envious of Paul. The word strife here. This is pretty interesting. It's rivalry and discord. The word selfish ambition.

Self-promotion is the idea. It's similar to the word for strife, but they are two different things. And here's the thing. This is...

This envy and strife. These are... Envy, strife, and selfish ambition are all a part of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5, 20-21. Envy, strife, and self-ambition are the same exact Greek words as in the works of the flesh.

[18:58] So, you've got a group of gospel preachers who are living out works of the flesh. That's the thing. Promoting themselves. Do what? Promoting themselves.

Promoting themselves. That's exactly right. Okay. So, what about the... I want you to notice, too, that Paul does not call out their sin.

They're living works of the flesh, but that... He doesn't say, go to them and rebuke them. He doesn't say that the gospel that they're preaching is false.

As a matter of fact, he's glad they're preaching. Now, does it mean that they shouldn't be called out? No, they should be called out. That's just not Paul's point here. Paul is glad the gospel is progressing no matter what's happening to him.

Even these people who want to throw him down, hide him away, promote themselves, they want to see him have distress and affliction. Can you imagine?

[ 20 : 06 ] Can you imagine as a believer, here's another believer, and I want to act in such a godly way as I can to cause them harm. Like, I don't go out and preach the gospel just so that, you know, he gets another beating in prison.

I just... That is so strange. Yeah? A few weeks ago, in one of your sermons, you were talking about people preaching, and I'm thinking of Bill Osteen and Myers.

Right. How is that different than this? Right. So the difference is going to be the content of what they're preaching. Right?

So you can preach correct content and still have sinful behavior. You can have good behavior and preach false content.

Yeah. What we want to do is we want to get both of them lined up together. Yes, ma'am? Oh, I thought you were about to give me a correction there. Okay, great. Woo! Saved.

[ 21 : 13 ] Just kidding. I mean, what these guys are after is they're after notoriety, they're after fame, they're after a platform.

And the number of pastors, and this is something that's been very prevalent, you may not recognize this or know this, but being a pastor and seeing other pastors, you see it. There's been a lot of pastors over the last 15, 20 years that have done nothing but build a platform for their voice.

And most of them, you know, not all of them, and most of them are on TV or some sort of thing. Not everybody on TV is this way.

And not everybody who's building a platform for their name is on TV. But if you could just about guess who they are. TV is not a bad thing.

That's what the point. The point is, is that as a preacher of the gospel, I need to be like John the Baptist, who says, he must increase and I must decrease.

[ 22 : 19 ] I don't want a reputation. I don't want anybody to know me. I don't want my name in lights. And we, as we move forward, that's the way we should be.

The other group, tell me a couple of things about them. What do you see about them? This is the good group. Good qualities.

What do we got? Some do it from goodwill. Goodwill. Out of love. Goodwill.

Out of love. Anything else? I kind of see them as, whenever Peter became a martyr, and his, Paul became a martyr, and his notoriety expanded, and more people started believing, and preaching, and that type of thing.

I see these people doing this out of truth, honesty, the example of Paul, versus, what's in it for me type thing. Right.

[ 23 : 30 ] Right. They have, they have pure motives. Yeah. They know that Paul is appointed, by God, for the defense of the gospel. And, if you follow the thought, verse 12, his imprisonment has advanced the gospel.

Verse 14, his imprisonment has emboldened brothers, to preach the gospel. Verse 16, the emboldened attitude of those who love Paul, is built on knowing, he's here for the defense of the gospel. So, his imprisonment was ordained by God, his suffering was ordained by God, so that Paul could help advance the gospel, not just defend it himself.

In other words, what's happened to him, has inspired other people, to preach the gospel. And, this is a good check for us. Is my, facing my suffering, and the way that I'm doing that, inspiring others, to go after God, to preach the gospel?

That kind of a thing. It's, it's, it's one of those things where, I think maybe the best illustration, would be, you know, we're right here next to, Medina Community Church, and Brother Bill and I have a good relationship, and, we, we probably visit once a week, at least, for about an hour or so, we talk, we pray together, and, this is a good example, because, I don't, I don't know of another community, where the churches are so close, physically, and then so intertwined, with so much that we do in the community together, but, if, it would be easy for one or the other, to begin to want to preach, in such a way, out of, selfish ambition, like, well, they have more people than us, you know, well, we're going to do something to, you know, get more people, and so, you can begin to get a jealousy, and an envy, and a strife, because it's like, well, we don't have that, we want that, or, it could go the other direction, but what we're called to do, is like, are they preaching the gospel?

is it the gospel, and clear? Then, we should rejoice, we should rejoice, and so, just practically speaking, that's just a, an illustration, of how we ought to, face our suffering, Paul, summarizes, his thoughts, here, in verse 18, he says, what then, only that in every way, whether in pretense, or in

truth, Christ is proclaimed, in this I rejoice, yes, I will still rejoice, obviously, Paul's attitude, to both of these groups, is joy, why do you think, that he says, and repeats himself, in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice, why do you think that is?

[ 26 : 08 ] maybe he's emphasizing, that he does have, that much joy, that he's, just, wanting to make sure, that's, like, if I was to do it, I'd probably write, like two exclamation marks, okay, yeah, yeah, X's and O's, all around it, that's something, the heart, okay, well, and it's like, continuing to rejoice, even though, no matter what his situation, okay, Jack, it'd be awful this, but, it seems like, a lot of times, when I've seen things, repeated, repeated, they sometimes, are the same verse, it actually means more to me, okay, you know, he even said like, he said this two times, you know, here, you know, those words, right, I don't know if that's a pattern, or not, but, there's definitely purpose, behind the repetition, of things, you know, and some of them, have different, different kinds of meanings, in this case, it's interesting, because, in Greek, you can have a contrast, in a couple of different ways, you know, in English, it's like, you know,

I love you, but, right, and so, depending upon what we say next, shows how strong that contrast is, right, well, in Greek, you can show that contrast, by picking different words, and in this case, this is the strongest contrast, so it would sound something like, and this, I rejoice, but, strong contrast, I will rejoice, so that just doesn't even make any sense, right, but, there's a rule, with that word, Greek construction, and what these, what he's doing, is he's basically saying, and I will rejoice, and don't you ever, talk about this again, don't you even try to make me down, don't you even question me about this, I don't want to hear another question about, well, you shouldn't really rejoice about this, Paul, no, that's it, final, I will rejoice, he is, he's putting the nail, the final nail in the project, and saying, it's done, I'm rejoicing, man, I just thought, wow, that is really powerful, because, because, you know, when we go through suffering, there's sometimes, that as we try to walk through it the right way, there's well-meaning people, who will say, well,

I mean, you, come on, I mean, this is bad for you, right, and it's like, listen, why are you causing me to doubt, you know, it needs to be, rock solid, we need to, rejoice, in the Lord, the gospel being spread, and preached, ought to be, our number one, highest joy, including when, we suffer, it needs to be our highest joy, over growth, in numbers, it needs to be our highest joy, in influence, over our community, it needs to be our highest joy, over everything, that the gospel, is preached, so, pause there, and, I have discussion questions, for you, on the handout, they're on the back side, in case you, can't find them, and, I'm going to have you, I'm going to have you, turn around, you know, right here, well, if, if the two of you,

Joe and, and Shirley, y'all can come up here, and, to the front side, for Lois and, John, and then y'all can turn around here, and y'all can turn around here, y'all can turn around, but listen, as you, as you look at these questions, and answers, one of the things, that's, that's tempting to do, is to, what I would call, commandeer the floor, okay, you, you have a question, you know an answer, you want to say, and it's easy, to kind of just say, your answer, and just keep going, just recognize, everybody needs an opportunity, to share, so, share what you need to share, and then let somebody else share, okay, that way everybody has the opportunity, to, to, to express, express themselves, so, anyway, I'll let you do that then, and then we'll come back, together in just a few moments, .