

WEEK 02 · PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26

God can use our suffering and our attitude towards it to advance the gospel and embolden others to suffer alongside Christ.

Preface

Last week, we learned from Paul's prayer that all believers ought to grow in love that continually increases in knowledge and depth of insight so they can live pure and blameless lives that glorify God.

This week, we will read about Paul's confidence in the gospel, how much he treasures it, and his deep commitment to advancing it, even if that means enduring suffering or imprisonment.

Background: It is largely believed that Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians when he was under house arrest in Rome. In this letter, Paul is trying to encourage the church that the gospel is spreading, not despite his imprisonment, but through it.

Warm-up question: What is one topic that you are very passionate about that you would defend no matter what?

Study

Read Philippians 1:12-14 to answer the following questions.

1. How did Paul view what had happened to him? What happened as a result of Paul's imprisonment? (1:13-14)

Notes:

- The palace (praetorian) guard and everyone else knew he was in chain for Christ.
- Most of the brothers and sisters have (1) become confident in the Lord, and (2) dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

2. What is the gospel as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8? What are the four verbs that Paul used to explain what the gospel is, concerning what Christ has done or overcome?

Notes:

1. Christ **died** for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:3)
2. Christ **was buried** (1 Cor 15:4a)
3. Christ **was raised** on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:4b)
4. Christ **appeared** to Cephas, then to the twelve, then to many, then to James and other apostles, and finally to Paul (1 Cor 15:5-8)

Read Philippians 1:15-18 to answer the following questions.

3. Compare and contrast the two inner motivations from which some preach Christ. How does Paul view those who preach Christ out of selfish ambition? (1:15-18)

4. What is one thing that Paul was concerned about that made him rejoice? (1:18)

Read Philippians 1:19-26 to answer the following questions.

5. What were the two things that Paul relied on during his imprisonment? What outcomes was Paul anticipating? (1:19-20)

Notes:

- Key ideas: **the church's prayers** and **God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**
- Paul was anticipating his deliverance and that he would not be ashamed but would have the courage to exalt Christ in his body, whether through life or death.
- Side note: The word **deliverance** can also be translated as **salvation**. This word can mean Paul's release from prison, his deliverance from affliction by death, or his spiritual salvation.

6. What dilemma was Paul facing during his imprisonment? (1:21-24)

7. What was Paul's conclusion? How will Christ be exalted whether he lives or dies? (1:21-26)

Application

1. How does Paul's attitude towards his suffering encourage us? How can we follow Paul's example?

2. How have you encountered God's presence and guidance during difficult circumstances? How might you advance the gospel as a result of that experience?

3. It is easy for us to think of salvation as a gift, but do we think of suffering for Christ as a gift?

Optional Follow-up Exercise: Testimony Sharing and Evangelism

This week's study shows how Paul was unashamed of the gospel and encourages us to adopt the same mindset, so more people may come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. As believers, we are called to share the gospel and make disciples of all ethnic groups (The Great Commission). Sharing the gospel with strangers or friends can be daunting, but we can start small by initiating spiritual conversations that may lead to sharing the good news.

A key part of sharing the gospel is being able to share the testimony of God's active and transforming grace in our lives. We are called to be God's witnesses and we must be equipped to share the gospel in a way that is understandable to those who have never heard it before.

Instructions:

- Think of one person to have a spiritual conversation with, or choose a specific time and location with your group to do evangelism.
- **Practice sharing your testimony in your small group.** Reflect and share about: "What was your life like before you met Jesus?" "How did you commit your life to Jesus?" "What difference has Jesus made in your life?"
- Familiarize yourselves with the gospel message. Several useful tools are the resources from **Cru**, called "**Knowing God Personally**" or "**Four Spiritual Laws**".
- Pray earnestly for God to soften the hearts of those you will talk to.
- When you have your spiritual conversation, ask deeper questions, such as, "What is the nature of God?" "What is the meaning and purpose of life?" "How would you describe human nature?" "Who do you think Jesus is?" "Where is your source of spiritual truth?" (Adapted from **Cru's Perspective Cards**)
- In your small group, share what the experience was like and pray that God will continue to grow the seed of the gospel in the hearts of the people you talked to.