

## Session 4: Philippians: Paul's Letter to the Church

### Introduction:

Last week we talked about Paul's perspective as someone who was suffering for the cause of Christ. We discussed Paul's determination to view and use every difficult circumstance that he encountered, as an opportunity to share the gospel and expand the kingdom of God. Using our own practical examples, we talked at length about the difference between suffering that we create, and suffering that we endure for the cause of Christ. The suffering that we bring on ourselves due to bad choices, sin, disobedience or error must be identified, confronted and dealt with before we can effectively mature and grow as His disciples. It's important to identify which one of these apply to you, so you can approach it the right way. Suffering for the cause of Christ will produce maturity in us, and work Christ-likeness in us - the result will be that Christ is glorified, the gospel is expanded, and the kingdom of God grows. Suffering because of our own choices needs to be confronted.

**Student Assignment:** (Be prepared to take time to discuss the results of this in class. I will be asking for your feedback.)

I challenged you all to take on this assignment over the 2 weeks following our last class and prayerfully evaluate your own life by inviting the Holy Spirit to show you any area of your life where you may be creating your own suffering. Then I asked you to go through the following steps to deal with your heart and your motives, by repenting and making the necessary adjustments.

- Be honest with yourself if you have made decisions that resulted in you, your family, and/or others suffering
- Repent to God, and if necessary, to those who have been affected
- Make the necessary changes to align your life with God and submit yourself to His lead so that you can move forward

**DON'T GET STUCK! Too many people get stuck in this process. They will evaluate and see the need for change, but never take the steps to change.**

**Ask yourself:**

- ☐ Have I been stuck in life?
- ☐ What is the pattern of my behavior that keeps me from moving forward?
- ☐ How can I make a change today that becomes my first step in moving forward?

## A. Paul's Suffering Causes the Gospel to Be Shared

### Reading Assignment: Philippians 1:19-30

The obstacles in life are meant to create growth and maturity and Christ-likeness in us. ***It's often said that it's not what happens to you that matters, it's what you do with what happens to you that matters.***

Paul is living proof of this. Did Paul want to be in prison? Of course not. But Paul didn't complain and despair in the prison in Philippi (we just read about this last week in Acts 16). He's not going to start complaining and groaning to everyone around him now that he's imprisoned in Rome. Paul had a unique ability to find opportunity where others saw adversity. He turns prison into a pulpit and preaches the good news of the gospel to the soldiers and jailors who were responsible for keeping him under guard. This is exactly what Paul is doing here in the next few verses. He's exercising faith, hope and love. Paul confronts the brutal facts, with unwavering faith. He wasn't denying the reality of his circumstances, he's aware of his situation, but he doesn't lose faith in the end of the story.

**Student Assignment:** After reading the following verses (15-18), spend some time thinking about what Paul is saying here. This is a very interesting statement that Paul is making in these verses. We will have an open class discussion about vs 15-18.

<sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: <sup>16</sup> The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; <sup>17</sup> but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. *Philippians 1: 15-18 NKJV*

☐ What deeper message can we get from this statement Paul made to the church?

## B. Paul's Holy Confidence in God

Paul was probably in chains when he was writing this letter but even here we can see he has the unshakeable, unwavering confidence in God and his focus is on others. Paul had a holy confidence while writing this letter that he was going to glorify God one way or another - whether it be in life, or in death; on the good days or bad days, in the mountains or in the valley.

<sup>19</sup> For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, <sup>20</sup> according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. <sup>22</sup> But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my labor*; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. <sup>24</sup> Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. <sup>25</sup> And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue

with you all for your progress and joy of faith, <sup>26</sup> that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. <sup>27</sup> Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but [ ] to you of salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, <sup>30</sup> having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me. *Philippians 1:19 -30 Nkjv*

## REFLECTION AND APPLICATION:

Take some time to reflect and pray. Ask God to help you answer the following questions:

- What do these scriptures teach me about God?
- What do these scriptures teach me about myself?
- What do these scriptures teach me about others?
- How can I apply this to my own life?
- How can I apply this to my church/ministry/calling