

Sermon Discussion 20 September 2020

Read Philippians 1:12-18 together.

Dig Deeper

Paul proceeded from his introductory comments to explain his personal circumstances. In relating them, the apostle revealed a spiritual viewpoint that is a model for all believers for all time. This section illustrates how the principles for effective partnership in the gospel that Paul introduced in verses 3-11 were working out for the furtherance of the gospel in his own circumstances.

Paul is able to embrace the reality of both the physical world he is suffering in and the spiritual world that is moving forward as the gospel is advanced. Instead of discounting or despising his suffering, he recognizes it all as God's purposes for spreading the good news of the gospel.

Many commentators call this letter the "Epistle of Joy." Since we know that Paul was locked in a prison cell when he wrote this letter, it is safe to say that joy is NOT related to circumstances. Joy is a gift from God to those who believe in Jesus. Joy is produced by the Spirit in people who, focused on eternal purposes, obey the word of God in the midst of trials. (See Galatians 5:22 for more on the "fruit of the spirit.")

1. Have you ever witnessed God turn a bad situation into something good? Do you think difficulties in life have actually helped "save" you? Explain.
2. Although Paul is plagued with physical suffering on earth, he is able to distinguish his own physical comfort from his one mission: the advancement of the gospel. He chooses to rejoice in his suffering because the gospel is spreading. What does your life say about your mission? Are you clear on what God has called you to do and what your mission is? In what way have you ever suffered for the mission of advancing the gospel?
3. What difficulties are you facing right now in life? How might they be used by Jesus to further his kingdom work?
4. How could Paul "rejoice" and tell other to rejoice even though he was in prison? How should his example impact us today?

Application & Prayer

- Paul makes an intentional choice to rejoice over what God is doing even though it means personal sacrifice. What is one area in your life where you need to choose joy even if it means sacrificing your own comfort, pride, or time?
- Who do you know who, like Paul, is willing to suffer for the gospel and rejoice in adversity? Make an appointment to ring them, write them, or meet with them to tell them what an example they are to you.