

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. Philippians 1:12-13

1. Why did Paul have such great faith that God would use his imprisonment for the spread of the gospel?

- ✓ Please read Acts 21:30-36, the story of Paul in Jerusalem before his current imprisonment.
 - Imagine an entire city mob beating and chasing you, until you are bound in chains and brought to prison. What past experience did Paul have in Philippi that would have really built his trust in God? If you missed the background from Pastor Joshua's first message about Philippians, you can read the story of Paul and Silas in Philippi in Acts 16:16-34.
 - How can this be an example for how we respond when we are in desperate situations and see no way out?
- ✓ As this encounter with the mob and officials plays out, Paul uses it as an opportunity to preach the gospel of Jesus. This is recorded in Acts 22 and the beginning of Acts 23. Read what occurs at the end of this sermon, in Acts 23:9-12.
 - How did Paul know that he wouldn't be "torn to pieces" and killed right there in Jerusalem by these crazy mobs?
 - What was going to happen in Rome? How does this back up his claim in Phil. 1:12 that being in chains was a good thing?

2. Why would God allow Paul to suffer to spread the gospel?

- ✓ Please read 1 Peter 2:15-24.
 - In v. 15 we can see that God has a different way to deal with foolish men than we would usually want to; what is it?
 - Why does getting punished or suffering for doing good show the world about Christ? What are they used to seeing people punished for?
 - According to our example, what do we trust in when we are suffering (v. 23)?
- ✓ Please read Matthew 5:43-48
 - Jesus was teaching the Sermon on the Mount. What does He have to say about our enemies and those who cause suffering in our lives?
 - How does dealing this way with people who are unfair or even evil toward us really draw people's attention?
 - Have you ever seen or known of someone who offered love or forgiveness to a person who didn't really deserve it? How did this demonstrate the good news of Jesus Christ to you?

3. Does this mean that God brings terrible things in our lives so that we can witness about Jesus?

- ✓ Definitely not!! Please read Genesis 3:17-19 and Romans 5:12
 - What were the consequences of Adam's disobedience?
 - How does Romans 5:12 explain the effects of Adam's disobedience or sin on you and me?
- ✓ Please read James 1:12-17

Week 2: God's Trojan Horse (cont.)

- James connects our trials with being temptations. How does facing a trial tempt you away from God, especially when doing the best thing in His eyes is the most difficult?
- What things do come from the Father according these verses?

Pain and suffering and trials are part of the world because of the curse of sin. Yet our loving God brings good and perfect gifts, especially life in Christ. That life gives us the promise of overcoming all sin and death in an eternal kingdom where there will be no more tears or pain. Knowing this brings joy even in difficult times, as it did for Paul.

To close this week, pray that God would open your eyes to see how you can demonstrate the love and forgiveness of Jesus even in bad situations and testify with the way you respond to them about the hope you have because of Him.



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Icebreaker: Share a story of someone you know of who went through great trials for the gospel.

Big Idea: Read the next to last paragraph of the devotional guide (above) beginning with “pain” and ending with “Paul”.

- 1) Read Acts 21:30-36. What was Paul's response to the people who sought to kill him? What does this teach us about how we can deal with persecution?
- 2) Read what happens at the end of Paul's sermon in Acts 23:9-12. How could Paul have known that the mob would not kill him, or did he? How do we grow/find that kind of faith?
- 3) Read 1 Peter 2:15-24. Why would God allow Paul to suffer to spread the gospel? What credibility does it bring to his beliefs? How does it speak to us today?
- 4) Read James 1:12-17. How do trials help us to grow in faith? How do physical muscles get stronger? How do our faith muscles get stronger?

Identify one thing you can do to help you grow closer to the Lord this week. Pray for each other to have the opportunity/time/perseverance to start on the one thing.