



ADVANCING  
THE  
GOSPEL

Philippians 1:12-18

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# Introduction

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- In this study, we are going to walk through four letters of Paul: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon and Titus.
- The first three—Philippians, Colossians and Philemon—are part of the group of Paul’s letters that scholars call his “Prison Epistles,” along with Ephesians.
- It is believed that these four letters were written during Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome (AD 60–62).

# Mamertine Prison



# Ancient City of Philippi



# Archaeology of Philippi



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# Summary

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- Paul seeks to encourage his Philippian partners that his suffering is not in vain. God has ordained it for the advancing of the Gospel. His imprisonment gave him the opportunity to share the Gospel with Roman elites and emboldened fellow believers to be witnesses as well.
- Apparently, many people even heard about the Gospel and came to visit him in prison to hear more about it. Although some preachers did ministry out of selfish ambition, many did so out of love. Either way, no matter their motivation, Paul rejoices that the Gospel is being proclaimed.

# Philippians 1:12-14

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Paul was writing this letter from Rome. He was living under house arrest.
- In this kind of imprisonment, he had to provide for his own needs financially.
- He had to pay for the house he was being imprisoned in and for his own food and supplies (Acts 28:30).
- Yet he wasn't able to continue his "day job" of tent making, so many of his churches sent money and provisions.
- The Philippians were one of the churches that supported him. So, he was partly writing to thank them.

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- This imprisonment had created a whole new ministry for him.
- He was able to witness to people he otherwise wouldn't have had access to – the royal guard, an elite and specialized group of soldiers who typically guarded prominent Roman officials (verse 13).
- During his imprisonment, he was also given freedom by those guards to allow visitors from all over Rome to come to him.
- Paul was there for two years awaiting trial.

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Acts 28:30-31 - “For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ, with all boldness and without hindrance.
- This is actually the last verse of the book of Acts. It is how the story ends. When you read Acts, it feels like an abrupt ending. We want to know more of the story of what happened to Paul.
- The conclusion of Acts brings into focus that even though Paul was in prison, the Gospel is being advanced.

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Paul spoke with boldness and without hindrance.
- Though Paul had guards and chains keeping his body contained, his message advanced without hindrance.
- Paul is making the same point here in our passage. He rejoices in his suffering because through his suffering, the Gospel is being advanced.
- This is a person who is more focused on his mission than on himself, his own comfort, his own life.

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Besides the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, the key to Paul's rejoicing in his suffering here is his motivation, his attitude.
- What others would see as an obstacle; Paul saw as an opportunity.
- Those chains weren't an obstacle to the Gospel, they were an opportunity to preach to a whole new group of people who otherwise may never have heard the Gospel.

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Acts tells us that Paul had even had an opportunity to heal and witness to an entire island full of people when they were shipwrecked while he was being transferred to Rome to be imprisoned (Acts 28). This was an island of people who may have never heard the Gospel otherwise.
- Paul even saw his trial before King Agrippa as a chance to proclaim the Gospel to him (Acts 26).
- As God had predicted to Ananias, “He will be my instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and to their kings” (Acts 9:15).

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Paul did not view suffering as meaningless or as proof that God had abandoned him.
- Rather, he saw suffering as an opportunity and a tool that molded endurance and faith in us (Romans 5:3-5).
- When our motivation is focused on advancing the Gospel more than our own comfort or ease, we, like Paul, can see obstacles as opportunities.
- It's all in our attitude.

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# Purpose in Paul's Suffering

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- Paul was able to turn his obstacle into opportunity because of his boldness.
- And he called others to be bold in sharing the Gospel (verse 14).
- One of the other positives of his imprisonment, besides being able to witness to a wider audience, is that it emboldened others to preach the Gospel.
- This was a direct result of his less-than-enviable incarceration.

# Philippians 1:15-18

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# Bad Motives

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- In verses 15-18, Paul is expounding upon these people who have been emboldened by his imprisonment to preach the Gospel.
- He separates them into two categories: those who do it out of rivalry and those who do it out of love.
- The word for rivalry here means “creating strife or quarreling, stirring up trouble.”
- Paul uses the word in his “sin lists” elsewhere to say that people who act that way have hearts focused on the flesh rather than the Spirit.

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# Bad Motives

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- Paul said that these preachers proclaimed Christ out of selfish ambition.
- They do it to make themselves look good or to gain power or money or fame for themselves.
- That they did it “to afflict me in my imprisonment” (verse 17).
- Perhaps these individuals hoped Rome would punish Paul or finally rid the church of him.
- Whatever the case, the situation was personal and hurtful.

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# Bad Motives

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- Paul's response to these rivals was admirable and fitting with his focus on the mission, with his motivation for everything.
- He said, "As long as Christ is preached, I rejoice" (verse 18).
- Paul did not present a defense to defend his reputation, retaliate with a counterattack or call for an end to his affliction.
- All that matters is that Christ is preached.
- All that matters is the advancement of the Gospel.

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# Bad Motives

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- Paul doesn't use the Gospel as a platform for his own glory.
- He doesn't put others down in order to lift himself up. He doesn't react when goaded by people, doesn't sink to their level, he doesn't play that game.
- Those who preached out of love knew that Paul was in prison to defend the Gospel (verse 16), that his motivations were pure and his commitment to the mission was enduring.
- It didn't matter what his rivals said, those who loved him knew the truth.

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# Application

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- God can use anyone for the advancement of the Gospel.
- The example everyone always likes to use is: “God can use a donkey to speak His Word; He can use anyone.” The reference is to the story of Balak and Balaam in Numbers 22-24. The Lord opened the mouth of the donkey.
- God spoke through a donkey. He spoke through a burning bush, a thunderstorm, and a whisper (Exodus 3; Exodus 20; 1 Kings 19).
- He spoke through dreams and visions. God spoke through Moses, who said he wasn't a good speaker. God spoke through young Jeremiah.

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# Application

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- In Corinthians, Paul uses the metaphor that we are all building a building.
- The foundation is Christ, but our life's ministry is the building; we build on top of that foundation.
- At the Judgment Day, in the refining fire, ministries that were built with wood, hay and straw will be burned up, but those built with gold, silver and precious stones will endure.
- If your foundation is in Christ, you will be saved, no matter what, but your life's ministry may be proven to have been only straw (1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

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# Application

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- God has a plan, and He is in control. He's using all kinds of people to accomplish that plan.
- There are going to be people in our world who may preach with bad motives, who take advantage of the Gospel for their own glory, money or fame.
- That is truly sad for them, because although God can use anyone, it is not good for the spiritual maturity of the person who is like that. The Bible says God will hold that person accountable for the kind of ministry they built and what kind of materials they used to build it.

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# Application

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- So when someone is preaching with wrong motives, let God worry about judging them.
- We are called to correct unsound doctrine. But if they are preaching the Gospel with impure motives, let them preach. Their motives are between them and God.
- Just keep doing your part in the mission, and keep checking your own motivations. Make sure your ministry is being built of gold, silver, and precious stones, not wood, hay, and straw.

# Using the Archaeology Booklet



- Christianity is based on history and can be verified through history and archaeology.
- Limitations of archaeology (page 2)
- Famous quotes (pages 2-3)
- Old Testament archaeology (pages 4-6)
- New Testament archaeology (pages 6-8)
- Recent discoveries (pages 8-11)