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The Gospel is Advanced by Suffering

Philippians 1:12-18, ¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. ¹⁵ It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. ¹⁶ The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. ¹⁸ But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice.

A. Your suffering can be used by God to help others (v.12)

- 1) To be used by God we need to suffer in a faith filled way.
- 2) When talking with others, learn what to maximize (what God is doing) & what to minimize (your discomfort).
- 3) Help others connect suffering to the gospel.
- 4) The gospel is not automatically advanced in suffering, we need to choose to do this.
- 5) The manner in which you endure difficulty affects the way others perceive Christ.

B. Suffer well, and unbelievers may consider Christ (v.13)

- 1) Suffering advances the gospel to unbelievers in new places.
- 2) God, “who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” (2 Corinthians 1:4)
- 3) Suffering advances the gospel accurately (because it shows people following Christ isn't about our comfort, but His kingdom).

C. Suffer well, and believers may serve Christ (v.14)

- 1) Suffering advances the gospel with believers by providing them inspiration that God's promises are real.
- 2) Suffering advances the gospel with believers by providing new opportunities for them to serve.

D. The gospel allows me to rejoice despite suffering (v.15-18)

- 1) Suffering focuses us on what really matters in life (God, relationships & our purpose).
- 2) Christians must choose to be joyful (“I WILL continue to rejoice”, v.18)
- 3) “...Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross...” (Hebrews 12:2)
- 4) Suffering is hard, sorrow is real, but the gospel is our hope.
- 5) “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or

crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” (Revelation 21:4)

- 6) Our suffering will end one day because of Jesus' suffering, but right now, if we'll partner with God, it can be used to advance the gospel and reduce others' suffering.

2021 CHALLENGE: Consider starting a Bible reading plan on January 1st. I recommend the *Foundations* or *Foundations New Testament* plans for busy believers. They help you read on weekdays with weekends to catch up if you missed any reading. Visit Go2Cornerstone.com/F260 to download a free PDF or open the YouVersion Bible app and search “F260” to see both reading (or audio listening) plans.