

## Unlocking Joy: Finding Strength to Stand Bold for Christ in the Midst of Adversity ([Philippians 1:12-20](#))

### What do you do when life doesn't go according to your plans?

What happens when your faith in Jesus doesn't shield you from hardship—but invites it?

What do you do when following Christ costs you—your comfort, reputation, relationships, maybe even your freedom?

Let's be real. Some of us came to Christ thinking faith would make life easier—that if we pray enough, obey enough, and stay faithful enough, God will keep bad things from happening to us.

But what happens when faithfulness leads you straight into the fire?

When, like Paul, your reality is the opposite of your expectations?

You wanted freedom—now you're in chains.

You wanted victory—now you're suffering.

You thought being in God's will meant everything would work out, but now you see that His will includes adversity.

That's where the tension is.

Because the truth is, hardship will come. And how you respond will reveal what you truly believe about God.

Will you see your trials as a sign that God has abandoned you? Or will you recognize them as divinely orchestrated opportunities for the Gospel to advance through you?

That's exactly what [Philippians 1:12-20](#) is about.

Paul should have been discouraged.

He should have questioned God.

He should have shrunk back, silenced himself, licked his wounds.

But instead, he says something outrageous:

**“Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the Gospel.”**

([Philippians 1:12](#))

How is that possible?

How can imprisonment advance the Gospel?

How can suffering produce joy?

How can adversity be the very thing God uses for His glory?

That's what we're unpacking today. Because if you take your faith seriously, suffering for Jesus is inevitable. Adversity will come, and you need to know how to stand through it—time and time again.

**This morning, I want to give you five keys from this passage to help you stand firm in the midst of adversity. beginning with...**

## **1. Shift your perspective to see your challenges for what they truly are. v12**

Paul's perspective was radical. Instead of seeing imprisonment as an obstacle, he saw it as an opportunity.

His ministry didn't shut down—it expanded. His suffering didn't silence him—it amplified the Gospel.

Think about the Philippians reading his words. Instead of Paul needing encouragement, he was encouraging them! His chains were advancing the Gospel.

It's the same with Jesus' crucifixion. His enemies thought they had stopped Him, but the Gospel exploded. Through Paul's imprisonment, God was doing it again.

Paul had a plan—to preach Christ in Rome. And he did. Just not as he expected. He made more disciples, but not as a free man. His freedom was gone, yet the Gospel was advancing.

**Here's what you need to know.**

**In Christ, your life will only ever play out according to the Father's sovereign will for you.**

You can't out-plan it.

You can't out-finance it.

You can't out-smart it.

You can't outrun it.

And you can't even out-pray it.

What God has decided for you has already been determined. How you go through it—that's up to you. But you **will** go through it. And the sooner you embrace this truth, the easier your walk will be.

So that when hardship comes... when problems show up simply because you love Jesus... You won't panic. You won't fret. Instead, your prayer will be:

**"Lord, I see what's happening although I would rather not go through it, I trust You despite my problems. You are working Your will through me."**

But in order to pray like that, **you must have the right perspective.**

**Let me be absolutely clear—not every struggle is from God.** Some of us have been taught that every setback, every trial, every problem is a setup for success. A set up for victory. But that simply isn't true.

Yes, some challenges are God-ordained to advance the Gospel.

But some? Some are just the result of **bad planning, poor decisions, and flat-out disobedience.**

Some of the mess you're in right now, is b/c you put yourself there and you expect God to bless you in your mess.

Real talk:

- If God didn't call you to it, **He won't bless it.**
- If God didn't lead you into it, **He won't empower you to endure it.**
- Where you are is where you will be until you repent and get back onboard with God's will.

God's will **is not just about suffering**—it's about **obedience**. You can't just slap a "God's will" sticker on your bad choices and expect Him to bless them.

So ask yourself today—**Did God bring me here?**

- If the answer is **yes**, then trust Him to use it for His glory.
- If the answer is **no**, then quit fighting a battle He never called you to fight.

**Having said that**, when you face adversity, God ordained troubles the first key to victory is to **adjust your perspective to see your struggles for what they really are—God's will to advance His kingdom through you.**

Paul understood this. Do you?

**But there's more.** Once you shift your perspective, you need to recognize something powerful:

**Your struggle is a testimony—so make it count.**

**Understand that your struggle is a testimony - so make it count. v12-13**

Paul continues, **"what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ...."**

God ordained Paul's imprisonment so that the Gospel would spread in Rome—not in spite of it, but through it. His chains didn't silence him; they amplified the message of Jesus.

Think about it. The imperial guard wasn't just any group of soldiers. These were Rome's elite—like the Secret Service guarding the President or the Dora Milaje protecting the Black Panther. Highly trained. Highly disciplined. Locked in on one mission: protect and serve their leader at all costs.

These men weren't the type to sit and listen to a prisoner talk about faith. But they did.

Paul's testimony spread amongst the guards until whole guard it. Scholars estimate the imperial guard to have numbered between 6,000 and 9,000 men—and that doesn't even count the "*everyone else*" Paul mentions. His story, his story reached people who otherwise would have never heard the Gospel.

### **Like Paul your struggle is your testimony so use it.**

What God has ordained for you to walk through isn't just about you—it's about the Gospel. You are a carrier of the Good News. Your story—how Jesus saved you, how He's been faithful, how He's carried you through sickness, loss, and trials—matters.

And here's the thing: the very people who need to hear your testimony probably won't step inside a church. They won't trust a pastor. And they won't open a Bible.

But they trust you. You're close to them. And because it's *your* story, they'll listen. And some will believe in Jesus.

Your God-ordained struggle has the power to break through even the hardest hearts. Paul's testimony reached battle-hardened Imperial Guardsmen. Yours can reach the people in your world. So, don't keep the greatest blessing you ever received to yourself.

### **Tell somebody about your Jesus.**

Don't waste your testimony—make it count.

That's the second key to standing bold for Jesus through adversity. Here's no.3...

## **Take hold of hope and inspiration when it comes. v14**

That's our 3rd key... look at v14 with me, he says...

**14 Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly.**

Paul sees his suffering for what it is— a **confidence booster** for those who already believe.

### **Confidence comes from two things:**

**1. Paul's unshaken commitment to the Gospel.** Even in chains, he's just as committed—if not more—than when he was free.

**2. The Gospel was now spreading in Rome—the capital, the heart of the empire.** The same Gospel that got Paul imprisoned was now flowing freely in the very city that was controlling the known world at that time.

So, it makes sense that these believers in Rome—the men and women who followed Jesus—would be **emboldened**. Seeing Paul's steadfastness to the Lord inspired them, giving them a greater sense of confidence.

Not only that, but some of them took it even further. They "**dared to speak the Gospel fearlessly.**"

Some may have even gone to the *imperial guardsmen* themselves—talking with them, explaining more about the faith Paul was suffering for. They weren't hiding. They weren't backing down.

Paul was locked up by some of the most ruthless, godless people of his time—yet instead of silencing believers, his situation **gave them courage**.

And the same thing happens today. **When we see God at work in someone else's life, it strengthens our own faith.** His faithfulness in their struggle reminds us He'll be faithful in ours.

You've seen it before. And you may have even experienced it personally:

- When you wake up every morning facing rent hikes, gas prices, and groceries getting more expensive (like eggs costing \$12 per dozen)—but you refuse to let financial struggle shake your faith.
- When you see a single mom raising her kids in Christ, despite working two jobs and having no help - yet she prioritizes Church on Sundays.
- When you see a brother or sister walking through sickness, pushing through a bad medical report—but still praising God.
- When your dream falls apart or when your relationship fails—but instead of breaking, you trust God and keep it moving.
- When you see churches in around the Triangle struggling to keep the doors open, but still faithfully preaching the Gospel.
- When people tell you, "You're wasting your time following Jesus," but you keep standing strong, because you know what He's done for you.

These are but a few examples of ways you can receive hope and inspiration. And when you see them. Or you when you experience them personally don't waste them, instead take hold of hope and inspiration when it comes.

Because doubt and discouragement are always lurking. Satan is always looking for an opening—to trip you up, to fill your mind with lies. To make you doubt that struggling for Christ is worth it.

And if you don't fight back with **truth**, like Jesus did in the wilderness ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)), you'll get distracted. You'll focus on your circumstances instead of God. And when that happens, **discouragement will overtake you, to the point where you begin to doubt God**. When that happens Satan gets a W you give Jesus an L.

**Don't let that happen.**

**Take hold of hope and inspiration when it comes.** Because you're going to need it.

Just like an astronaut needs an environmental suit and breathable air to survive in space, you need the hope and inspiration that God provides.

Without it, you'll succumb to your environment of doubt and discouragement.

So **keep your head up**. Stay locked in. And when God sends hope and inspiration—**grab it, breathe it in, and let it fuel you to keep going**.

That's the **power of taking hold of hope and inspiration when it comes**.

That's our third key, the 4th is ...

## **Remember the message is superior to the messenger. v15-19**

This one comes directly from v18 where Paul says...

**"What does it matter? Only that... Christ is proclaimed."**

Now, let's be clear—this isn't a blanket statement. Paul is not saying that anything goes or that every preacher is valid. But his focus is crystal clear: the Gospel must advance. And he is more concerned with that than with the character of the preachers delivering it.

Word had reached Paul that there were two types of preachers in the field:

1. **Those preaching Christ out of love**—they knew Paul was appointed by God to defend the Gospel and saw themselves as partners in the mission.
2. **Those preaching Christ out of envy and rivalry**—they saw Paul as competition. They wanted to **one-up Paul** and hoped to cause him distress in prison.

Instead of getting caught up in worthless drama, he says, **"What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed..."**

Paul recognizes that these rival preachers were not spreading false doctrine. Their hearts may not have been right, but their message was. And despite their selfish ambition, God was still using them to advance His kingdom.

So Paul rejoices. In v18, He says... **“in this I rejoice”** And he qualifies his rejoicing in 19...**because I know this will lead to my salvation, through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”**

Wait Paul in the midst of all this you're rejoicing? Yeah, he is, considered what has happened...

- **the imperial guard**—thousands of Roman soldiers—heard the Gospel.
- **Fellow believers were emboldened** to preach the Gospel with more courage.
- **His rivals were now out there preaching Christ.**

Paul steps back, sees the bigger picture, and essentially says, **“Lord, You are glorifying Yourself through me! Fill me up with Your grace, use me up, pour me out. I don't care who you use, just get your gospel out... advance your kingdom!**

That is the right perspective—to focus on **the Message, not the Messenger.**

**The Church, (big C) church needs to learn from this.**

- We may not like how certain Christians do ministry.
- We may not agree with their methods.
- We may not like their style, their worship music, their dress code, their denominational label, their stance on social issues, or the way their church is structured.

But. And this is a big but, if **Christ is being exalted, His Word is being preached, and souls are being saved**— Then what difference does it make.

Instead we need to take a step back and say, *“Lord, I see what You're doing. I may not like how your'e doing it through them, but if they are truly bringing people to You, then we celebrate that.”*

Now, **hear me. Hear me well.**

I am **not** saying that it's okay to water down God's Word.

I am **not** saying we turn a blind eye to false teaching.

Some so-called "ministries"—and I wouldn't even call them churches—are nothing more than **works of Satan.**

There is **no** Gospel in them. There is **no** true worship of God.

Their preaching **reeks** of heresy. There is **no** evidence of God in them or on their ministries.

**Such places need to be shut down. Period.** Their leadership needs to repent, and the people in them need to hear the true Gospel and be saved.

However, I **am** saying is this:

We need to do a better job of **staying focused on the message—the Gospel that is being proclaimed and the fruit that is coming from it—rather than nitpicking the messengers.**

Some of us spend way too much time **criticizing other believers instead of preaching Christ ourselves. How you gone criticize what someone else is trying to accomplish when only people who know you're a Christian is a select few?**

Instead of criticizing others, we need to stay locked in on what matters: **the Gospel.**

- Live it
- Preach it to yourself and others.

Because at the end of the day, **the message of Christ is greater than any messenger.**

**That's our fourth key, preach the superior message of Jesus Christ. 5th and finally....**

## Prioritize your spiritual legacy over your trials. v20

That's exactly what Paul is getting at in [Philippians 1:20](#)...

my eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Paul wasn't consumed by his circumstances. He wasn't staying up at night, stressing about how things would turn out. No—he had **one focus**: That **Christ would be glorified** no matter what happened to him, whether he lived or died.

And let's be clear—Paul's faith didn't exempt him from suffering. He was eventually executed by the Roman Empire because he refused to compromise his faith in Jesus. We don't know when Paul realized that death was coming, but we do know this—**God had prepared him for it**.

That's why he could say with full confidence, **“Whether I live or whether I die, I just want Jesus to be honored.”**

Paul saw everything—his suffering, his victories, and every life he impacted—as part of his spiritual legacy. He understood something that we all need to grasp:

**Your life is bigger than just you.**

Your faith is not just about what **you** gain from God—it's also about what you **leave behind for others**. Paul's life in Christ was a **spiritual investment**, meant to inspire and build up future generations.

And guess what? **We are proof that God answered Paul's prayer.**

Over **1,900 years later**, we're still reading his letters. We're still studying his faith. We're still applying his example to our lives. That's the power of a spiritual legacy!

I know, we're not Paul. He was hand-selected by Jesus. He was an apostle, a miracle worker, a man who wrote much of the New Testament.

But at the end of the day, **Paul was still just a man.**

And the same God who worked through Paul is the same God working inside of **you**.

I want you to do something right now. Close your eyes for a moment. No, really—close them. I want you to imagine what your life would look like if you truly saw it as a way to **leave a God-glorifying spiritual legacy**.

- How would that change your outlook on life?
- How would it shift your perspective during suffering?
- How would it enrich your worship?
- How would it deepen your faith in Jesus?

What if you lived every day knowing that you are **leaving behind something for God's glory**—something that will **outlast** you and **inspire** others long after you're gone?

If you truly grasp this, it will **unlock a new level** of faith, power, and grace in your life. You will stop **just surviving** and start **living with purpose**.

Your trials won't control you. Your circumstances won't shake you.

Instead, you'll stand firm—knowing that **God is writing your story for His glory**. (Repeat)

## Prioritize your spiritual legacy over your trials.

### Communion

And speaking of **leaving a legacy that is worth following**, there is **one person** who did it perfectly—His name is **Jesus Christ**.

That's why it's good for us to **remember Him** and **celebrate what He did for us** through communion. Because at the end of the day, without Him there would be no one to put our faith in nor a future to hope for.

## Closing

Pray/recommit/questions, CC, Bridge Women, WLFJ, LGLHP

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