

COMMUNITY BIBLE CHURCH
PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS – LESSON 3
PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26

WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 30 - OCTOBER 4

Paul's confinement, chains, adverse circumstances, detractors and future uncertainty all work as catalysts for the progress of the gospel

Paul is writing to his beloved Philippians to encourage them to confidently proclaim the gospel especially in the face of opposition and various obstacles, challenges, hardship and trials. Paul desired that the Philippians and all believers would view their obstacles as opportunities to further the advance of the gospel. He writes this letter to give them a report that God is using his incarceration to spread the gospel. Paul is also encouraging them that although he is jailed and bound, the Word of God is not bound. He desires that these dear saints will, with great confidence, rely upon God's provision and be encouraged to boldly stand firm for the Lord Jesus Christ despite opposition to the gospel.

“Paul's suffering was neither corrective nor instructive. It was simply a suffering permitted by God so that the gospel might be spread to others.” Philippians, James Montgomery Boyce, p. 52

1. In **Philippians 1:12**, Paul refers to “my circumstances”. Describe the circumstances to which Paul is likely referring.

2. From **Phil 1:12-14**, how does God use Paul's imprisonment and chains and difficult circumstances to advance the progress of the gospel?

3. Paul describes his imprisonment in **Phil. 1:13, Ephesians 3:1; 4:1 and 6:20**. Read those verses and explain Paul's perspective on his time in jail awaiting trial.

4. From **Philippians 1:15-18**, what were Paul's detractors and critics doing to cause him distress in his imprisonment? How did Paul respond to their actions?

5. Bible scholars recognize 4 possible interpretations of Paul's expectation of deliverance in **verse 19**. It could refer (1) to Paul's ultimate salvation, (2) to his deliverance from execution, (3) to his vindication by a final ruling or (4) to his eventual release from prison. What two means of his deliverance does Paul recognize?

6. What does Paul say in **verse 20** that sheds light on his perspective of the ultimate outcome of his incarceration?

Paul is facing an uncertain future staring death square in the eyes. Yet he is living with an unwavering mission for the gospel. Paul wants the Philippians to know that he is ready to die for his faith in Jesus Christ. Paul comforts the Philippians with his boldness and courage even in the face of death.

In **verses 21 through 26**, Paul expresses his struggle between departing to be with Christ or remaining to labor for the proclamation of the gospel and the spiritual growth and ministry to believers. Paul begins this section by making the dramatic statement that reveals the heartbeat that should be pulsating in every Christian “for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain”.

7. What does Paul mean by his statement “for to me to live is Christ”? Read also **Gal. 2:20** and **Col. 3:4** to clarify this statement. What does that statement say about Paul's purpose and singular focus in life?
8. Also in **verse 21**, Paul writes “to die is gain”. Gain means to receive a great profit.
- How is death a great profit for the believer? See **John 14:2-3**, **1 Peter 2:11**; **2 Cor. 5:1-8**.
 - What does **verse 21** tell you about Paul's greatest desire?
9. While Paul expresses his desire in **verse 23**, he wrestles with his dilemma in **verse 24**. What is Paul's dilemma?
10. From **verse 25**, what is Paul's decision in this struggle? How does Paul's conclusion show his willingness to sacrifice his personal desire for the greater benefit of others?
11. As you consider this section (**Philippians 1:12-26**) how do these passages impact the way in which you will invest your time and resources, even in the midst of trials?