

Paul begins this section by saying...

*I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; Philippians 1:12-13 NRSV*

Paul is in jail with the likely possibility of his execution

We don't know for sure where he is at the time this is written as he was in several jails

The book of Acts reports that after the period of Paul's great missionary work, he was arrested in Jerusalem, imprisoned for two years in Caesarea, and then, after a perilous sea voyage, was imprisoned for another two years in Rome (Acts 21:17–28:31).

Commonly assumed that he is under house arrest in Rome, although Caesarea is possible

What Paul does make clear is that he is in prison because of Christ—

He is not a criminal, but he has been imprisoned because he is a Christian

Jesus warned us that we would face persecution, just as he did (Matthew 5:10-12)

The truth of this imprisonment, is that it has served to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ

In true Paul fashion, he tells the story of Jesus everywhere and to everyone

The good news has gone out far and wide, both within the prison community and beyond

Fellow Christians took heart and also shared the good news with boldness

Even the prison guards and Roman rulers heard the gospel

Many have come to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ because Paul is in jail

The motives of others sharing the gospel are sometimes good and other times out of envy or rivalry

But for Paul, the only thing that matters is that the message of Christ is shared

When the good news is shared, Paul rejoices, whatever the motivation

His rejoicing doesn't end with gratitude that the gospel is being preached

He faces a trial and with prayers of the Philippians and help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ

He hopes for deliverance and freedom

However, his greater hope is that Christ will be exalted in whatever happens

... whether he lives or dies

*For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. Philippians 1:21 NRSV*

He goes on to talk about the choice, which he cannot make for himself

He is torn between the burden of life and the release of death

Living means continuing to work for Christ

Dying means departing this earth to be with Christ

But remaining on earth, is more necessary for the Philippians, so he chooses life

He then challenges everyone to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ

He calls people to faithfully journey with Christ and to stay united as one people

Paul reminds people that it is a privilege to suffer for Christ, as we all partake in the struggle

Yet, whatever happens, we continue to rejoice in Christ

What Paul writes in this letter to the Philippians, is born out of experience

He has learned to find peace and even joy, no matter his circumstances

From singing in the dungeon to writing encouraging letters from prison, he can do so with grace

*Query: When we face adversity, how do we find our center?*