

Main Reading: [Philippians](#) 1:12-30

Last week, we discussed how Paul was under house [arrest](#).

He was seized by Jewish people who had [rejected](#) Jesus, and the [irony](#) is that Paul used to be one of those Jewish people who—not only rejected Jesus—but persecuted his followers.

There were women in the Church who were [widows](#) because of Paul.

But, since then, Paul had been saved and *totally* changed by God.

And now *he* was the one being [persecuted](#)!

So, there he was in the Jewish jail system. But, while he was waiting for a trial hearing,

Paul (as a Roman citizen) appealed to Rome. [[like U.S. cases can go to the supreme court](#)]

Then, when the Romans took Paul into *their* judiciary system, he went on house arrest for 2 years.

And it was there, where he was under 24/7 surveillance by the Imperial Guard. [Acts](#) 28:30-31

[\[verses-by-verse\]](#) [v. 12-14]

When the Philippians got wind that Paul had been [arrested](#) *again*, they would have been worried.

They knew that the last time Paul was in jail, it took a miracle to get him out [[Acts](#) 16]

Remember the story where God sent an [angel](#) and an [earthquake](#) to start a jailbreak.

So, the Philippians probably thought, “Unless God does another miracle, this won’t end well...”

Spoiler alert: God did **not** provide another miraculous escape. But, why not?

Well, here’s the deal: In this situation, God displayed a *totally* different type of [power](#).

See, a miracle is when God [disrupts](#) the norm and does something incredible.

But God *also* works through something we call [providence](#).

This is when He uses seemingly everyday situations to accomplish His plan.

Here are some examples from the Bible:

**Life of Joseph** → sold into slavery → accused by Potiphar's wife → becomes 2nd command in Egypt.

**Genesis** 50:20

**Judas** → befriends then betrays Jesus → Jesus is killed → His death provides a way of Salvation.

[ELCA Transgender Clergy Vote → Tornado tears the roof off of the church]

Here are specific verses about providence: **Proverbs** 16:33, **Matthew** 10:29, **Romans** 8:28

So, in Paul's story, God is using His power...just in a more **subtle** way.

God is using Paul's situation to get people saved—which is the biggest miracle. **Romans** 1:16

Ephesians 2 likens a salvation to a resurrection—a dead person receiving new life.

And, at this time, God was *saving* employees to the Roman **government** through Paul's preaching.

Paul was **chained** to *several* imperial guardsmen over the course of each day.

This gave him *plenty* of time to tell them about Jesus Christ *and* have follow-up **conversations**.

He was giving them an evangelistic **earful** everyday, and the word about Jesus spread.

But, Paul's time in jail *also* allowed him to write *Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*.

These books serve as *essential* building blocks to our Christian faith.

Clearly, Paul saw this time of **opposition** and used it as an **opportunity**.

And since Paul stood firm during this opposition—others grew more **bold** in their faith as a result.

**QUESTION**: What's a tough situation in your life that God may be using for good?

[v.15-18]

This may come as a surprise, but there were people who were jealous of Paul's **authority**.

He had haters who were trying to take attention off of Paul and put it on *themselves*.

They might say things like "Paul's not a *real* preacher because he's in jail..

his arrest is a punishment from God."

But Paul wasn't concerned their **opinions** of him...he was *happy* that they preached about Jesus.

Again, we see Paul display the overarching theme of *Philippians*: JOY in hard times...

Even when people are spreading **propaganda** about you behind your back, rejoice!

Paul cared *more* about Jesus Christ than his own **reputation**. Do you?

Like we said last week, Paul isn't interested in **arguments** about who gets the credit.

Especially at this point in time, since it was so tough to be a Christian in Rome.

The **persecution** was ramping-up under Emperor **Nero**...

So, Paul was glad that others were preaching about Jesus, even if they didn't like him.

While these anti-Paul preachers had bad motives, we need make sure *we* have the *right* **motives**.

We should not be like the people who do things out of **selfish ambition**.

Selfish ambition *literally* means "one working for **hire**"—these people can be bought or **bribed**.

If the price is right, a person who operates out of selfish ambition will do *terrible* things.

Some people will **play** the part of a preacher if it makes them **rich** or famous.

And some people will come to Jesus just to **get** something from Him.

but we should come to Christ because we want *Him*...Desire the **Giver** more than the gifts.

[v. 19-26]

One of my favorite preachers has said: "No one is ready to live, *until* they are ready to **die**."

Think about it...if you are unsure of your eternity—or

you're scared of death—there's *a lot* to be **worried** about.

Hebrews chapter 2 teaches that *every* person is **scared** to die.

And there is *one* way to *actually* remove this fear—you must make peace with your Maker.

And Jesus, as *truly* God and *truly* man, is the *only* person who can give you that **peace**.

Now, Paul possessed that peace and was **ready** to die. *HOW & WHY* was he ready? 2 **Corinthians** 5:8

In the midst of his writing, Paul comes to a crossroads...and maybe you can relate.

Have you ever *really* wanted to do something, but other people needed you to do something else?

[a businessman gets offered a promotion illustration]

This was the exact situation that Paul found himself in...

Paul wanted to go home, but every Christian needed Him to finish his work.

And we will *all* come to similar points in our life where we must ask ourselves:

"Will I do what I want to do or what is best for others?"

Anyways, Paul was not going to die just yet, because there was still fruitful labor for him to do.

And, for each of us here today, God has work for us to do. [Ephesians](#) 2:10

You don't have to change the world...or do something extraordinary...

Paul, in Ephesians, explains the types of good works that Christians should do, and he lists things like being a good [mom](#), [dad](#), son, daughter, boss, [employee](#), etc.

As a Christian, you are to serve God in your *ordinary* life,

and one day you will receive the *greatest* gain you could ever imagine...

Not streets of [gold](#)...not pearly gates...not a [healthy](#) body...but being face-to-face with Jesus.

Everything else in Heaven is an added bonus.

**QUESTION**: Which verse from that section would be most helpful for you to memorize, and when would be a great time to remember it?

[27-30]

This verse teaches that our [conduct](#) *absolutely* matters to God...

There are some churches who say "you're saved, it doesn't matter how you live anymore!"

There's a fancy word for this...we call it "*antinomianism*"

It's the belief that Christians have no responsibility to be [moral](#).

But the Bible teaches that we behave in *only* one way. Let's break it down:

Here's how [strong](#) this command is: the Greek word for "conduct yourselves" (*politeuomai*) gives us

our word for [politics](#) and means "to be a citizen who [obeys](#) the laws."

But we do not *primarily* follow the [American](#) laws, or Roman law, or any government.

Because, as people who believe the Gospel, we are **citizens** of Heaven and we obey God's law. And our obedience is should be consistent...Paul said "**whether I come and see you, or am absent**"

See, sometimes, when your **boss** is around, you work harder,  
or your **parents** are around you act better.

But, Paul says that it's God's desire for you to be Christlike no matter who is watching.

At all times, we *must* live according to what we believe in. [quit smoking ad campaign]

But, here's the deal: When we live as Christians in this world, people aren't going to like it.

This is a **promise** from the Bible. 2 **Timothy** 3:12

They will mistreat you either with **words**, physical attacks, or by excluding you...

Now, Paul's language may seem strange at the end of this chapter.

He says to Christians, that two things have been granted to us.

1) **Salvation** and 2) **Suffering**

Again, like last week, Paul refers to Salvation as a **gift** that you can't take credit for.

If you pay for a gift, it isn't a gift...Salvation is something that Jesus accomplished.

But along with that, Christians receive the gift of suffering.

And I want you to hear how Jesus explained this. **Matthew** 5:11-12

And Peter explained it like this... 1 **Peter** 4:13-14

The Gospel is **good** news, but it is *never* **easy** news, because we have been *promised* suffering.

Jesus was treated *poorly* while He was on earth, and we should expect the *same*.

This is one of the *hardest* parts of Christianity...because nobody *wants* to suffer.

But it is far better to suffer a little now, than to suffer a *whole* lot later.

**QUESTION**: In what ways have you suffered for being a Christian?