



Date: **January 21, 2018**

Scripture: **Philippians 1:19-30**

Last week we looked at how in the midst of suffering, Paul was able to have a gospel-focused view of his suffering. He viewed his imprisonment not as a set back to his ultimate goal but as a means to advancing the gospel he was called to preach. In fact, because of his imprisonment, the gospel was able to spread in ways it might not have had he not been imprisoned.

Paul now turns from the gospel implications of his imprisonment to how one is to live in the midst of suffering. For Paul, the focus is on how he and the gospel win whether he lives or dies in or out of prison. For the Philippian believers, the focus is on carrying on their new life in the gospel in Paul's absence.

### **Digging into the Text on Suffering...**

- Paul speaks of “deliverance” from his circumstances (1:19). Deliverance from what circumstances?<sup>1</sup>
- In what way does Paul have “eager expectation and hope” that he will not be ashamed (1:20)?
- Paul clearly lives in the tension between life with Christ in death and the further advancement of the gospel in life (1:20-26).
  - What is Paul most concerned about while living in this tension?
  - Why might someone, like Paul, choose continued life in the flesh in the midst of suffering, over death and life with Christ?
  - What do we learn about life and death from Paul's tension?
  - What is strikingly absent from Paul's prayers about his suffering and his requests for others to pray for him?
- Throughout Paul's letters there is a tension between Law & Gospel. In verse 27 Paul tells the Philippian Christians to live a life “worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Does Paul give us any indication (in this passage or others) what this life looks like?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Some believe it is from his imprisonment and others think it is from this life; thus ultimate salvation.

<sup>2</sup> See also Rom. 12:1-2 & 2 Peter 1:5-8



**Living out the Text:**

- What do we learn from Paul's own prayers during his suffering and his requests of others concerning his suffering that should inform our own prayers regarding our suffering and the suffering of others?
- Some religions teach martyrdom as the height of their follower's faithfulness. Is this something Paul is teaching in his tension? Is this something we are to seek?
- Do you have any examples of people you know who have been in a similar situation as Paul, who have modeled a similar attitude about their situation as Paul's?
- Why is Paul concerned about the Philippian's "manner of life" amidst suffering? What dynamics does suffering have that can pose a challenge to testing the genuineness of one's faith?
- Paul clearly sees suffering as part of the Christian experience. How do you view your suffering? How has God grown you through suffering to transform you more into Christ's image?

**This week:**

(1) Maybe you know someone who is suffering for the cause of Christ – pray for them this week and let them know how, when, where, and what you prayed.

(2) Maybe you are suffering for the cause of Christ at work, or among friends or family – share with your group how they can pray for you now and this week.

(3) Pray for yourself and others you know that they will be ready for suffering when it comes, that they will be comforted in the gospel, have an eternal perspective, and that it will be an opportunity for them to grow as Christians.