

## Christ is Present in Hardship

### Philippians 1:12-26 NLT

**Philippians 1:12-26 NLT** – “And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. <sup>13</sup>For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. <sup>14</sup>And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God’s message without fear. <sup>15</sup>It’s true that some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. <sup>16</sup>They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. <sup>17</sup>Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my chains more painful to me. <sup>18</sup>But that doesn’t matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice. <sup>19</sup>For I know that as you pray for me and the Spirit of Jesus Christ helps me, this will lead to my deliverance. <sup>20</sup>For I fully expect and hope that I will never be ashamed, but that I will continue to be bold for Christ, as I have been in the past. And I trust that my life will bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. <sup>21</sup>For to me, living means living for Christ, and dying is even better. <sup>22</sup>But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don’t know which is better. <sup>23</sup>I’m torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. <sup>24</sup>But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live. <sup>25</sup>Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith. <sup>26</sup>And when I come to you again, you will have even more reason to take pride in Christ Jesus because of what he is doing through me.”

**Summary of Philippians 1:12-26:** Paul is in prison because of preaching Christ and he is glad about it since it is leading others to be bolder in their faith there in Rome. Jesus is being preached by others outside of prison with pure and impure motives, and Paul see the purpose in his suffering and is willing to suffer all things for the sake of the gospel because it will have a good outcome as others hear about Christ.

“Something in Paul’s posture, presence, or pattern of response to his imprisonment was used by God to embolden the brothers and sisters so that they spoke the word of the Lord unflinchingly” – George H Guthrie, *Philippians*, 110.

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Living for Christ invites hardship. It is because the very nature of exclusively serving the One true God and the Son of God Jesus Christ, means you are automatically excluding the worship of all other gods. To confess Jesus Christ as Lord was scandalous because he died a criminal’s death. He didn’t just die as a common person for no reason, he was crucified which was often reserved for those who caused an uprising against the government.

In their culture honor and shame were powerful tools. Often people would conform to the societal norms out of pressure. Christians faced public shame, being ostracized, even financial ruin. So they had to band together to support each other.

There was no secular activity in their society as all of it included deities and idol worship at nearly all events.

To bow your knee to Caesar and call him lord meant to call him a god. Christians would only bow to the Lord Jesus Christ.

It came at great cost to each person to serve the Lord leading to possible imprisonment.

### **3 types of hardships we encounter:**

1- **Self-inflicted hardships.** Our own bad decisions and sin have caused bad things to happen. God isn't backing you when you're in sin, but He can forgive you as you turn from your sin and turn to Christ. You may still have consequences from these, but God forgives the eternal punishment from sin as we turn to Him. Example: If you commit a crime that doesn't mean you're unable to be forgiven by God but you will have consequences.

2- **Hardships caused by life or other people.** There are injustices that come upon everyone as part of this fallen evil world due to sin. Tragedy and abuse may have occurred and God is not the author of evil but He can heal from the pain of that. The message of the kingdom of God is that Jesus came to make all things new in the life to come.

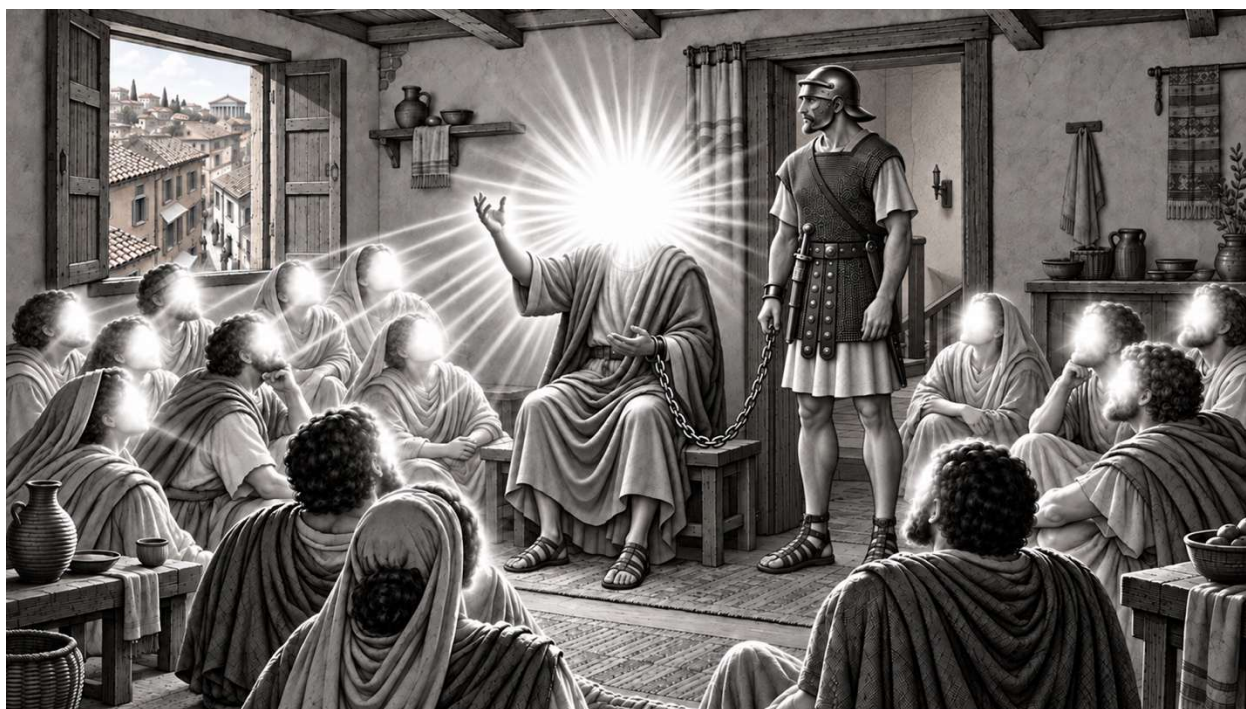
3- **Hardship as a result of serving the Lord.** Because we are in a spiritual battle the world, the flesh, and the devil hate the work of the Lord but we need to have a proper perspective on this. Those in darkness are brought out as light goes into the darkness. The darkness is afraid of light, all darkness can do is hide from light. There is nothing the enemy can do to stop the good news of Christ. As we obey Him there is sure to be some level of persecution and suffering as we re-prioritize our lives (**John 16:33, 2 Timothy 3:12, 1 Peter 4:14-16**).

Christ is present with you in hardship as a result of serving Him.

The purpose of Paul's hardship was for the advancement of the gospel. To show that the gospel is not chained, it is not able to be stopped or held back. The message is more important than any single messenger.

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This image below gives us a glimpse into Paul's imprisonment. He was in Rome most likely during his writing of Philippians and was there basically under house arrest with a guard possibly chained to him with a short chain. He was able to preach as believers risked their own reputations to come to him. In their honor/shame culture it was a major decision to support someone in prison.



**Phil. 1:13-14** Boldness and fearlessness have risen up in other believers who have seen Paul continuing to preach despite the chains he is in. Many times the challenges we go through for the sake of Christ are for the encouragement of other believers.

**Phil. 1:15-17** There is lengthy discussion around these verses by scholars. These are people that are wanting to destroy Paul's ministry by undermining him personally are not outright said to be unbelievers but in their selfish preaching of Christ they are keeping the name of Christ spoken of in the public sphere.<sup>1</sup> They may be believers (as unlikely as it seems) based on the fact Paul does not call them otherwise and does not say they are preaching a false gospel (as he does in other places) so we can assume if they are believers they have yet to be sanctified as they are doing ministry in the name of the Lord out of selfish ambition and envy, not unity (Phil. 1:27, 2:3).

**Phil. 1:16** Hardship for Paul was because he served Christ. In our Western culture success is often equated with many followers online and big crowds. Paul (and Jesus also) was unable to have a bigger impact in his earthly ministry because of persecution, but fulfilled the calling on his life, yet the eternal impact was incalculable. The fruit of obedience to Christ is not always seen in this life but seen in eternity by the number of people we led to Christ.

Philippians 1:21-24 NKJV – **Do we realize that**

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, George H., *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Philippians*, 99-109.

**Phil. 1:24** Paul was satisfied in suffering because he saw the fruit of it in the lives of those who heard the gospel. Paul knew suffering was temporary, so this prepared him to endure, since the gospel meant eternal life for all who believe and His eternity was already secured in Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:7 **NLT**

1 Peter 4:14-16 **NLT**

**The glory of the Lord and Spirit of the Lord rests upon you as you serve Him diligently.**

**We are not victims but actually receive glory by living like Christ. We may be dishonored before the world but honored before God.**

**We understand that we are standing with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when we are put down for His sake. It is a great privilege.**

James 1:2-8 **NLT**

James 4:6-10 **NLT**

Romans 12:1-2 **NLT**

**The purpose of hardship is to form you into the image of Christ, to be a living sacrifice.**