



Brown Community Group

Discussion Guide

To Be Content: Our Suffering
Phil. 1:12-30 – September 20, 2020

I. Starter Context and Discussion to Ponder:

What comes to your mind when you hear the word “suffering”? Does it torment you with a supreme concern whereby you would do anything in your power to stay away from it? While a Godly life and decisions may mitigate some level of suffering, we know that in many situations of our life, we are utterly powerless to control or deflect suffering.

Have you ever pondered how much of the world’s or your personal suffering has been brought about by Adam and Eve’s original sin into the world, and now we are a passenger on this sin ship of unavoidable consequences? Or has God himself directed specific suffering in your personal life for a reason?

These are deep topics to ponder, but regardless of the origin of our suffering, God has taught us in His Word that we are to accept, interpret and be content in our circumstances. What an important and powerful lesson that Paul has for us today; Contentment through our suffering.

II. Discussion of Scripture:

Philippians 1:12-30

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted

to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Scripture Interpretation:

In this portion of Phillipians, Paul gives us a glimpse into his outlook in the midst of his imprisonment. This passage is a weighty example of how to have contentment in the midst of suffering. For a more in depth understanding of the circumstances surrounding Paul's imprisonment we can read Acts 20:17 thru 28:31. Insight into his sufferings throughout his ministry can be found in 2 Corinthians 11:21-31 and aspects of his final imprisonment can be found in the book of 2 Timothy.

III. Group Discussion Questions:

1. Paul lists 5 specific reasons/outcomes resulting on why he was imprisoned, so let's discuss each and its meaning:
 - a. Served to Advance the Gospel
 - b. Is for Christ
 - c. Brothers have become confident in the Lord
 - d. Bold to speak the Word without fear
 - e. Defense of the gospel
2. What is Paul's attitude toward contentment during these tough circumstances? Verses 12-18
 - a. What is Paul focusing on specifically that allows this contentment?
3. In Verses 19-26, these remarkable passages in some cases are hard to fully accept and appreciate:
 - a. What is Paul's idea or view of deliverance?
 - b. In second part of Verse 22, what is Paul really saying? What does this mean?
 - c. Why does he say that to die is gain?
 - d. Can you either fully comprehend or say with conviction that you are ready to die for gain?
 - e. Why is Paul convinced that death is not imminent for him?
 - f. In verses 25-26 what benefit do the Phillipians gain from Paul's remaining alive?
4. In verses 27-30 Paul shifts from his prerogative on his own circumstances to exhortation of his audience. What are the instructions that he gives the Phillipians? What importance does he place on their unity? How does he describe this call to unity?
5. In verse 29 why would Paul say that "Suffering is granted to them"? Why would he proclaim this as a benefit? Who is going to sign up for something when the leader trumpets that you will be suffering as a benefit of participating?
6. Think through your ability to be "content" in your suffering? Are we like Paul or on the other end of the scale with no peace and constant turmoil.
 - a. What is key as Christians to move closer to Paul's position?
7. Several of us are in a season of suffering right now; We need to pray for each other fervently and in the bond of unity as taught in this lesson.

IV. Responding in Prayer:

The truth is that in this fallen world, not one of us is a stranger to suffering. Suffering manifests itself in numerous ways. The good news for those of us who have accepted Christ as our savior is that he tasted suffering of many forms when he walked this earth and bore our ultimate suffering so that he can relate to us in the middle of our suffering on this earth and even better yet, he has replaced our destiny of eternal suffering with eternal rest and friendship with him. So for us, just as it was with Paul, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Spend your final moments in this time praying for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who are experiencing a season of suffering. Also pray for our community, that God would bring more people to a saving faith so that they too can replace eternal suffering with eternal Joy.