

Study 10: On Christ's Behalf

Philippians 1:29-30, Luke 2:25-35

Fellowship in the Spirit Phil. 2:1

Share about the strangest gift you have ever received.

Encouragement in Christ Phil. 2:1

We invite you to be still, give thanks, write a prayer, or release any concerns to Jesus.

Suffering is harder when it is confusing. Am I paying an idiot tax for my own stupidity? Is this the result of someone else's sin, spiritual warfare, a broken world—or is God using it to enlarge my heart? Maybe, maybe, maybe, and maybe. The Bible offers no single explanation for every sorrow. But it gives us three certainties: nothing is beyond God's control, no suffering need be wasted, and no suffering will last forever. At the cross, He shows us that suffering cannot mean he's abandoned us. And in the resurrection, He promises that suffering will not have the final word.
Mike Woodruff

Holding Firm to the Word of Life Phil. 2:16

Philippians 1:29-30, Luke 2:25-35

Philippians 1:29-30

29 For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer
for him, 30 since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I
have.

Luke 2:25-35

25 There was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. This man was righteous and
devout, looking forward to Israel's consolation, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been
revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's
Messiah. 27 Guided by the Spirit, he entered the temple. When the parents brought in the child
Jesus to perform for him what was customary under the law, 28 Simeon took him up in his arms,
praised God, and said,

29 Now, Master,
you can dismiss your servant in peace,
as you promised.
30 For my eyes have seen your salvation.
31 You have prepared it
in the presence of all peoples—
32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and glory to your people Israel.

33 His father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon
blessed them and told his mother Mary, "Indeed, this child is destined to cause the fall and rise
of many in Israel and to be a sign that will be opposed — 35 and a sword will pierce your own
soul—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."

Growing in Knowledge Phil.1:8

Last week, we looked at Paul's call to live a life worthy of the gospel. His exhortation is grounded in the truth that, first and foremost, we are citizens of heaven. Paul's encouragement is an invitation to enjoy all the rights and privileges of citizenship of heaven now, in the place and time in which we live. Paul also believes that a "life worthy of the gospel" is found in a surprising place…suffering for Christ.

What might Paul mean? Recall that Paul is familiar with suffering (*see 2 Corinthians 11:21-30*). Paul is not implying that suffering in and of itself is a GOOD thing. He is not glorifying the impact of disease, of broken relationships or of pain in our lives. However, Paul *does* see suffering as a place of fellowship with Jesus. He says later in Philippians 3:10, "My goal is to know [Christ] and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings…". Today we consider the grace that might be available *to us* in our suffering, through the One who came to experience suffering *for us*.

Dwell on These Things Phil. 4:8

If there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things…
And the God of peace will be with you. Philippians 4:8-9

1. The word "granted" in Greek is *charizomai* and means "gifted." In verse 29, Paul says believers are granted two gifts on Christ's behalf. What are they?

    a. What is it like to hear and to consider that suffering is, in some way, a gift from Christ?

    b. In what ways do we tend to see suffering as an interruption to the good life that we desire?

c. What comes to mind for you when Paul says “suffer for [Jesus’] sake”?

d. While we may not be held in a Roman prison or beaten for the gospel, Paul seems to assume that suffering is granted to every believer in Jesus. In what ways do we regularly face suffering as citizens of Jesus’ kingdom?

2. In verse 30, how do you think Paul and the Philippians are involved in the “same struggle” when their circumstances are so different? What do you think the struggle is, and what is the “same” about it?

   a. Do you identify with this idea that we can experience unity in suffering? Why or why not?

   b. In what ways do you experience being in the “same struggle” for the sake of Christ as other believers in your life? Are there any ways that you feel lonely in your struggles?

   c. Think about a time you’ve experienced the presence of other believers in suffering. Maybe you were the one suffering, or perhaps you were present with someone else in his/her suffering. How did you experience Jesus in that time? Share together.

3. Consider the prophecy of Simeon, given to Mary & Joseph regarding Jesus, in Luke 2. According to verses 29-32, what words stand out to you about who Jesus is and what gift He will bring?

a. In verses 34-35, what else does Simeon say will inevitably occur with the coming of this Christ child?

b. How can both of these be true– that Jesus brings *light* and *glory*, while also causing *rising, falling,* and *opposition*? What is your response to this?

c. What does opposition to the saving work of God feel like in our lives?

4. In this season of Advent, where are you waiting, longing, and hoping for the gift of Jesus in your suffering? Take time to share and pray for your sisters during this time together.



Praying with Joy Phil.1:4

Please join us in praying together Philippians 4:4-7 **in BOLD.**
Use the pause after each prayer to pray silently, even writing your prayers.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.

Practice Rejoicing! The Lord is near you right now.

Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Practice presenting your requests to God. What are they?

Practice thanking God. For what?

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

You are guarded and safe in God's peace! You can rest in it.

Let the glory of the Lord endure forever
Let the Lord be glad in His works.
I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live;
I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

Finally brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is any moral excellence and if there is anything praiseworthy—dwell on these things. Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you. *Amen.* Philippians 4:8-9