

PHILIPPIANS

UNSHAKEABLE FAITH

STUDY TOOLS

Sunday, March 2, 2025

Teaching Title: Unshakeable Perspective

Key Scripture: Philippians 1:12–18

CEDAR VALLEY

5-DAY READING PLAN WITH QUESTIONS:

Monday: Acts 16

Tuesday: Philippians 1:1–18

Wednesday: 1 Peter 4:12–19

Thursday: 2 Corinthians 4:7–18

Friday: Hebrews 12:1–13; Romans 8:18–30

1. What does this passage tell you about God?
2. What does this passage tell you about people?
3. If this is God's word, what do I need to do?
4. What's your takeaway?
5. Who would you tell?

MEMORY TOPIC:

Obstacles and opportunities

MEMORY VERSE:

Philippians 1:12 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.

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

Introduction:

In Paul's time, people often wrote letters to inform friends or family of their circumstances. It seems the church in Philippi was concerned about how Paul was doing, especially since they had heard he was in prison. They even sent a gift through their dear brother, Epaphroditus, to show their concern for him (2:25; 4:10, 14). In 1:12–18, Paul describes his present condition, and the results probably surprised them. His imprisonment, which seemed like an obstacle, became an opportunity for the gospel to spread to new audiences, strengthen other believers, and allowed him to choose joy despite his circumstances. Paul helped the church in Philippi to see their difficulties from a new perspective. Instead of viewing life's challenges as setbacks, we can see them as opportunities to advance the gospel. Life's obstacles can be your opportunities.

Questions:

Icebreaker—What is one thing that made you feel glad or grateful this week?

1. Read Philippians 1:12–18 together as a group. What might it have been like for Paul to be chained to a Roman guard all day?
2. In Philippians 1:12–14, what is Paul's attitude toward his imprisonment? Does this surprise you? What unexpected outcomes of his imprisonment does Paul mention? (Hint: there's more than one!)
3. What personal challenge or setback are you facing right now? How can you view it as an opportunity to advance the gospel?
4. How might Paul's imprisonment have encouraged other believers to speak boldly about Christ (Philippians 1:14)? How can we strengthen others through our own challenges?
5. What is one specific way you can demonstrate boldness in your faith this week, inspired by the example of the believers in Philippians?

6. Paul chose to rejoice despite his circumstances (Philippians 1:15–18). What is one area of your life where you need God to shift your perspective from seeing an obstacle to seeing an opportunity?

Notes

On Sunday, Neal shared the Good News of Jesus Christ by sharing what is commonly called the “Roman’s Road.”

1. The Good News starts with bad news. Romans 3:23 —*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Everyone is a sinner, we've all broken God's law.*
2. As a result, there are consequences. Romans 6:23—*For the wages of sin is death. There are consequences and the “death” here means separation from God—eternal separation.*
3. Real love demonstrates. Romans 5:8 (NIV)—*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* God loves us and demonstrates it in that He sent His only Son.
4. Trust. Romans 10:9–10—*If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.* The Greek word for believe is *pistis*, which means to “trust.”
5. Grace. Ephesians 2:8–9—*God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.*

Digging Deeper

Not only does the gospel advance through Paul's imprisonment, but it also advances despite bad motives. The end result is what matters to Paul—Christ is preached! With this carefully balanced structure, Paul rhetorically dismisses the effect of the false group on him. After all their efforts to oppose Paul, they succeeded in doing the one thing that matters to him most—they have preached Christ.

Structure of 1:15–18 by Frank Thielman

Paul's Friends	Paul's Rivals
preach Christ	preach Christ
out of goodwill	out of envy and rivalry
in love	from selfishness, not sincerity
knowing	supposing
that I am put here for the defense of the gospel	that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains
in truth	in falsehood

Paul is also filled with joy and expects the Philippians to be joyful also (1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17–18, 28–19; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10). The reason for this joy is not that Paul believes suffering to be good, or that people ought to force themselves to laugh at pain. Paul acknowledges the pain in his own situation and is grieved by it (2:28). Nevertheless, he knows that God is, through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, accomplishing the good purpose of reconciling the world to Himself. Thus, Paul's imprisonment enables the gospel to advance (1:12), and the Philippians' persecution affords an opportunity to shine like stars in a crooked and perverse generation (2:15).

—Frank Thielman, *The NIV Application Commentary: Philippians*. Pgs. 26, 61.