

Weekly Study of Sunday's Message

September 28, 2025 Flip it: What you meant for bad God meant for good. (Paul)

I Intro.

We're now officially in fall, and waiting for cooler weather, and we're in full swing. You'll see more opportunities for you to participate in the life of NCC. Stay connected to our social media to keep up with everything that's happening. We're glad you've chosen to join us as we move through 2025. Welcome to our companion devotional to Sunday's message. It's just a part of all we have to offer to you. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing. We hope you find this tool helpful on your spiritual journey. We don't want you to miss out on anything. We consider you part of our community. We have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can find all those through our website, app, and social media sites. Our app is the best way to livestream our services, but you can also livestream on FaceBook and YouTube. You can revisit past services, sign up for events and even give. We're encouraged by your presence when you gather with us. New and familiar faces join us every Sunday. If you join us online, we appreciate your presence. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is anything you need, prayer, or anything else, please let us know.

II Recap.

There is difficult pain in the heartbreaks and crushing events of life. This is more than just when bad things happen. This is when you are a victim of tough circumstances. When a person, or some group, brings harm to you. Either directed towards you personally. A friend, family member, co-workers, or just a person you know. Or you're a victim of a system or structures that intentionally isolate people like you. Economic, artificial, boundaries (disabilities, age, color, race, etc.) designed to make sure you aren't included in specific areas of life. We're identifying these events or structures that were meant for bad, to harm, and how they can be 'flipped' towards good.

We've hit stories of redemption. Redemption is about rescue, transformation, finding wholeness. 'Flipping it', redemption, rescuing, transformation isn't trying to erase, reverse or pretend the bad didn't happen. They are/were bad events intended to harm. This is a pathway God creates to 'flip it' to something good. Bringing good out of brokenness, freedom out of bandage, life out of death.

III Sunday.

I'm going to read this scripture outright. And then we'll see what it's rooted in.

A. Paul flips the situation without the situation changing.

Remember Paul was an intense and different kind of dude. But we can still learn from him.

Acts 28:17-20, 30-31 *Three days later he called together the local Jewish leaders. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: "My brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. The Jews objected, so I was compelled to make an appeal to Caesar. I certainly did not intend to bring any charge against my own people. For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain."*

“Therefore I want you to know that God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen!”

For two whole years Paul stayed there in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!

This is crazy talk....right?

How was Paul able to frame his situation that way?

A. How Paul flips his unchangeable bad situation into good.

This passage blows my mind. I will admit, I am far from being at the same place being able to flip what is a bad permanent situation into a good one. So, how does it do it?

1. Paul reframes his bad situation as an opportunity. Paul says chains don’t mean failure. But they become a platform for him to speak. He did this before in prison with Silas in Acts 16. This is admitting you don’t have the power or control, to actually change the situation you find yourself in. So, you have to find a way to reframe it. When you can’t control a bad situation, you still have control over how you see it. This is reframing PTSD to PTSG. **Growth.**

So, what situation, not of your choosing, do you find yourself in?

What are negative, bad, truly limiting aspects of your situation?

Identify and name them. Acknowledge how difficult they can make your life. Then;

How can you reframe your situation to see it differently?

Can you learn something you didn’t know? Are there hidden opportunities?

Can you grow in specific ways? Can you be strengthened in specific ways?

Reframing acknowledges the difficulty of your situation while refocusing on what you can and can’t control. Accepting this is your new reality. And asking; **“Now what?”** This isn’t to make everything wonderful, or the bad to disappear. It’s to allow yourself to be open to do the work of redeeming.

2. Paul discovers the freedom within his limitations. Paul can’t travel around to start churches like he once did. But he can write, teach, and encourage others. Many of his letters were written from prison. Two of the greatest, most impactful writings, were written from prison. *“Letter from a Birmingham Jail”* Dr. King *“Letters and Papers from Prison”* Dietrich Bonhoeffer. There are literally too many writings from Gandhi in prison to count. Paul not only discovered the freedom he has. But he inspired some of our most influential people to do the same. We all live with all sorts of external limitations. But none of those external limitations can take away the freedom God has given you. I’m beginning to discover what I can’t do. I have limitations placed on me. So, I now ask; **What can I do?**

3. Paul uses his bad situation (even suffering) as a way to connect with others. I need to confess; *“I have a complicated relationship with redemptive suffering.”* Redemptive suffering says suffering is necessary because it serves a greater purpose. Sometimes to a point it can be abused to tell people that they cannot try to escape bad situations. Such as slavery, abusive relationships, not confronting injustice, churches and ministers getting away with horrific

behavior, and God even causing and using inflicting pain and suffering to accomplish his purpose. I genuinely believe scripture doesn't support intentionally seeking out suffering. This belief has infected the church in our current culture. We look at opposition, or loss of privilege, as persecution. We almost seek it out and ask for it. Truth is, we will experience bad situations, and possible struggle (not sure we always SUFFER) for our beliefs. But as a byproduct of standing up for what we believe, not stoking it.

I want to frame suffering, being in situations intended for harm, not as something we just sit in and take, because it was the only way God could accomplish his purpose. What I believe Paul is saying is, *"We learn and grow in how to rejoice THROUGH our suffering not IN our suffering."* Truth be told, we connect with others more through our pain than in our victories.

How many, "we're not alcoholics or drug addicts" groups are you aware of?

When I listen to a speaker, I'm more connected to them through their struggles and difficulties than their easy life. Going through difficult times is what earned Paul the right to speak.

It will be through your tough situations, intended for harm you'll be able to connect with others.

This is the power of support groups. Find strength, encouragement, and wisdom in how to flip that bad thing, situation, even if you can't get out of it, into something good. It means you're not alone in being stuck in a bad thing.

4. Paul trusts that something bigger is happening. Paul is part of a bigger story. The situation he was in. What was happening to him. Was not the final word of the bigger story being written. What has held all of our stories in this series together. Joseph realizing even though his brothers had 'intended' calculated and planned for him to 'disappear', God's 'intended' was to do the same kind of work for good. Lamar...and his ongoing, never will end, battle with cancer, but finding God in the middle of his struggle. Esther was just going to be another beauty from Xerxes's harem pulled into being Xerxes queen. God was going to use this moment to save his people from extermination. Each of these individuals trusted that God was doing something bigger.

This works when we can look ahead by looking back. *"Yes, I'm stuck in this bad thing. And it may have even been intended to do harm." "I was in an awful situation before, had this bad thing happen to me, and I can now see how God was able to use that situation, and me, to accomplish this greater thing."*

We need to realize this tough, even bad thing, is hard. But we hold onto the truth that- *"I have the opportunity to be a part of this greater, bigger, story being written"*. This takes trust that bad is actually being flipped into good. And it will grow trust when you see it happening. None of these happen easily or overnight. They are the steady, consistent, faithful work of surrendering self, and trusting in the work of God.

5. Paul finds the positive in the bad.

Paul was able to teach unhindered because he 'flipped' his own situation. I want to read to you one of the letters he wrote from prison. Remember we're still reading it today.

Philippians 1:12-14 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Paul never let external circumstances determine his internal world. What was intended for harm, to inflict suffering on him, actually made him face and overcome his fears. The greatest win in flipping a bad thing into a good thing, is also flipping your fear, uncertainty, timidity, hesitancy into courage...and therefore action. Learning to do the things Paul did, are what's called '*transferable knowledge*'. Or what we call a '*super habit*'. **"A super habit is a practice we regularly do that grows an aspect of our character and serves as a gateway to implement other life-changing habits."** Examples are; self-discipline, looking at everything for the purpose of creating, courage (do one new thing every day, week, month) patience, etc. Since I've learned to do this, I've overcome the fear that limited and hindered me. Now when I face other things, fear doesn't have the power over me it once did. Fear is not my default reaction. This is the power of finding the positive in the bad.

IV Challenge.

So, how does Paul do it?

By changing the way he thinks. Which was at the core of his beliefs. His understanding of his relationship with Jesus, and how he lived in the world. This is what he told the church in Rome just a few years before he wrote Philippians.

Romans 12:1-3 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

This is Paul actually putting his beliefs into action. Paul had learned how to live, was practicing this, BEFORE he was thrown in prison. So when that bad thing did happen to him, he already had those skills, habits, practices in place to help him do the work of flipping a bad thing into a good thing. And it was this spiritual inner work that allowed him to be in a bad situation, intended for harm, not knowing how long it would last (rest of his life) and still flip it to good.

Okay, we've just finished another series. It's not about not being afraid. Or not acknowledging a situation is bad. We have to be honest, and real about the situations we find ourselves in. It's like Joseph, Lamar, Esther, and Paul, channeling that fear into growing courage. It's reframing, and growing the ability to allow God to flip those bad situations into good. And this is the greatest power of God using our tough situations, what was intended for harm. The greatest release from bondage is to be freed from the bondage of fear. That is an incredible, and the ultimate, transformation. And the life God wants for us. And God will give us ALL we need to flip those bad situations into something good.

What situations, or difficult places are you in, that you need what only God can give to help you in that situation? Ask God for what you need.