

Small Groups

Fall Semester 2026



About Session 3:

Please Read: —————→

Memory verse:
*“For to me to live
is Christ, and to
die is gain.”*
(Philippians 1:21)

In Philippians 1:12–18, Paul emphasizes that joy is not dependent on our circumstances. His situation is particularly compelling because he writes from prison. Instead of focusing on his chains, Paul directs his attention to what God is achieving through his circumstances. His imprisonment has actually helped advance the Gospel, and it has encouraged other believers to speak about Christ more boldly. Even when some preach Christ with improper motives, Paul chooses to rejoice because Christ is being proclaimed. His perspective serves as a reminder that, despite difficult circumstances, God is still at work. We find joy when we learn to look beyond our current situations and recognize what God may be doing through us.

In verses 19–30, Paul expands on his perspective. He is confident that God will be glorified regardless of whether he lives or dies, stating, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” His primary desire is not personal comfort, but rather that Christ would be honored through his life. Paul then challenges the Philippians to live in a manner that reflects the gospel, encouraging them to stand together with courage even in the face of opposition. For Paul, suffering is not a sign that God has abandoned them; instead, it can be an opportunity to demonstrate the reality of their faith. Joy during trials arises when Christ becomes greater than our circumstances, comfort, and even our fears.



Before You Watch:

+ Joy is not the absence of trials; it is the presence of God in the midst of them.

+ Think about this question throughout the lesson: *What is the source of my joy?*

Brief Overview | Philippians 1:12-30

Paul offers the Philippians a fresh perspective on his situation. Although he is writing from prison, he does not see his suffering as a setback. Instead, he recognizes that God is using his imprisonment to advance the Gospel, deepen his devotion to Christ, and strengthen his testimony.

Paul's joy is not based on the absence of trials; rather, it stems from the knowledge that Christ is being honored through his circumstances. Whether he lives or dies, succeeds or suffers, remains imprisoned or is released, his ultimate desire remains the same: that Christ would be magnified in his life.

Key Thought: *Our circumstances may change, but our joy can remain when our focus remains on Christ and His purposes.*

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1. Trials can advance the Gospel — v. 12–18

*“T I want you to know, brothers,[a] 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.”*

2. Trials can deepen my devotion to Christ — v. 19–26

*“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.

3. Trials can strengthen my testimony — v. 27–30

*“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.*

Discussion Questions:

- 1. Discuss this statement: “One of the clearest signs of spiritual maturity is the ability to safeguard our joy from being diminished by adversity or a negative attitude.”**
- 2. Read Philippians 1:21 again, what is Paul’s purpose in sharing this verse?**