

## HIS STORY

### Paul Desires the Gospel to Advance

Difficult circumstances often visit us as well, and just like He did with Paul, God uses our hardships to bring attention to Christ. But that seems counterintuitive to most of us. We want to see Paul as the exception—that God used Paul despite his adversity. We want to believe that Paul was hindered in his imprisonment. Yes, he was able to share the gospel, but imagine how much more he could have shared the gospel if he had been free. But that is not how Paul saw it, and this is the mind-set we need to resist. God didn't work despite Paul's difficulties; He worked through them.

### ► How have you seen God use suffering—yours or someone else's—to make much of Jesus?

### Making Much of Jesus by Living Or by Dying

As we read these verses, we can feel the internal struggle along with Paul. He was wedged between two worlds, and he was torn between them. On one hand, Paul knew his appeal to Caesar would possibly lead to his execution, which meant he would be with Jesus. And that was a thought that captivated Paul's mind and heart. To look into the face of the Christ he encountered on the Damascus road. To trade his sorrow for ultimate joy. To exchange chains for crowns. No wonder Paul saw death as gain.

However, Paul wanted to keep breathing. He wanted to leave prison on his two feet, not in a coffin. Not because he was afraid of dying—we have already seen that he longed to be with Christ—but because there was still more fruitful work to be done for Christ. Paul wanted to continue the mission God had given him to push the gospel farther and faster. Death would be gain for him, but life would be Christ—every minute of every day God gave him would be lived to reveal Jesus.

### Standing Firm Through Suffering

Paul was telling the church exactly what they needed to hear. He did not want them to see his adversity as something distant, something they were detached from in Philippi. They needed to be ready. If it wasn't already there, opposition was coming and they needed to prepare for it—standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel. They would suffer for Christ. They were engaged in the same struggle as Paul. Were they ready?

### Essential Doctrines

**Edification:** *Edification refers to the progressive growth and maturity of the church, both individually and collectively. The Bible talks about different ways maturity, or edification, may happen such as through the fellowship Christians share with one another (1 Cor. 12:26; Gal. 6:2). In addition, edification takes place through the church's preaching and teaching of Scripture (Eph. 4:11-12), helping people understand and internalize the whole counsel of God. In the end, edification is building up the body of Christ, equipping people to live on mission for the kingdom of God.*

**Leader Note:** *Because some content from the Personal Study Guide will not be available on the One Sheet, make sure to adapt the session based on how you use the material with your group.*

