Where’s God in This? September 16, 2018

*Philippians 1:12-18 Series: Inextinguishable Joy*

God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world. – C. S. Lewis

Intro: What it will take to convince a watching world?

1. Love God’s glory more than your comfort. (vv. 12-13)
2. What ‘happens to us’ tests our love.

v. 12 *what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel*

v. 12 *I want you to know*

We need to move from “Why didn’t God prevent it?” to “How is God using it?”

Philip Yancey: In Gethsemane, [Jesus] did not pray, “Thank you for this opportunity to suffer,” but rather pled desperately for an escape. And yet he was willing to undergo suffering in service of a higher goal.

1. Some people will only be reached through our suffering.

v. 13 *it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ*

2 Corinthians 4:11 *For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.*

* If Paul didn’t love God’s glory more than his comfort, how might he have reacted to the news that the gospel was spreading through his imprisonment?
* How can you tell if you love God’s glory more than comfort?
* How does our suffering make it easier for others to see Jesus?

1. Love God’s glory more than your freedom. (v. 14)
2. Loss of freedom tests our love.

v. 14 *my imprisonment*

2 Timothy 3:12 *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted*

Philip Yancey: When I stub my toe or twist an ankle, pain loudly announces to my brain that something is wrong. Similarly, the existence of suffering on this earth is, I believe, a scream to all of us that something is wrong. It halts us in our tracks and forces us to consider other values.”

1. Some believers will only be matured through our suffering.

v. 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.*

* Why does persecution follow a desire to live a godly life?
* What were some of the things that made the believers in Rome timid in their faith?
* What are some of the things that make you timid in your witness?
* Why did Paul’s imprisonment make the other believers more bold?

1. Love God’s glory more than your reputation. (vv. 15-18)
2. Personal attacks test our love.

v. 15 *Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will.*

v. 17 *The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.*

Matthew 5:11 *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*

1. Unjust suffering shows our faith in a different Judge.

Acts 5:41 *Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*

Romans 12:19-20 *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.”*

Conclusion: When our world is falling apart we see whether Jesus is our pearl of great price or just a religious veneer. And the world sees, too, and takes notice!

* In what sense, was the attack from envious rival preachers harder to endure than the imprisonment itself?
* How does God’s justice encourage you when you experience people’s injustice?
* How can personal attacks be an opportunity to give God glory?

Study ahead: Next week, we’ll study Philippians 1:19-26

Notes