



- The question is not, "Will I suffer?" (John 16:33)
- The question is, "Will I suffer with purpose and joy?"

Big Idea: True joy is found in Christ-centered suffering.

1.) The joyful believer sees Christ in spite of difficult *Circumstances* (v. 12-14).

- v. 12 – "...*what has happened to me...*" (Acts 21:27-28, 2 Cor. 11:23-29)
- **In spite of his extremely difficult circumstances, Paul is joyful because he loves Christ more than *Comfort*.**
 - Comfort is one of our culture's most exalted pursuits.
 - Consistent joy in Christ requires a delight in Christ that supersedes comfort.
- **Joy in difficult circumstances is about the forward progress of the *Gospel*.**
 - v. 12-14 – Paul's joy in his circumstances is entirely Gospel-centered.
 - v. 12 – Paul recognized how God was using circumstances he might not like to proclaim the message that he loved.
 - v. 13 – Paul saw his imprisonment as a n opportunity for evangelism.
 - v. 14 – Paul's joy in hardship inspired others who loved him to take up his mantle and follow his example.
- ***Don't let difficult circumstances steal your joy. Rather, see Christ at work in your troubles and rejoice in God's purpose.***

2.) The joyful believer sees Christ in spite of difficult *People* (v. 15-20).

- v. 15 – "...*some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry...*"
 - The problem with these teachers is wrong motives, not wrong theology.
 - In their desire to exalt themselves over Paul, they were stirring up rivalry and strife.
- v. 15-16 – Motives matter: God takes note not only of *what* we say but also *why* we say it.
- **Unbiblical thinking about *Suffering* only adds to affliction.**
 - Two False Theologies that Make Suffering Worse:

1.) “All suffering is chastening from God.” (John 9:1-3)

2.) “Word of Faith” Theology – “The reason you are suffering is because you do not have enough faith.”

-- **Paul is joyful because he loves Christ more than *Human Praise*.**

-- v. 18 – The truth of the message is more important than the package in which it comes.

-- Paul is far more interested in winning praise for Christ than winning praise from people.

-- *Don't let difficult people steal your joy. Rather, seek to honor Christ and rejoice in the hope of the Gospel.*

Application:

Don't just endure suffering; use it for the glory of God.

-- **In your suffering, let God do something good *In* you.**

-- Romans 5:3-5, 1 Peter 4:12-13

-- John Piper – “This is God's universal purpose for all Christian suffering: more contentment in God and less satisfaction in the world.”

-- **In your suffering, let God do something good *Through* you.**

-- 2 Corinthians 1:3-7

-- Let not one ounce of our suffering will be wasted, but in it and through it, let God be glorified as the Gospel goes forward.