

PHILIPPIANS

Rejoice In
The Lord!

When Bad Is Good

Lesson Six

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Lesson Goal: To help students see that bad circumstances can be good.

Scriptures: Philippians 1:12-14

For Memory: “Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.” Philippians 1:14

When Bad is Good

The story of the imprisonment of Paul in Rome is told in Acts 21-28. It is a long story that may be abbreviated like this: The Apostle Paul was doing his best to be what God wanted him to be. He worshipped God in the Temple in Jerusalem. Because Paul had brought Trophimus (Tro'-fi-muss) with him to Jerusalem, the Jews attacked him for bringing a Gentile into the temple. There is no indication that Trophimus, from Ephesus, was ever in the Temple. The Romans, who ruled the Jews, didn't want problems, so they arrested Paul to save him from an angry mob who might have killed him.*

Later, Paul told the Roman soldiers who had put him in prison that he was a Roman citizen. When you were a Roman citizen, special rules applied to you that didn't apply to those who were citizens of one of the countries that Rome had conquered. After a long time in prison, Paul was granted his request to be tried, as a Roman citizen, before the emperor, the ruler over all of Rome.

He was sent to the capitol city, Rome, which is, today, in the same place it was back then. He was put in prison there. Later, he was allowed to live outside the prison, but was always chained to a Roman soldier. That is how he was living when he wrote to the church at Philippi. So, in our verses for today, Paul says that even though he is chained to a soldier, God is making good things happen.

For a long time, Paul's great desire had been to go to this great city, and tell people about Jesus. Paul was a planner. There are some people who seem to take pride in never planning anything. If Paul had never planned for what he felt God calling him to do, he might have died in the jail at Caesarea Philippi. That's where he was sent from Jerusalem so that the Jews couldn't harm him. God told Israel that He had plans for them. That applies to each of us. Paul was determined to fulfill what he understood as God's plan for him to go to Rome as a preacher. He didn't get to do it that way, so he went as a prisoner.

But, while he was there, chained to a guard, he did preach...that is, tell the Good News...the Gospel. He could tell everyone that God had sent Jesus into the world

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to live and die for every person who ever lived. And, believing in Jesus, they could have eternal life with God. Paul says that everything that had happened to him, though difficult and frustrating, may not have happened exactly as he had planned it, but God did allow him to accomplish his ambition to preach the Gospel in Rome.

He says that all the soldiers in the palace guard, the special military people assigned to the emperor, had come to know that Paul was there because he was a special messenger of Jesus Christ. He was not just some crook.

He goes on to say that not only the palace guard was aware of this, but that everyone who had contact with the guards knew it. He was very effective as a witness for Christ, even as a prisoner.

In our memory verse for today, Paul says that because he was willing to be used by God in his most difficult circumstances, other believers had become much more courageous. They had become fearless in giving their testimonies, encouraging unbelievers to consider Jesus as their Savior.

What we need to learn from this lesson is that we are not always going to have the best circumstances for telling others about Jesus. That didn't stop Paul, and it shouldn't stop us. Even when bad things happen to us, with God's help, they can be good things.

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.



Teaching Tips:

1. You may want to spend more time discussing the arrest, trials, and imprisonment of Paul as found in Acts, chapters 21 through 28.
2. Songs that emphasize Christian commitment, Christian service, and God's care and protection for us will be appropriate.
3. Pray with your students about overcoming circumstances that seem to hinder us from fully following God's will.
4. Paul's references to preaching in Rome are in Acts 19:21 and Romans 1:15.
5. The Greek word translated advance (furtherance in KJV), in verse 12, means "first advance." Paul saw his ministry like that of the soldiers/engineers who go ahead of the army to make the way passable.
6. You should place emphasis on telling the Good News, no matter what the circumstances.

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Student Worksheet

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For Memory: “Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.” Philippians 1:14

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=The Romans, who ruled the Jews, didn't want problems, so they _____ Paul to save him from an angry mob who might have _____ him.

=After a long time in prison, Paul was granted his _____ to be tried, as a Roman citizen, before the emperor, the ruler over all of _____.

=In our verses for today, Paul says that even though he is chained to a _____, God is making _____ things happen.

=God told Israel that He had _____ for them. That applies to each of _____.

=Paul says that _____ that had happened to him may not have gone exactly as he had planned it, but God allowed him to accomplish his ambition to _____.

=What we need to learn from this lesson is that we are not _____ going to have the best circumstances for _____ others about _____. That didn't stop Paul, and it shouldn't _____ us.

=When _____ things happen to us, with God's help, they can be _____ things.

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that there is a God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.

Fifth, believe that He has answered your prayer and be determined to live for him all the rest of your life.