

**Thank you, Alexis Brown!**  
**Speaker for today**

### **Paul's "Light Affliction"**

2 Corinthians 11:24-28. *"Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent adrift at sea. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers at sea, dangers among false brothers; I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches.*

2 Corinthians 4:17 *"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."*

### **No July Birthdays**

#### **Regular Meeting Times**

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.

Sunday.....10:45 a.m.

Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

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# **Indio Informer**

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## **The Benefits of Being in Prison**

(Philippians 1:12-14)

By Mike Johnson

*"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."*

Philippians 1:12-14

Many think that Paul wrote the book of Philippians during his imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28) when he was subject to house arrest. He was in chains and guarded by a Roman soldier (16, 20). Despite his misfortunes, Paul's letter to the Philippians is full of joy. The words "joy" or "rejoice" occur seventeen times in this short book. The book's theme is considered to be in 4:17, where he says, *"Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!"* With this outlook, it is not surprising to see Paul focusing on the positive and even being able to see some benefits of being in prison. Verses 12-14 show how people can do the work of God even though circumstances might be harsh. Consider some lessons.

### **Bad Can Be Good**

In verse 12, Paul said his imprisonment furthered the gospel ("advanced" NIV). How is this possible? It seems the opposite would have happened: preaching the gospel would have been hindered. Being in Rome, however, gave Paul the chance to preach God's Word there. In verse 13, he points out that it became evident to the "whole palace guard" that he was not a criminal but was

being punished for his religious beliefs. They saw that Paul was not a typical prisoner.

In 1 Peter 4:14-16, the writer points out the shame of being imprisoned for being an evildoer, a murderer, or a thief. However, there is no shame in suffering for doing what is right. Verse 16 of 1 Peter 4 says, *“Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.”* Paul was suffering as a Christian. The “whole palace guard” noticed this, which may indicate some conversions from their ranks. In closing this letter, he said, *“All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household”* (4:22). Some from Caesar’s household were converted.

### **Courage Can Be Contagious**

A second positive from his imprisonment is in verse 14. Paul’s situation caused many saints to become bolder and speak God’s Word without fear. Again, one would think the opposite would have occurred. Seeing Paul in prison might have caused people to stop preaching God’s Word, but it did not.

Christians need to have courage. Besides being how God wants us to be, doing so encourages other Christians to be bold and do the right thing. One courageous act can inspire others. In a group situation, one person standing up for what is right is often all it takes to get others to do the same thing. 1 Corinthians 16:13 says, *“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.”*

Paul obviously would have preferred not to be in prison. But, like Paul, there are things to be thankful for in all adversity and for which we can rejoice (1 Thessalonians 5:16, 18). Today, we must learn to make the best of adversity, using it for whatever good we can. The problem may be sickness, persecution, or loss of loved ones. Whatever the hardship, we can always gain from it (James 1:2-3). Also, like Paul, we should take advantage of all kinds of situations and teach others. Who would have thought that Paul could have turned his difficult situation into an opportunity for so much good?

## **Access to God Through Jesus**

By Kevin Cauley

In Revelation 4:8, the four living creatures cry out, *“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come.”* God is holy; He is above and beyond all created things. He is unknowable unless He reveals Himself to us. *“For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:11). No created thing has direct access to God. *“No man has seen God at any time”* (John 1:18, 1 John 4:12). Paul affirms this also in 1 Timothy 6:16: *“who only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power eternal. Amen.”*

This was one of Job’s many problems. He begged for access to God, but never got what he desired. When God showed up, it was not to give Job access, but a stinging rebuke. Job said, *“Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes”* (Job 42:6). Job remained cut off from what He was ultimately seeking from God. He did not find a mediator that could intervene on His behalf before God (Job 9:33).

Job’s problem is all of humanity’s problem. Who may approach God? Thank God for Jesus! He resolves this problem by being both God and man. John wrote further in John 1:18, *“the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* Jesus literally interprets who God is for us so that we may know and have access Him. *“For through Him we both have our access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* (Ephesians 2:18). What a great blessing! If we pray to God today, thank Jesus.

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