



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

1, 2 Peter, Jude Sermon Series

Supports Session 6: Our Defense

Sermon Title: “Proclaiming Christ In Hardship” (Philippians 1:12-21)

Connection to Session 6

Peter’s letter teaches us that we should not be surprised when we encounter suffering and hardship for the sake of righteousness. Instead, we should understand that we are blessed as our suffering draws us closer to Jesus. Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi reflects this truth. He used his imprisonment to proclaim Christ to others.

Introduction/Opening

Hardship attracts attention. If we see someone struggling, we tend to want to investigate. If one of our children comes home discouraged or disappointed, we will start asking questions. If we see a jovial coworker acting somber, we will want to know if something is wrong. When we are the ones experiencing the hardship, we would be wise to know that others are watching and that we could be given a chance to influence. In today’s message, we will see that Paul was in prison for sharing the gospel. But he did not use this hardship to focus on himself. Instead, he used it as an opportunity to share the gospel with others.

Outline

1. We must maintain proper perspective (vv. 12-14)

- a. *It’s not about circumstances.* Paul did not focus on his circumstances. He was imprisoned for sharing the gospel. He could have been upset over his circumstances, and he had an audience that would listen to him. At no point, though, do we find him less than optimistic when his circumstances were less than ideal. We, like Paul, will have a choice when facing hardship. We can try to make it all about us, or we can use our circumstances as an opportunity to share the gospel with those around us.
- b. *It’s about advancing the gospel.* Paul never denied that he was in prison for sharing the gospel. He accepted the reality of his situation. Since he was not making it about himself, he used his circumstances to advance the gospel. The word “gospel” means good news. Paul had good news to share even while dealing with hardship. Not only was he sharing good news, but he was also seeing growth in brothers and sisters in Christ who had “gained confidence in the Lord” and were speaking “the word fearlessly” (v. 14). If Paul was focused on something other than the gospel, he would have been less apt to talk about Jesus because he would have been talking about himself.

2. We must preach Christ alone (vv. 15-19)

- a. *Preach out of love.* We know that there is one gospel, which is Christ crucified and raised again. We can discern, however, that some preach this message for

various reasons. To preach Christ out of envy and rivalry is to place self in the spotlight and compare self to others. Paul did not do this. Instead, he preached Christ “out of love” (v. 16). The word used here for love is not a word of affection or desire. Instead, it is a deep-seated love; a love that is willing to give one’s total being for the object of that love. It is a love that a parent feels for a child and is willing to lay down one’s life for that child. When we are experiencing hardships, as Paul was, we may gain an audience with those who are typically closed to the gospel. Since we have a deep-seated love for family and friends, let’s share the good news of Jesus with them. When we do this, we begin to make sense of a possible reason for the hardship.

- b. *We can rejoice.* The hardship Paul was facing was not something to rejoice over. Yet, he was able to articulate that he rejoiced and would continue to rejoice. His focus was not self or hardship; his focus was the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus. If we focus on our hardships, it becomes much more difficult to rejoice. If, however, we are like Paul and focus on the opportunity to share Jesus with others, then we can rejoice like he did even during hardship.

3. Never give up hope (vv. 20-21)

- a. *Hope that Christ is honored.* Paul stated that he had “eager expectation and hope” (v. 20). This is yet another example of Paul focused upon Christ and not his current circumstance. His expectation and hope were that Christ would be “highly honored in my body” (v. 20). Paul was not content with merely honoring Jesus; Paul wanted Jesus to be highly honored. To honor someone means to lift or place another ahead of self. We can be encouraged by the actions of Paul as evidence that we can follow the example he set before us.
- b. *Hope of glory.* Paul did not know how his time in prison would end, but he was confident in the ending. If his captors were to set him free, then he would continue to proclaim the gospel of Jesus. If, however, they were to kill him, then that would be his gain. As we face our hardships today, let us as followers of Jesus, embrace this truth. If the Lord allows us to survive, then He is not finished with us yet. If He calls us home to Himself in glory, then it is our gain. The hardship will not win as we are victorious in Christ.

Conclusion

Hardships are inevitable and difficult, but we have a choice. If we know Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can focus on self and allow the hardship to win, or we can focus on Jesus and find hope even within the struggle. Those without Jesus also have a choice. You can try to fight the hardship alone, or you can look for the love of Christ in the hardship. Christ is aware of your hardship and can use it to save you from a future hardship of eternity apart from Him. If you are experiencing hardship and do not know Jesus, do not leave here today without asking Him to guide you through the current hardship and save you from an eternal hardship.

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