

Personal setback = gospel advance

discussion guide

based on **Philippians 1.12-30**

which can be accessed at www.stjamesbythepark.org/current-sermon-series

This is part of our series looking at Philippians ("church: family on mission")

Intro: Paul is writing from prison, yet is very thankful and full of joy. What has helped you to find things to be thankful for even in the midst of very difficult situations?

It's worth taking some time to watch this 9-minute video introduction to Philippians - <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/philippians/> Feel free to pause it at various points because there's a lot in there!

Read Philippians 1.12-30

v12-14 Paul's adversity has led to gospel advance. Think through how this might have happened in practice.

Can you think of times when personal setback has led to gospel advance (either from your own life, or that of others)?

v15-18 Whilst Paul is in prison, some preachers are obviously denouncing Paul but still proclaiming Jesus. How can you test the authenticity of Christian leaders? How have you seen God work even through those who have selfish ambition?

v19-20 What has helped Paul survive his imprisonment? How can you lean on the support of others and the Holy Spirit when you're in difficulties?

v21-26 Paul knows there are 2 possible outcomes for him: execution or release. He comes to the incredible conclusion that execution would be his personal preference (because he would get to be with Christ), but release would be better for others (because he could carry on telling more people about Jesus and building up churches). What do you find comforting about these verses? What do you find challenging?

v27-30 Paul knows the Jesus-followers will suffer, but mustn't be frightened. Instead they should stand firm in one spirit. How could fear of opposition undermine the Christian message?

How does this passage speak to our desire to be a God-dependent, grace-filled, Bible-based, mission-focused, authentic community?

Up (love God): Paul's passion for Jesus and the gospel is incredible. Pray that God would increase your passion for Jesus.

In (love each other): When faced with opposition, how could you help each other 'stand firm in one spirit, contending as one person for the faith of the gospel' (v27)?

Out (reach the world): pray for churches elsewhere in the world, and Christians in this country, who face severe opposition for their faith. Pray by name for your friends who are most hardened against the gospel message.

Continue to spend time discussing the 7 mission priority areas and your individual / collective response to them.