

Philippians 1:12-14
The Power of Chains

Suffering servants ...

I. Imprisoned Apostles

- A. Bound for Christ
- B. Undeterred Testimony
- C. Powerful Impact

II. Inspired Saints

- A. Surprising Source
- B. Christ-centered Confidence
- C. Emboldened Believers

III. Liberated Sinners

- A. God's Mysterious Ways
- B. His Faithful Witnesses

... advance the Gospel.

Children, Listen ...

1. Why were Paul and his friends in jail?
2. Did everyone who knew Jesus love Him and His message? What happened to Him?
3. Should Christians be surprised when people don't like them or the message they bring?
4. Does God sometimes use the suffering of His people to get His message out to others?
5. Did Paul being in jail worry the other Christians or make him bolder?

Courage or Cowardice

Jesus said to His disciples: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." John 15:18

The apostle John wrote: Do not be surprised, brothers, that the world hates you. 1 John 3:13

Jesus said to Ananias about Paul: "I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." Act 9:16

And as Paul writes this letter to the church at Philippi we find Paul in chains for Christ because he was faithfully telling people the Good News of Salvation. His imprisonment, according to our text, has two strange effects. Saints are inspired by it, and sinners hear the Gospel because of it. This is just one of the many mysterious ways the Lord works. What may be most surprising to us is the way the believers familiar with Paul's circumstances responded, because (if we are believers) we wonder how it would impact our witness if our companions in Christ were imprisoned, persecuted or even martyred for the cause of Christ. Would it embolden us or frighten us – would we be more courageous or more cowardly? We have not experienced persecution to any serious degree in our country, and we need to thank the Lord for that! But we don't want to become soft. It seems to be a unique trait of American Christianity that, because things have been so good here by and large, we are surprised when the world doesn't love us – when we get any pushback for our faith or convictions. But that is contrary to what we are told to expect. May God grant us the grace to be His faithful witnesses whatever comes to pass. And may we be inspired by the faithful witness of others who suffer for Christ to be bold and witnesses, all the more, while we have the luxurious freedom most of our brothers and sisters do not enjoy.