

**“But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.” Philippians 1:12**

Paul was probably the most effective Christian missionary in history. His dynamic evangelistic and Bible teaching ministry resulted in many conversions and the subsequent formation of several Asian and European churches. Far from robbing the apostle of his effectiveness his imprisonment actually led to the advancement of the gospel. First, Paul diligently witnessed to his captors who were taken from the ranks of the elite palace guard (Phil. 1:13; in this verse “palace” is literally *Praetorium*, i.e. the place of the powerful royal bodyguards.) Second, the curtailment of his public preaching ministry, coupled with his resolute courage in the face of danger, motivated other Christians to begin proclaiming the good news of Christ in place of the incarcerated apostle.

Paul’s example leads one to ask oneself: Am I willing to suffer that the gospel may progress to lost souls? Do the problems of life open up avenues to glorify the Lord? Christians must pray to discern how they may use every occasion to witness to the lost, as well as grow in personal dependence on the Lord. A good friend once told me how terminal cancer opened doors for him to share the good news of Christ with many people that he otherwise would not have met. I can testify that my personal affliction of cerebral palsy has taught me much about the Lord’s powerful mercy, as well as providing numerous opportunities to share Christ with people who suffer physically. Praise God that He sovereignly uses the hard things of life to bless and save people!