

Training for God's Purpose



David Wilkerson (1931-2011) May 9, 2018

"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 is telling the Christians in Philippi not to worry about all the things he had endured.

Interestingly, Paul wrote this epistle while bound in a Roman prison. At that point he was a seasoned warrior of the gospel, having endured every conceivable hardship. If you have studied Paul's life, you know the kinds of things he had faced: shipwrecks; beatings; mockings; hunger and thirst; defamation of character. And, sadly, Paul's worst afflictions had come at the hands of those who called themselves born-again believers.

Some of Paul's opponents were envious church leaders who turned their entire congregations against him. They ridiculed his lifestyle, mocked his preaching, misrepresented his message, and questioned his authority. Everywhere Paul went it seemed that he was met with trouble and sorrow.

But listen to his testimony! "None of these things move me" (Acts 20:24). And another place he said, "No one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this ... We told you before when we were with you that we would suffer tribulation" (1 Thessalonians 3:3-4).

Paul was not complaining, he was reassuring these believers. "Why are you so surprised? I've told you all along that if you are going to walk with Jesus, you will face afflictions." This goes directly against a philosophy in today's American Church that says, "If you have your faith worked out correctly, you will prosper and not suffer." But that is not what the Bible teaches.

God certainly has the power to keep us from all afflictions, but he allows us to go through certain things. Every trial God allows is an investment he is making in us, a training exercise behind which is a divine purpose. Listen to what the psalmist says, "For You, O God, have tested us; You have refined us as silver is refined" (Psalm 66:10).

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