

Progress Through Pain

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Sermon Synopsis

This episode of *World Impact*, titled **“Called to Change the World: Progress Through Pain,”** unfolds amid the ancient stones and flowing waters of Philippi, where the Apostle Paul once preached and suffered for the Gospel. Dr. Billy Wilson delivers a powerful message from this historic site, reminding believers that spiritual progress is often born in pain. Drawing from Paul’s journey to Philippi—sparked by a divine vision in Troas—he reveals how every true call to leadership and transformation carries with it seasons of trial. Just as Paul’s imprisonment produced the epistle of joy, our own hardships can become the womb of divine breakthrough when surrendered to Christ.

Standing near Lydia Springs, the place where Europe first heard the Gospel through the conversion of Lydia, Dr. Wilson connects this sacred beginning to a timeless truth: the advancement of God’s Kingdom often flows through the rivers of suffering. Drawing from Genesis 3:15, he unpacks the “garden principle”—that victory always bears the marks of battle. Pain, he explains, is not punishment but participation in Christ’s redemptive work. Just as Paul and Silas faced the constricting spirit of oppression in Philippi, modern believers, too, encounter resistance that seeks to stifle the Spirit’s move. Yet, in worship and perseverance, the chains of oppression are broken, and the Gospel advances anew.

Through a close study of Philippians, Dr. Wilson outlines Paul’s four keys to enduring as a world changer: confidence in Christ, the mindset of the Master, a forward-facing faith, and joy in the journey. These principles form a roadmap through the crucible of leadership—showing that joy and pain coexist in the life of every believer called to make a difference. Each hardship becomes a step toward transformation, forging character and faith that influence the world for Christ.

The message culminates with a heartfelt invitation to embrace the refining process of pain as a means of spiritual progress. From the ruins of Philippi to the hearts of believers today, the call

resounds: to lead, to persevere, and to rejoice through the struggle. This episode reminds viewers that in the Kingdom of God, pain is never wasted—every trial is a step forward, and every scar a testimony of His redeeming power.

Sermon Highlights

- Leadership and changing the world for Christ often involves enduring pain, as evident in the experiences of Paul and Silas in Philippi. Through their suffering and imprisonment, they witnessed God's power and shared the Gospel, demonstrating that progress in the Kingdom of God is frequently birthed from pain.
- Paul's letter to the Philippians from his Roman imprisonment is a testament to enduring faith and perseverance. Despite his own suffering, he encourages the believers in Philippi to remain steadfast and confident in their faith, assuring them that their struggle is not in vain and that they are part of a grander vision for the world.
- Adopting the mindset of Christ is key for those who wish to change the world. Paul highlights the importance of having the same attitude as Jesus, who humbled Himself and became obedient to death on the cross, setting a supreme example of selflessness and sacrificial love.
- Paul urges believers to always face forward, pressing on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. He emphasizes the necessity of forgetting the past and striving towards the future, even when pain and difficulties threaten to hold us back.
- Expressing joy in the journey is crucial, even amidst suffering. Paul calls the church to rejoice in the Lord always, underscoring that the true joy of a Christian is found not in the absence of trouble but in the presence of God, who provides strength and comfort in all circumstances.

Scripture Verses

Philippians 1:29-30

For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

Philippians 1:13-14

As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

Philippians 2:5-11

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 3:7-14

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 2:17-18

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

Quotes

- "Many times leadership, many times changing the world and giving our lives for Christ produces pain. And yet always in the midst of pain when we suffer for God, we make progress." - Dr. Billy Wilson

- "Without pain, there's no progress for God. It takes pain to make progress in the Kingdom of God." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "If you're not hurting, you're not leading. Your vision for the future has to be big enough to propel you to face the heartaches and struggles you'll find along the way." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "When you crush Satan's head, you wind up bruised to some degree. Progress in the kingdom of God, world change, changing the world for Jesus Christ, always causes us pain." - Dr. Billy Wilson
- "Joy is not necessarily the absence of suffering. It is the presence of God." - Sam Storms

Bible Study

Objectives

- To understand the Biblical principle that progress in God's kingdom often involves pain and hardship.
- To gain insight from the life of Paul and his teachings to the church at Philippi regarding suffering.
- To discover personal resilience and joy in the face of trials through a Biblical perspective.

Reading and Reflections

- Philippians 1:29-30 - Embracing suffering for Christ as a gift for the progress of the gospel.
- Philippians 1:13-14, 2:5-11, 3:13-14, 4:4 - Exhortations to be confident, adopt Jesus' mindset, face forward, and find joy.

Key Observations

- Paul's perseverance and joy amidst suffering serve as a model for Christian leadership.
- Progress for the sake of the Gospel is often intertwined with personal and collective hardship.
- Suffering, when embraced with the perspective of Christ, leads to growth and spiritual maturity.

Personal Reflections

- Consider times when you've encountered pain and hardship. Reflect on how these experiences may have contributed to your spiritual growth.
- Contemplate Paul's joy and confidence in prison. How can his example inform your response to current struggles?
- Identify areas in your life where you may be resisting pain that could lead to progress in your faith.

Lessons for Daily Life

- Develop a robust faith that expects and endures hardships as a part of the Christian journey.
- Cultivate a mindset that seeks to serve and uplift others even through personal suffering.
- Prioritize spiritual growth and Kingdom progress over personal comfort and ease.

Practical Applications

- Implement a daily practice of rejoicing, as Paul instructs, regardless of circumstances.
- Engage in acts of service as a means of developing the mindset of Christ.
- Write down and verbally declare affirmations of confidence in Christ during times of hardship.

Challenges for the Week

- Every morning, declare your confidence in God's faithfulness to complete His work in you.
- Choose to perform at least one selfless act of service daily to cultivate the mindset of Christ.
- Identify a past or present pain and find a way to use it as a catalyst for growth and encouragement to others.

Further Study

- Read the Book of Philippians in its entirety, reflecting on the themes of suffering and joy.
- Study the lives of other Biblical characters who experienced progress through pain (e.g., Joseph, David).
- Explore other New Testament passages that speak to suffering and endurance (e.g., James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:12-19).

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You with hearts open to Your Word and Your ways. Teach us, O Lord, to see the purpose in our pain and the progress in our trials. Help us to embrace suffering with the confidence and joy of the Apostle Paul, that we may be steadfast in our pursuit of Your Kingdom. Grant us the grace to serve selflessly, to press forward with relentless faith, and to rejoice evermore in the journey You have set before us. May our lives reflect Your strength and glory as we become agents of change in this world for Your honour. In Jesus' Name, we pray, amen.

Daily Devotionals

Day 1: The Power in Suffering for Christ

Scripture Verse

Philippians 1:29-30 - 'For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.'

Reflection

Beloved, when we engage in the narrative of Paul's journey to Philippi and his tribulations there, we are reminded of the heavy cost of discipleship. Paul's life exemplifies that the path to divine purpose is often paved with suffering. Our faith walk isn't exempt from this reality; for as gold is refined through fire, so is our character molded in the furnace of trials. Consider Joseph, who was cast into a pit and later imprisoned, yet these painful experiences propelled him into his God-ordained destiny as a leader in Egypt. Like Paul and Joseph, we are called to a holy resilience that forges greatness from the grit of our struggles. When we endure suffering for Christ, we are enfolded into the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming co-heirs with Him in His glory. Today, let's look beyond our sufferings and see the expanse of progress and purpose they draw us into. Embrace the pain, knowing that through it, our testimony is fortified and our faith made unshakeable.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, grant me the courage to embrace the sufferings I face for the cause of Christ. As Paul rejoiced in his chains, help me to find joy in the midst of trials, knowing that through these, Your purpose for me is fulfilled. Amen.

Day 2: The Joy and Peace in Believing

Scripture Verse

Philippians 2:5-11 - 'In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.'

Reflection

Brethren, as we draw closer to the heart of Jesus, let us strive to emulate His humility and servanthood. The mind of Christ is a tapestry woven with threads of sacrifice, a willingness to descend into the lowest places that we might ascend with Him into glory. In your daily journey, seek not the elevation of self, but rather the elevation of others through acts of love and service. This mirrors the life of Jesus, who, though He was God, emptied Himself for our redemption. Recall the story of the Good Samaritan, who, unlike the priest and the Levite, did not merely offer prayers from afar but became an embodiment of Christ's love through tangible action. Today, may you reflect on how you can incarnate the love of Christ in your interactions, serving with a joyful heart, knowing your labor in the Lord is never in vain.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, infuse me with Your selfless love, that I may serve others with the humility You modelled. May my life reflect Your grace as I lay down my desires in the pursuit of Your higher calling. In Your precious name, I pray. Amen.

Day 3: Pressing Forward in Faith

Scripture Verse

Philippians 3:13-14 - 'Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.'

Reflection

Child of God, take heart and press on in your spiritual journey, for your destiny is not beheld in hindsight but held in the promises that lie ahead. Like a farmer who tends to his field, undeterred by the harsh elements, steadfastly sowing seeds in anticipation of the harvest, so must we labor in the Kingdom of God. Let the past with its trials and triumphs serve not as a fetter but as a wind that propels you forward. Reflect on the widow's mite, her modest offering eclipsing the grandeur of wealthier patrons, for she gave out of her poverty. Her forward-looking faith was in the providence of God, undeterred by her present circumstance. This day, may you cast aside every weight and sin that clings so closely, running with perseverance the race marked out for you, fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.

Prayer

Almighty God, empower me to release the past and reach forward to the future You have ordained. May I run with endurance, eyes fixed on Jesus, drawing from His strength to press toward the heavenly prize. Amen.

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