



## EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Philippians, Colossians, Philemon Sermon Series  
Supports Session 2: Joy in Adversity  
Sermon Title: God Uses Downturns and Downtimes  
Passage: Romans 8:28

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### Connection to Philippians 1:12-26

Paul planned to travel to Spain and visit Rome on the way (Rom. 15:24). He had a desire to share the gospel where no one else had gone (Rom. 15:20). Instead, as he wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, he was confined in a Roman prison. Paul discovered that the gospel continued to spread during his confinement to unlikely recipients and even through the impure motives of questionable heralds. He concluded that Jesus is never thwarted, and the privilege of the believer is to experience His victory through us.

### Introduction/Opening

We may think that when we are pursuing God's will, everything should fall neatly into place without a hitch. However, God is able to use frustrations and catastrophes to accomplish His will through us. He will not be defeated. He will always emerge victorious, and we will experience His victories as He uses us.

### Outline

1. God is present and working in our world.
  - a. Our culture seems to be content with a godless world. According to popular perception, our universe is evolving with humanity at the top of the food chain and not accountable to anyone. This "scientific" presumption is woven into television programming, media reports, and textbooks. God is portrayed as not necessary or relevant. Believers are seen as antagonists and clumsy. Culture demands that believers accept their standards of behavior (1 Pet. 4:4). Otherwise, we are narrow and ignorant.
  - b. Instead of an absent God, the Bible reveals an Almighty, actively engaged God. He is Creator and Sustainer of the heavens and earth (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-4). He is involved with natural life and feeds birds and mammals (Ps. 104:10-18). He is not absent from human life as He forms us in the womb and knows our thoughts before we have them (Ps. 139:1-4,13).
  - c. God is not only present in the natural and human experience, He holds life as we know it together (Col. 1:17). God works even in the molecular level of life. God also

- makes plans for humanity (Jer. 29:11) and reigns as the King of kings, Sovereign over the history of the world (1 Tim. 6:15).
- d. The believer's faith in God's action in our world includes a use of our frustrations and setbacks to accomplish His will through us. We can consider this God's synergy for us.
2. God's synergy through human adversity
    - a. God is always working (John 5:17), and it is the privilege of the believer to discover that effort and join Him.
    - b. Paul describes this labor of God's as Him working all things together. The Greek term is *synergi*, literally "together working" all things for good. This Greek word is found in the often quoted Romans 8:28.
    - c. From this Greek term we derive our English word, "synergy." Synergy reflects a heightened energy when efforts are combined to produce an effect greater than the sum of separate effects.
    - d. An example of synergy is when two companies merge together with assets that complement each other resulting in combined growth greater than they would have experienced separately.
    - e. The context of Romans 8 is God's work on our behalf in difficult occasions. If God is for us, who can stand against us? (8:31). God helps us in our weakness (8:26), and if He gave His son for us, won't He give us all we need (8:32)?
    - f. Paul discovered God's synergy would surmount his setbacks. It is our privilege as fellow servants of Jesus Christ to discover the same dynamic working in our lives.
  3. The believer's experience of divine synergy
    - a. While Paul was unable to be on the mission field due to his incarceration, he observed that the entire palace guard became aware of the gospel (Phil. 1:12-13).
    - b. Paul also discovered that his confinement prompted others to share the gospel. Even when their motives were not pure, the power of the gospel produced salvation through the proclamation of Christ (Phil. 1:14-18).
    - c. Instead of discovering defeat by frustrations and downturns, the believer notices the synergy of God producing victory in unlikely places. Confidence despite mishaps fuels joy through serving God who triumphs in spite of our calamities.

## Conclusion

A common nightmare of mine is riding a bike uphill from point A to point B. As I pedal up the steep slope, frustrations like flat tires or loose handlebars occur. As the dream continues, new mishaps prevent me from reaching my destination. This dream represents the frustrating challenges of life that prevent us from reaching our goals. Thankfully, in real life God redirects our mishaps and through His synergy works them together to complete His will through us.

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