

# Growth Group Discussion Q's

December 7, 2025

**Fun Discussion Starter:** What is one thing that you did today that you took delight in?

## Message Review

How do we react when hardship visits our life through abrupt and painful circumstances? Do we blame God or feel abandoned by Him? Sunday's message explores the Apostle Paul's surprising poise and peace when his desire to visit Rome on his way to a new ministry opportunity in Spain gets derailed in a dramatic and painful way.

## Review of Paul's Plans (Romans 15:22-33):

- Paul's desire and hope was to visit Rome on his way to Spain (v.22-24)
- But first he planned to deliver the contribution to the saints in Jerusalem (v.24-29)
- He knew that trouble awaited him there, so he asked for prayer for deliverance (v.30-33)

## The Dramatic and Painful Change (Acts 23-28)

- Paul is falsely accused in Jerusalem
- A riot ensues and Paul is beaten by the crowd and rescued by Roman soldiers
- He appears before Felix and Agrippa who cannot find any evidence to convict
- A plot is discovered so Paul appeals to Caesar
- He is shipwrecked on his way to Rome
- He lingers under house arrest for 2 years

## How did Paul React?

1. He ministered "freely" to all who visited him in prison (Acts 28:30-31)
2. He wrote three of the most transcendent letters of the entire New Testament (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians)
3. He preached the gospel to the entire Imperial Guard who took shifts guarding Paul (Phil 1:12-13)
4. He helped orchestrate the reconciliation of a runaway slave and a personal friend (Philemon 10-11)

## What does Paul teach us through his life?

### Paul understands that suffering is God's Training (Rom 5:3-5)

- Why is experiencing hard things in life so important to our growth and maturity?
- Pastor Mark spoke of the "wilderness experience" motif common in scripture where a person experiences important lessons about who God is and his love for us during difficult times. Can you think of important lessons you have learned through past painful experiences? How did these shape you? What was your view of God during these times?

### Paul understands that he is a beloved son (Rom 8:14-17)

- Often, we interpret hardship as abandonment. When things go wrong, we believe God has abandoned us. For us to successfully navigate the “wilderness” we must remember that we are beloved sons and daughters of God. The writer of Hebrews instructs his readers that it is vital to view hardship as training under the direction of a loving father to his beloved children (Heb 12:7-11).
- Is it hard to imagine God as a loving father when you are experiencing pain, loss or failure?
- How does being rooted in God’s love help us when our lives are experiencing chaos and struggle?

**Paul has learned patience and perspective through delays and setbacks (Rom 8:28-29)**

- Paul planned to visit Rome for only a short period before departing for Spain. After his arrest, he lingered there for two full years. How did Paul adjust his plans to fulfill his calling under this new timeline?
- How do you navigate disappointment and adjust to the “new” plan that God has allowed in your day or year or life?
- What are ways we can “practice” managing our disappointment during setbacks in order to gain a patience and perspective similar to Paul’s?