

# The Apostle Paul

## SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Week 3 September 15, 2024

“Opposition, Suffering, and Death”

### OPENING PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for standing by Paul, whose life and writings both guide and inspire us. Give us his courage and faith so we can do whatever you set before us. Help us to engage in meaningful discussion today; allow us to grow closer as a group and nurture the bonds of community. Fill us with your grace, Lord Jesus. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGES

#### 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 (NIV)

*<sup>23</sup>Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. <sup>24</sup>Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. <sup>25</sup>Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was pelted with stones, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, <sup>26</sup>I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. <sup>27</sup>I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.*

#### Romans 8:28 (NIV)

*And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose..*

#### Romans 8:35, 37-39 (NIV)

*<sup>35</sup>Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>37</sup>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup>For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,<sup>[b]</sup> neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup>neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Apostle Paul continued to spread the gospel of Christ in spite of constant threats on his life, punishment and imprisonment. Paul's life is a reminder that life can be hard. We all go through difficult, and sometimes dark, seasons in our lives. So what lessons can we learn from Paul when we face adversity?

The key that allowed Paul to keep going in the face of hardship was perseverance. And we learn from Paul's life that there are four keys to perseverance:

- 1) Turn toward God and not away in the midst of adversity,
- 2) God is able to take our suffering and pain and bring something good from it if we allow him,
- 3) We all need stretcher bearers in our life
- 4) Through Jesus Christ, death has been swallowed up in victory.

## QUESTIONS

1. In January 2024, Sesame Street character Elmo tweeted this:  
*“Elmo is just checking in! How is everybody doing?”*  
What would your response be today?
2. Paul exercised perseverance and hope in the face of difficulty. Where is God calling you to exercise perseverance and hope in the face of difficulty right now?
3. Paul's enemies made exaggerated claims about him. When have you seen others exaggerate the position of people they disagree with to discredit them? Are you able to differ with someone without overstating or even lying about what that person believes?
4. Has God at times brought good out of hard things you have faced? What spiritual “anchors” keep you linked to God's love, hope and peace?
5. Can you trust as strongly in Jesus' resurrection as Paul did?

## FINAL APPLICATION

Study the 4 keys to face hardship with perseverance.