



## MESSAGE FROM PRISON

*And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear.*

Philippians 1:12-14 NLT

It's most amazing these days how clearly the Bible speaks to me, no matter what I read. It has to be because of all I have been going through over the last few years. Has the suffering made me spiritually more aware? I do know I've come closer to Jesus than I ever could have otherwise. Living in fellowship with the suffering Christ has helped me cope with many of the hardships I've had to face.

The hurtful things that happened seemed to have prepared me to play a part in God's work I would otherwise not have had. I've learned that the more I suffer, the more God leads me to write. Sometimes I get a bit self-centered, but mostly I think my work offers helpful thoughts.

This morning I was reading from Philippians, the letter Paul wrote while in prison. And I thought to myself, I too live in a kind of prison. I can't live a normal life of freedom like others. More and more I have to cancel out of activities. Often I can't manage the simplest chores. I can identify a bit with Paul. I know what it is to have my writings read, hopefully spreading God's word far.

Yes, I *can* write. And when I write, God's messages pour from my pen with ease. The words aren't my own, but God's. In the writing I feel his love—for me and for others. I find a wholeness within myself not available elsewhere.

As I write I pray especially for those many who, like me, experience suffering. I pray that they will realize that Jesus cares about them and that his healing hand is always reaching to them in love. All they have to do is to accept what he has to offer.

I pray that my words will find a home in my readers' hearts and in the hearts of all those who need to know Jesus better.

marja