

Good Results From Bad Circumstances
Philippians 1:12-26
Part 6

We have begun to examine Phil. 1:12-26, which briefly outlines for us various circumstances in Paul's life. The underlying principle of this section of Scripture is that human circumstances lie in God's hands and that God will use those circumstances to advance the gospel. This is true of our lives and it was also true of Paul's life. How did God use Paul's circumstances to advance the gospel?

The first circumstance in Paul's life that God used to advance the gospel were his chains. We saw this in **VV. 12-14**. The second circumstance in Paul's life that God used to advance the gospel were professing Christians who were preaching Christ from impure motives. We saw this in **VV. 15-18**. We are now looking at a third circumstance in Paul's life that God used to advance the gospel. The third circumstance God used to advance the gospel was Paul's crisis (Phil. 1:18b-26).

Let us read this section of Scripture, **“(18) and I will rejoice. (19) For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, (20) according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (22) But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. (23) But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; (24) yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. (25) And convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, (26) so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.”**

Paul at the end of **V. 18** says **“and in this I rejoice”** referring to his response to those preaching Christ out of impure motives. And then he immediately follows this expression with **“and I will rejoice”** at the very end of **V. 18**. This is an expression of confidence by Paul that his joy will remain constant as his present crisis continues to unfold. Paul in effect is saying in Phil. 1:18, “The gospel is advancing in the midst of my present circumstances and I am rejoicing. And I will continue to rejoice in my future circumstances as my present crisis unfolds.”

So this weekend as we consider Paul's present crisis we will get a glimpse into the future of Paul as he sees it. And hopefully as we get this glimpse into Paul's future as he sees it, we will be able to understand why he believes that he will continue to rejoice in his unfolding crisis. This leads us to ask ourselves the question: What do we need to understand to appreciate Paul's statement, “and I will rejoice?”

WE NEED TO KNOW THAT PAUL'S ANTICIPATED FUTURE JOY COMES FROM HIS ASSURANCE OF ULTIMATE SALVATION

Let us look at **V. 19**, **“For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”** As Paul begins to explain his future joy, he begins by talking about his future deliverance. What is this “deliverance” that Paul is referring to? Reading the passage quickly you might think that Paul is talking about his deliverance from prison. But this is very unlikely. Why? The deliverance that Paul is talking about will be realized whether he lives or dies. How do we know this? We know this because of **V. 20**. The deliverance that he is speaking about in **V. 19** will be **“according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”** If we say that Paul uses the word “deliverance” to refer to his being released from prison, this does not match up well with **V. 20**, which tells us that this deliverance will be realized whether he lives or dies. If Paul’s use of the word “deliverance” is not referring to a release from prison, then what is it referring to?

The word “deliverance” (SOTERIA) is commonly used in the New Testament, and especially in Paul’s letters to mean “salvation” in the ultimate sense of rescue from God’s wrath on the final day. This certainly seems to be the emphasis that is given to the word by Paul later in **Phil. 1:28**. What does **Phil. 1:28** say? **“In no way alarmed by your opponents which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation (SOTERIA) for you.”**

Understanding the word “deliverance” in the sense of ultimate salvation is reinforced by the fact that Paul is quoting the words of **Job 13:16** as they appear in the Septuagint, word for word when he begins **Phil. 1:19** with the phrase, **“For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance.”** This certainly would not appear to be a coincidence. Paul would have been very familiar with the Septuagint. Paul quoting Job 13:16 is strong evidence that Paul uses the word “deliverance” in Phil. 1:19 to communicate his final vindication before God.

In order to fully appreciate the significance of Paul’s quotation of this verse from Job, we will have to look at the entire context. In **Job 13:13-18** Job is expressing confidence that he would be vindicated before God through whatever circumstances he might pass including death. Paul is expressing the same confidence in **Phil. 1:19-20**.

Let me read **Job 13:13-18** for you and as we do this, consider that what I have just shared with you is true.

V. 13 begins with these words **“Be silent before me so that I may speak.”** In other words, Job is saying to his friends, who have been highly critical of him during his many sufferings, to not interrupt him as he speaks. And of course you know that they are highly critical of him during his many sufferings because they believe that his sufferings have come upon him because of personal sin which he has been steadfastly denying. Job then goes on to say, **“Then let come on me what may.”** After you listen to what I have to say then you can choose how you will respond.

What is the first thing he says after appealing for their silence? **“Why should I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in my hands?”** He is confused by his human condition. He is in

effect saying, “Why do I suffer such agonies?” He does not understand why he is suffering so greatly considering the fact that he knows that he is a righteous man. And in the midst of his confusion, his suffering was so great that he was ready not only to rend his clothes, but even to tear his flesh because of the greatness of his affliction. He sees himself at the brink of death. After expressing the confusion that he is experiencing because of his agony, he cries out in **V. 15**, “**Though He slay me, I will hope in Him. Nevertheless I will argue my ways before Him.**” In the midst of his confusion, in the midst of his agony, he reaffirms his trust in God even if these agonies cause his death. But this confidence in God is not going to stop him from arguing his case before Him. Now listen to **V. 16**, “**This also will be my salvation (or deliverance), for a godless man may not come before His presence.**” What is Job saying? He is simply saying that his confident expectation of being able to stand before God and argue his case, whether in life or in death, vindicates him. Why? Because if he were not righteous he would not be able to stand there and argue his case. But he is not only convinced of his personal righteousness, because he views himself before God being able to present his case, but he sees himself winning the case. Listen to **Job 13:17-18**, “**Listen carefully to my speech, and let my declaration fill your ears. (18) Behold now, I have prepared my case; I know that I will be vindicated.**”

Job 13:13-18 is all about vindication. It is all about Job believing, in spite of all his sufferings, even if those sufferings included his death, that he was a righteous man and would be ultimately vindicated in the courts of heaven. Paul, I believe, is applying these words of Job to his own situation, not because they were vaguely or marginally similar (Job certainly was not in jail awaiting the judgment of the courts) but rather because he, like Job, is confident of his vindication before God.

Remember our definition of biblical joy that we gave to you when we began our study of the book of Philippians? Biblical joy is a gift from God to all those who believe, produced in them by the Holy Spirit as they receive and obey God’s word, which will thrive in the midst of trials while focusing on future glory. Was Paul focusing on future glory in **V. 19**? Yes.

We need to emulate Paul. What are you presently choosing to focus on? What is filling your mind? What is occupying your thoughts? Hopefully it is your future vindication, your future deliverance, your future salvation.

If we fail to focus on our future glory, our lives can very easily become an emotional roller coaster. One day our circumstances may be good and one day our circumstances may be bad, but Paul was not focusing on the circumstances of his life, but on where the circumstances of his life were leading. And where did he think that the circumstances of his life were leading? What does **Phil. 1:19** say, “**For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance.**” Paul believes that the circumstances of his life were leading to a glorious final destination.

In essence, **Phil. 1:19** is an expression of faith in response to the promise of God found in **Rom. 8:28**. What does **Romans 8:28** say? “**And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**” There is no incident or circumstance - no matter how trivial - that is without purpose

or meaning. There is no incident or circumstance - no matter how incredibly devastating - that is without purpose or meaning in the life of a Christian.

What is God's purpose for us? Let us read **Rom. 8:29**, "**For whom he foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.**" God's purpose for everything that He has done, is doing or will do, is all about conforming us to the image of His Son. This is God's goal and hopefully this is our goal. In fact, if we are a Christian it will be our goal.

What does **1 John 3:1-2** tell us? "**See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope (being like Jesus) fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.**"

Hopefully because this is our goal, and knowing that God is working all things together for our good in order to accomplish this goal, every circumstance, whether good or bad, should prompt us to think about our future vindication. The long commute that you drive should not cause you to grumble and complain, but rather to rejoice, knowing this circumstance will be used by God to conform you to His son and ultimately vindicate you. Those who are blessed with a short commute should not simply take it for granted but should rejoice knowing that even this has come to them from the hand of God and is being used by Him to conform them to the image of His Son.

Paul was able to say, "**For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance**" (for my vindication, for my salvation) because he knew all of the things he had experienced and all the things that he would experience as his crisis continued to unfold were being totally and completely orchestrated by God, so that one day he would stand in front of the Lord Himself, conformed to the very image of Christ, vindicated and delivered.

What about you this weekend? Do you want to experience biblical joy? Then you need to focus on future glory and be able to say with the same confidence as Paul said in V. 19, "**I know that this (the circumstances of my life) shall turn out for my ultimate deliverance.**" But for you to be able to say this with the same confidence as Paul, you need to know the underlying passion of his life that has led him to make such a bold statement as he did in Philippians 1:19.

We started this message by asking ourselves the question, "What do we need to understand in order to appreciate Paul's statement "and I will rejoice?" We have seen, first of all, that we need to understand that Paul's anticipated future joy comes from an assurance of ultimate salvation. But we also need to understand that Paul's anticipated future joy comes from an assurance of ultimate salvation that flows from a Christ-centered life.

Paul's anticipated future joy comes from an assurance of ultimate salvation that flows from a Christ-centered life

Don't be misled. The joy produced by Paul's assurance of ultimate salvation or deliverance does not exist in a vacuum. And it should not exist in a vacuum in our lives. If there is any doubt concerning this, all we have to do is to read the rest of **V. 19** and **V. 20**, "**For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, (20) according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.**"

CONCLUSION

If you are a professing believer, I would implore you not to live a roller coaster existence, lifted by a good circumstance but then dashed on the rocks by a bad circumstance.

In Christ it is possible for us to live our lives in such a way that joy can be our constant companion always. So that we can say with Paul, "**and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice.**" Is this the kind of life that you are striving for? If it is then you will want to come back next week.