

**Good Results From Bad Circumstances**  
**Philippians 1:12-26**  
**Part 7**

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**. And the third circumstance God used to advance the gospel was Paul's unfolding crisis, which he spelled out for us beginning at the end of **V.18** and continuing through **V. 26**. This is the passage that we are currently examining.

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. This is good. This is wonderful that Paul could do this in light of what was happening. But what is even more impressive is that he immediately follows this expression of joy with a confident assertion of future joy as well.

At the very end of **V. 18** what does Paul say? He says, **“and I will rejoice,”** How could Paul be so confident that he would continue to rejoice as his crisis unfolds? In order for us to understand this very confident assertion we need to know some things. What do we need to know to appreciate Paul's statement, “and I will rejoice?”

First of all, we learned last week that Paul's anticipated future joy came from his assurance of ultimate salvation. Let us again look at the end of **V. 18** and the first part of **V. 19**, **“And I will rejoice (19) for I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance.”** As we examined this phrase last week, I shared with you that Paul is not referring to his deliverance from Roman imprisonment. This is clear based on the information supplied to us in **V. 20**, which tells us that the deliverance he is speaking of in **V. 19** flows from a certain earnest expectation and hope. And

what was his certain earnest expectation and hope? It was the hope that he would not be put to shame in anything, either in life or in death. His reference to death does not seem to fit with deliverance from prison. If Paul was not referring to his Roman imprisonment, then what was Paul referring to? I believe he was speaking about his ultimate deliverance, his ultimate salvation. And I gave to you last week a number of very good reasons why I believe this is the best interpretation.

Why was Paul able to presently rejoice in his current circumstances according to **VV. 12-18**? We have seen that he was able to rejoice because he saw that God was using his circumstances to advance the gospel. He saw that God was using his chains and his Christian opponents to get the message of Christ out. But we have not seen that Paul has an additional source of joy. What was that source? It was Paul's belief that the unfolding crisis, no matter how it played out, would eventually result in his ultimate deliverance, his ultimate salvation. What did he say? **For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance.**"

Hopefully we can take heart in Paul's response to his circumstances. First of all, rejoicing in the fact, like Paul, that God is using our present circumstances to advance His gospel and secondly, like Paul, we hopefully will be able to rejoice in the confident expectation that our present circumstances will turn out for our future deliverance.

We are asking ourselves the question "What do we need to know in order to appreciate Paul's statement, "and I will rejoice?" First of all we need to know that Paul's anticipated future joy came from his assurance of ultimate salvation in **V. 19**. What is the second thing we need to know?

WE NEED TO KNOW THAT PAUL'S ANTICIPATED FUTURE JOY, WHICH CAME FROM HIS ASSURANCE OF ULTIMATE SALVATION, WAS LINKED TO THE PHILIPPIANS' PRAYERS AND THE PROVISION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

All we have to do to establish this link is to look at **V. 19**. But this time let us read the entire verse, "**For I know that this** (my unfolding crisis) **shall turn out for my deliverance** (my ultimate salvation) **through your prayers and the provision of the Holy Spirit.**" Paul is acknowledging by this statement that the continuing provision of the Spirit was necessary for his ultimate deliverance. And he also saw that a part of that supply was coming through the intercessory prayer of the Philippians.

Now this is very interesting. Why does Paul view himself in continuing need of the provision of the Spirit of Christ in order to experience ultimate deliverance or salvation? Doesn't he already see himself as saved?

Paul views himself as saved but that belief will not be verified in his mind until he crosses the finish line and receives the victor's crown (1 Cor. 9:24-27). Let us read **1 Cor. 9:24-27**, "**Do you not know that those who run in a race all run but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (25) And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-**

**control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (26) Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; (27) but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.”** Why is Paul affirming the importance of prayer in respect to his ultimate deliverance? Paul sees the prayers of the Philippians and the subsequent provision of the Spirit as essential if he is going to successfully run the race alluded to in 1 Cor. 9:24-27 and receive the prize.

Paul did not take his salvation, his ultimate deliverance, for granted. And neither should we. If we take on the mindset that because we made a profession of faith in Christ, the issue of our ultimate deliverance has been settled, we are failing to appreciate the thinking of Paul and this would be unprofitable for us. Why? It would be unprofitable for us because it will most likely cause us to spiritually relax and expend less effort in our pursuit of holiness.

I am sure that you have all watched runners at track meets. As long as they believe that they are in a race and have not yet crossed the finished line they will expend themselves. But what happens as soon as they think the matter of winning and losing has been settled? They will immediately relax and find a comfortable place to rest.

This is exactly what is happening throughout the church today. Many Christians are not embracing the mindset of Paul. They believe that because they have made a profession of faith in Christ, they are fine and they can spiritually relax. This can have tragic consequences. Why? Not embracing the mind set of Paul to run the race to win is tragic not only because it is very likely that we will fail to give our maximum effort to live a life pleasing to the Lord, but we may also fail to demonstrate by the way that we are living that we are even Christian.

I have been in professional ministry for 32 years. I have sought to live my life for Christ. I am seeking to live my life according to God’s Word and I am committed to spreading His Word. If you were to ask me at this moment, “Dale, are you assured of your salvation?” I would say yes. I have no fear of dying, of passing from this life into the next. Why? Because I know that I am running the race that Paul is describing and I am running it to win.

Having said this, what would happen if I were to say to myself, “I have been involved in professional ministry for 32 years. I have done enough working, striving, pressing, and running. I think I will find a nice comfortable place to rest and, in effect, drop out of the race. I know that I am not yet conformed to Christ but what does this matter? I have already proved my faith to be living and saving.” If I were to do this, could I continue to enjoy the assurance of my salvation? The answer is no! The hope that has been fixed on me according to **1 John 3** is to be like Jesus. This hope that has been fixed on me has not yet been realized. My race is not over. I have not yet crossed the finish line. Because of who I am in Christ, I cannot stop and take my rest. If I do this I will lose the assurance of my salvation. I cannot take my salvation for granted. I will not take my salvation for granted. Not only for the Lord’s sake, not only for your sake, but for my sake.

How are we saved? We are saved as we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation (Eph. 2:8-9). What does **Eph. 2:8-9** say? **“For by grace you have been saved**

**through faith and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.”** If an individual desires to be set free from their sins and the consequences of those sins, all they have to do is by faith enter through the door that Christ opened and they will at that very moment be born again. They will become a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). What does **2 Cor. 5:17** say? **“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”**

These are wonderful truths! But they are only true for those who are in fact born again. These are wonderful truths! But they are only true for those who are in fact new creatures in Christ; whose profession of faith is true, living, and saving. But how can we know if our profession of so-called faith is real? It is by the way we live (Matt. 7:15-23).

The Bible teaches us that we shall know them by their fruit. This is a biblical principle. If we claim to be something, we should be able to demonstrate the truthfulness of that claim by the way we live. If you claim to be a bird, then what do you need to do? Fly. You need to continue to fly. Why? Because that is what birds do! Birds don't fly for a couple of days and then say, “Well that proves it, I'm a bird” and then go find some comfortable place to rest and never fly again. Why don't they do this? Because they are birds. And birds fly! And they continue to fly! Until they are what? Dead.

If we claim to be born again, if we claim to be new creatures in Christ, then what do we need to do? We need to live like we are born again. We need to live like we are new creatures in Christ. If we profess to be Christians then we need to continue to press forward in the race until we are conformed to Christ. But how can we be assured that we will continue to do this? One way we can be assured that we will continue to do this is through prayer.

Paul understood this. This is why he said in **V. 19**, **“For I know that this (my unfolding crisis) shall turn out for my deliverance (my ultimate salvation), through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”** Paul not only acknowledged the importance of these prayers as he continued to press forward to the finish line, but he asked fellow believers to pray for him.

Listen to **Roman 15:30**, **“Now I urge you brethren, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.”**

Listen to **Eph. 6:18-20**, **“With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (19) and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, (20) for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”**

Paul was committed to prayer and Paul was committed to intercessory prayer. Paul saw that it was through prayer that he would be supplied with the Spirit of Christ as he continued to press toward the finish line and the final prize.

## CONCLUSION

At the very end of **V. 18** what does Paul say? He says, “**and I will rejoice.**” How could Paul be so confident that he would continue to rejoice as his crisis unfolds? In order for us to understand this very confident assertion we need to know some things. What do we need to know to appreciate Paul’s statement, “and I will rejoice?”

First of all, we need to know that Paul’s anticipated future joy came from his assurance of ultimate salvation.

And secondly, we need to know that Paul’s anticipated future joy, which came from his ultimate assurance of salvation, was linked to the Philippians’ prayers and the provision of the Holy Spirit.

How should we respond to what we have learned? Hopefully we have committed ourselves this weekend to the race that has been set before us. Hopefully in doing this we have also renewed our commitment to prayer both for ourselves and others.

If we have done this then hopefully we will be able to say with Paul with the same confidence, “**And I will rejoice, (19) for I know that this** (my present circumstances as they continue to unfold) **shall turn out for my deliverance** (my ultimate salvation) **through your prayers and the provision of the Holy Spirit.**”