

Good Results From Bad Circumstances
Philippians 1:12-26
Part 8

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.”**

At the very end of **V. 18** what does Paul say? He says, **“and I will rejoice.”** 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. Let us look once again at **Phil. 1:19**, **“For I know that this** (my unfolding crisis, no matter what happens) **shall turn out for my deliverance** (my ultimate salvation).” Paul had the assurance of ultimate deliverance.

I would hope that everyone here this weekend would have this same confidence. Hopefully everyone here this weekend would be able to say, **“I know that this** (my present circumstances, no matter what those circumstances might be) **shall turn out for my deliverance** (my ultimate salvation).” If you share this confidence with Paul, then certainly you can understand why Paul, in looking to the future, was able to say, **“and I will rejoice.”**

I don't know what will happen with my marriage. I don't know what will happen with my children. I don't know what will happen with my grandchildren. I don't know what will happen with this church. I don't know what will happen with my health, but if I can say with Paul that I

know that my present circumstances, no matter what those circumstances might be, shall turn out for my ultimate deliverance, my ultimate salvation, I should be able to say with Paul, “and I will rejoice.”

How could Paul be so confident that his circumstances would turn out for his ultimate salvation? Paul helps us to understand this confidence as we continue to read the last part of V. 19, “**For I know that this** (my unfolding crisis no matter what happens) **shall turn out for my deliverance** (my ultimate salvation) **through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Christ.**”

What is the second thing we need to know in order to appreciate Paul’s statement, “**and I will rejoice?**” We need to know that Paul’s anticipated future joy was linked to the Philippians’ prayers and provision of the Spirit of Christ. Paul was confident that there were people praying for him.

I would hope that everyone here this weekend would have this same confidence. Hopefully everyone here this weekend would be able to say the same thing, but with just a little different twist. Hopefully we would be able to say, “I know that this (my present circumstances, no matter what happens) shall turn out for my deliverance (my ultimate salvation) through (the prayers of my brothers and sisters in Christ at Valley Bible Church) and the provision of the Spirit of Christ Jesus.”

I don’t know what will happen with my marriage, with my children, with my grandchildren, with this church, with my health. I don’t know how my present circumstances will unfold, but I do know this; that as I run the race for that prize that is set before me, I will have more than adequate resources to deal with whatever comes into my life through your prayers. I would hope that all of us here this morning are tied to this fellowship in such a way that you would share this same confidence with me. And this confidence certainly would support our expectation of ultimate deliverance and help us to appreciate Paul’s statement, “and I will rejoice.”

But it is not enough simply to believe that we have adequate resources. We must also have realistic expectations that we will appropriate those resources to run the race successfully. And this leads us to the very next thing we need to know in order to appreciate Paul’s statement “**and I will rejoice.**”

We need to know that Paul’s anticipated future joy was not only linked to the provision of the Spirit made possible through the prayers of the Philippians, but it was also linked with Paul’s earthly preoccupation.

What was Paul’s earthly preoccupation? Let us read **VV. 19-20**, “**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, (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.**” What was Paul’s earthly preoccupation? Paul’s earthly preoccupation was that Christ would be exalted. Paul was in the race. He wanted to win the race. But in order for him to be

successful he had to run the race in a certain way. And what did that mean to the apostle Paul? It meant that Christ needed to be exalted. And this desire to exalt Christ became Paul's earthly preoccupation.

The word "exalted" (MEGALUNO) means, "to make large or long, magnify." Paul's earthly preoccupation was to exalt or magnify Christ. Because of Paul's chains, Christ was known (V. 13), and because of his critics, Christ was preached (V. 18). And because of Paul's crisis which was continuing to unfold, Christ would not only be magnified but would continue to be magnified (V. 20). This confidence that Christ would continue to be magnified brought him joy. It brought him joy because it reinforced for him the fact that he was running the race to win and that he would cross the finish line and receive the prize, the imperishable wreath. But it also brought him joy because he knew that in exalting Christ, the gospel of Christ would continue to advance.

Does Christ need to be magnified? After all, how can a mere human being ever magnify the Son of God? Consider this: the stars are much bigger than the telescope, and yet the telescope magnifies them and brings them closer. The believer's body is to be a telescope that brings Jesus Christ close to people. To the average person, Christ is a misty figure in history who lived centuries ago. But as the unsaved watch the believer go through a crisis or simply maneuver himself through life, they will be able to see in us what they were unable to see without us.

For Christ not to be exalted was a shameful thing. Let us again read **V. 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."** For Paul it was one or the other. To exalt Christ was not to be put to shame but to not exalt Christ was to be put to shame.

As Paul drew upon the provision of the Spirit of Christ made possible through the prayers of the Philippians, it was his earnest expectation and hope, first of all, that he would not be put to shame in anything. Look at the very first phrase of **V. 20, "According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything."**

Shame is defined in our English dictionaries as "the painful feeling arising from the consciousness of something dishonorable, improper, ridiculous, etc., done by oneself or another." What might produce this feeling of shame in respect to our unsaved friends and neighbors? Perhaps they might feel shame if they were caught in a drug sting. Perhaps if they were caught in a lie. Perhaps if they were fired from a job for a just cause. And certainly if something like this happened to us I would think that we would feel that same sense of shame.

But hopefully by the grace of God we will not find ourselves involved in any of these things. Hopefully by the grace of God we would, if we had a drug problem, be delivered from the power of those drugs and would never have to go through the shame of being caught in a drug sting. Hopefully by the grace of God we would be able to put aside all falsehood and would never go through the shame of being caught in a lie. Hopefully by the grace of God we will honor our employers and follow their rules and regulations and would never go through the shame of being

fired from a job for just cause. Living our lives in such a way that we would never experience shame for the things that so many in the world experience shame is a wonderful goal and in Christ it is not such a difficult goal to realize.

But the goal that Paul is setting before us here is a very different animal. What does he say? **“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.”** What is Paul saying? He is saying that his goal is not to be put to shame in anything, which in his mind means that he would never fail to exalt Christ. If Paul became consciously aware that in any specific situation he failed to exalt Christ, what would he feel? Shame.

To help make this thought come alive for us, Paul goes on to elaborate exactly what he has on his mind when he speaks of exalting Christ.

Let us read the rest of **V. 20**, **“According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything** (that I would not experience that pain from knowing that I have done something dishonorable) **but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”** The phrase, “but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” contains three different modifiers. These different modifiers will help us to fully understand what is on Paul’s mind when he speaks about exalting Christ.

The first modifier that Paul used, “with all boldness,” pointed specifically to his speech. The basic meaning of “with all boldness” is “outspokenness” or “plainness of speech” that conceals nothing and passes over nothing.

Paul is presently in Roman imprisonment. And there is some uncertainty about his future circumstances in respect to the outcome of his imprisonment. This is clear from the end of **V. 20** through **V. 24**. But Paul, in light of the prayers of the Philippians and the provision of the Spirit of Christ Jesus, combined with his preoccupation with exalting Christ, is not uncertain about how he is going to speak when given the opportunity. He is going to speak with all boldness. This means that he is prepared to share Jesus. He is prepared before the courts of Rome to share what he believes about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. He is prepared to stand before them as a representative of Christ and represent Him fully, holding back nothing.

If we say that we are running the race to win, may God give us the grace to run the race well. It grieves me that many professing Christians believe that they are somehow exalting Christ in their speech because they don’t curse, share off-color stories or participate in gossip sessions. These are good things to avoid, but there are people in the world who can claim the same thing. But what we can do that the unbelievers of this world cannot do is exalt Christ boldly.

What is the second modifier? Let us again look at the verse, **“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.”** The second modifier is the phrase, “shall even

now as always.” Since Paul’s conversion to the unfolding events of his crisis, his preoccupation has always been the exaltation of Christ. I know that not everyone here this weekend will be able to say that same thing as Paul. I cannot say the same thing as Paul. Shortly after I became a Christian I failed my Lord miserably, but I have been picking up steam over the years and I am sprinting to the finish line. And a part of that sprint is knowing that I need to speak boldly for Christ.

But someone might say that if we start talking about Jesus at every opportunity that is righteously presented to us, we could upset people! And of course we could upset people. This is not our goal but it certainly can be the result. And this leads us to the third modifier.

Let us go back to **V. 20** once again, **“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.”**

The third modifier is “in my body, whether by life or by death.” Paul wants the Philippians to know that his desire to exalt Christ in his unfolding crisis and beyond is his singular passion, even if it results in his death. What did Paul have on his mind when he spoke of exalting Christ? Paul was preoccupied with exalting Christ. Paul was preoccupied with magnifying Christ.

As he was facing the final stage of his present unfolding crisis, Paul was focusing on speech. He was committed to being bold. He was prepared to continue to present the person and work of Christ in every possible opportunity, whether in life or in death.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully we can now better understand and appreciate Paul’s statement “and I will rejoice” as he looked forward to his unfolding crisis.

Paul had a heart to exalt and magnify Christ, whether by life or by death.

Paul knew because of this heart that he would draw upon all the resources made available to him through the prayers of the Philippians, and this brought him the assurance that he would cross the finish line and secure the prize.

Hopefully this morning we have this same heart, the same confidence in the Lord’s provision, and the same assurance of ultimate victory and so much so that we can also look to our future and say as confidently as Paul, “And I will rejoice for I know that this (my unfolding present circumstances) shall turn out for my (ultimate salvation).”