

Something Better Than Life

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Bible Verse: Philippians 1:19
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It is the nature of Scripture that it is timeless because it comes from an eternal God and, therefore, it should not surprise us when we come to passages that are especially timeless in their import for our lives and for their significance for everything that we are going through. We come to such a passage as that in Philippians 1 where I invite you to turn for our text this morning. I'm very privileged again to open God's word and privileged to open this passage in a way that I trust the Lord will use in our lives.

We'll look at the end of verse 18 where Paul says,

18 ... Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will 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 will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

Now as you know from our prior teaching on Philippians 1, Paul is writing this from prison. He is under house arrest awaiting trial before Caesar's court where he will give an account for the charges that the Jews brought against him, and he is restricted, he is not able to do what he would necessarily like to do with geographic freedom, and he is taunted on the outside by some who are preaching the Gospel simply to call men to themselves in selfish ambition rather than as a strength and encouragement to Paul, and we saw last time some of Paul's reaction to that. What we see now in this text, and we're gonna take two weeks to go through this text, verse 19 today and verse 20 next week, what I want you to know in advance and what I want you to contemplate in anticipation of this passage is that Paul is talking about something that is utterly transcendent here that goes beyond life. He's talking about something that is better than life itself and to understand what he is saying here is to grasp the very nerve center, is to grasp the vital spinal cord, it's to grasp the very reason for which we have been saved in Christ. Why did Christ save you, you might ask. What is the purpose of Christian salvation? How does it bear on the adversities and the difficulties through which I go in this life? You could even frame the question this way as I often like to do: what does it mean to trust God and what are we trusting him for? Why do we trust him? What are we hoping him to do?

Now if we were all honest and sometimes honesty is in different degrees, I guess, if we were thoroughly transparent, we would probably have to admit that a big part of the time we're just wanting God to get us out of our present earthly difficulty and make our earthly circumstance better. "God, fix this difficult broken relationship. God, help me in this sense of adversity. God, I'm struggling physically and I need a touch of healing here." And there are certainly plenty of places where you can go to encourage you to think about God and the nature of salvation in those kinds of terms but, beloved, that's a serious mistake and a serious misunderstanding of the very nature of true Christian salvation as we're going to see here this morning. There is something better than life and therefore there is something better that we are hoping for, something better that we are trusting in, something else that we are looking for that goes beyond every resolution of any earthly circumstance could possibly go. In saying all of that, I'm just wanting to bring you to a point of a sense of expectation and anticipation that we're seeing something that, as it were, steps outside the bounds of life, steps beyond the grave, steps outside the realm of time itself and brings us into the realm of why we were truly saved in the first place.

Now as I've said, this text comes in the midst of a broader section where Paul is reporting on his personal circumstances to the church at Philippi. He's told them in verses 12 to 14 that the Gospel is advancing, God's doing his work, the Gospel is spreading; he goes on and he talks about the nature of ministry in verses 15 to 18 as it was happening at that time. There were Christians that were preaching boldly because Paul was in prison, some were doing it for the right reason, some were doing it for the wrong reasons, and so Paul has assured them about the progress of the Gospel while he is chained to a Roman soldier, and here is the predominant sense in which he writes, the spirit in which he writes.

Look at verse 18 for a sense of context. Having gone through all of those different aspects of life as he knew at the time he wrote this letter, he says in verse 18, "What then? What shall we say about my circumstances and the condition of the Gospel?" He says, "Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice." His spirit is not one of complaining or grumbling, rather he is full of joy, he is full of contentment, he is satisfied with the circumstances even though others are trying to eclipse him in prominence, he has no personal freedom, he doesn't even have the certainty of knowing what the next day will bring because it's possible that this trial could end up in his execution. So there's a lot that is happening in these circumstances of his life and we all know that we're in those situations ourselves today. You are. I am. There's a lot swirling in life. It's hard to know where it's all going to come out. It can hurt. It can frustrate and all of those things, and yet in circumstances beyond ours, Paul says, "I'm rejoicing in the midst of it all."

Now I'm gonna go on a little tangent here to talk about a life-long pet peeve of mine in the Christian life, I guess. Some will simply try to address discouragement in the life of another believer with an imperative, "Well, you just need to rejoice in the midst of it," and Scripture calls us repeatedly to rejoice, in one sense I get that, but if that's all that you say to somebody, you're really missing the boat and you're really acting as though the telling them that the difference is found in an exercise of your volition, you need to

exercise your will and you will have a completely different perspective on things. I think that's foolish pastoral ministry, foolish pastoral counsel because the reason that we rejoice is what we need to know. If we go back and we reflect and we meditate and we remember on why it is that we can rejoice, then the force of that changes our minds so that we are able to rejoice but we need to be reminded of the reasons that underlie the biblical commands to rejoice rather than simply reducing it to a mere exercise of the personal will. You could say, you could be a stoic and just say, "I am by the force of my personality, I will not let this get me down." That's not Christian sanctification, that's not Christian rejoicing at all. The reason is why is it that we can persevere? Why do we persevere? Why can we rejoice? Those are the things that Paul is going to bring out now in what he has to say going forward in verses 19 and 20. And it is astonishing what this passage has contained within it and it is remarkable in the sense that it takes some work to dig through it, in my opinion. We have to think about everything that Paul is saying in the context here.

Now let's look at this. He had just said at the end of verse 18, he said, "in this I rejoice. I am in the present. I am rejoicing right now." And so he's content, he is finding satisfaction with his circumstances, but notice at the end of verse 18, that he goes beyond saying, "I am rejoicing," his thought progresses; he is turning a corner at the end of verse 18 and is anticipating something different that provides additional grounds for his rejoicing more than simply the fact that Christ is being proclaimed as he said at the end of verse 18.

Look at it there with me in verse 18, he says, "Yes, and I will rejoice. I'm rejoicing now and in the future I will rejoice also." He's contemplating something additional to what he had been talking about in the prior six verses and that's what I want you to see. He has shifted his attention now so that in verses 19 and 20 he's looking to the future, he's stepped beyond the realm of time and he's talking about something that is yet to come, something that has not occurred yet that is a ground of further rejoicing for him in the future and that's what I want you to see here. In verse 18 he says, "Yes, and I will rejoice," future tense. Verse 19, look at it with me, he says, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance," future tense. He's looking to the future here and what our blessed privilege is and our opportunity is here today, is to say what is it about the future that he's looking forward to and it is surprising how important that question is and how good Christian men differ in their understanding of what it means.

So look at verse 19 here with me again. He says, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance. This will turn out for my deliverance." Well, what's the "this"? Well, the "this" is a reference to the totality of his present circumstances that he started talking about back in verse 12. Look at verse 12 and stay with me here, this will all become clear, I promise you, by the help of the Holy Spirit. In verse 12 he says, "Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel." That's what he's talking about and he goes on and he talks about the nature of his imprisonment, the spread of the Gospel, the nature of those who are preaching the Gospel while he is imprisoned, and so he's talking about his circumstances and this in verse 19, "I know that this," in other words, "the totality of my present circumstances will have a

future result, it will turn out toward something else. All of this adversity," he says, "all of the opposition, all of the uncertainty of my present condition are going to turn out in the future for a specific outcome; something is going to come out of this that is beyond and transcends my present circumstances." So he's taken a collective look at everything that he's been talking about and he says, "All of this, this whole package, turns into something else. It yields to something, it gives way to something else," is the idea that's going on here.

Look at verse 19 with me again. He says, "for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance." It will turn out to a specific outcome. And this word "turn out" is a very picturesque term. It is used in the Gospels in Luke 5:2 and in John 21:9 for something that would have been very familiar in the Palestinian area there in the land of Israel where all of this was taking place. It's used in the Gospels for – watch this – for disembarking from a boat. You step out of the boat onto dry land. You leave the boat behind and you step onto land and you continue on in your journey. You step out, you leave one thing behind and you come onto different terrain, you come into something else, is the idea, and what Paul is saying here, then, is that, "I am going to disembark, I am going to leave these circumstances behind because they are going to turn out into something else in the future. These circumstances, in other words, do not define the totality of the purposes of God in my life. These circumstances do not dictate what is going to be." And oh, beloved, how you must start with that fundamental sense of things, that the nature of life today is not the defining final answer on what all of life will be in the days to come. These circumstances turn out for something else and here Paul takes that word used in those water related circumstances of disembarking from a boat, he uses it in a figurative sense. What he's saying figuratively is that these present circumstances are going to move off into something else that is favorable. While there is adversity now, this will yield into, this will come into, this will leave that behind and come into something else that is favorable. Paul is saying, "I am going to step out of this situation into something that is better." Now we haven't defined yet, have we, what that "better" is, what the "better thing" might be, we're simply recognizing of how he's viewing his circumstances. He has said, "I rejoice in these circumstances now. I will rejoice in the future because I know something, I know that I'm going to step out of these circumstances into something else," that we are about to see.

So this present situation will give way to something better and what we want to know if we're following Paul's thought, in my opinion anyway, what we want to know is, "Paul, what's that outcome? I mean, you could die tomorrow, what's the outcome that causes you to say not only am I rejoicing now, I'm gonna rejoice in the future? Paul, you could die soon!" Do you know what's amazing about it is that Paul absolutely thoroughly recognizes that possibility in what he says.

Look at verse 19, he says, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This is going to turn out for my deliverance." Now I want to pause on that word "deliverance" for just a moment. It's translated that way in the ESV as well, deliverance, but it's the word that comes from the Greek word that means salvation. Soteria is the Greek word that is behind it. That's going

to be important throughout this and especially at the end of our time together here, so just keep that word in mind even though I realize it's a foreign word to most of you. Soteria, soteriology is the study of salvation, and the question is this, this word, it's not that it's mistranslated "deliverance," that's a proper translation, "deliverance, salvation," both translating the same term, there's nothing wrong with that, the question is: what is the deliverance that Paul has in mind here? Salvation, think about it, salvation is deliverance from our state of condemnation and judgment before God. We've been delivered that and transferred into the kingdom of his beloved Son; we've been delivered from guilt to forgiveness and a declared righteousness; we've been delivered from hell and delivered into a future that brings us into heaven; and so "deliverance, salvation," we can see those things and how those terms would be used interchangeably.

Now stay with me here. There are some commentators, you could say several if not many, who say this, that when Paul says he's anticipating his deliverance, he is anticipating his future release from prison, his future release from prison. Now I don't agree with that but I just want to explain to you why they say that and so I just want you to stay with me because, oh, I think this is so very very important. Paul is in prison here and he has been talking about imprisonment in verse 13, he says, "my imprisonment in the cause of Christ," verse 14, "I'm trusting in the Lord," there is "my imprisonment" that he mentions there in verse 17, "they're thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment," and so you can see where men would think that the nature of his imprisonment is foremost at the front of his mind as he writes about this, and when he says, "I've got a deliverance coming," that Paul is making a statement of his expectation that Caesar will release him and he'll be able to go back into ministry.

So there are commentators who say that's what Paul is talking about. Good men, excellent commentators that I would do well to pattern my ministry after, and let's go further, after Paul wrote this letter, he was released from his Roman imprisonment and so that favors those guys, and later on in this context, he does express confidence that he's going to continue to minister to the Philippians in the future. Look at verse 25 where he says, "Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again." Now stay with me here. I'm telling you, this is important. Trust me, this is for the good of your soul that we're spending the time on this. Paul's been talking about prison, later on a few verses later, he talks about coming back and ministering to the Philippians and good men look at that and say, "Well, isn't it obvious he's talking about being delivered from prison and that's what he's confident in, his deliverance is away from prison, he'll step out of imprisonment into freedom, and that is what he is confident about and that's what he will rejoice in."

So that's plausible. They may even be right. It's okay to say that. Some passages good men can differ on. That view is reasonable. It may be correct but, beloved, when you look at this passage in its immediate context more closely, I'm not at all sure that that's what Paul has in mind when he's talking about deliverance here in verse 19. I'm not at all sure that that's what he has in mind. Now follow with me, follow with me with what we have seen so far. Paul has finished talking about the nature of his circumstances in verses 12 to

18. He says, "in this I rejoice," at the end of verse 18. Now at the end of verse 18 in that very little phrase there, "Yes, and I will rejoice," beloved, grammatically and just obviously in the sense of English, he has pivoted to something else and you can see this in your own English Bible. He has moved from the present and now he's talking about something different, "Yes, I will rejoice. I'm looking, my thought is progressing to something else here." He changes verb tenses because he's changed the subject of what he is considering and what he is talking about in what is about to come. Beloved, at this point in the letter, there is a hinge, the door has closed on what he was saying in verses 12 to 18 and the door has opened, it has pivoted, it has turned on the hinge to talk about something else going into verse 19, and here's what I want you to see, I'm making quite a big point of this, I realize that, what is it that he's looking about in the future? What is it that he talks about in what follows? Well, beloved, whatever it is, and I'm gonna tell you what I think it is soon enough, whatever it is, it is something that transcends time and this earthly life. Whatever it is, he's talking about something else. He's not talking about his imprisonment in these immediate verses in my judgment, as I will show you right now. This future tense that he's looking about is something that is going to be true whether he lives or whether he dies.

Look at the end of verse 20. He says, "Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death." Huh? That's strange. If he's talking about being released from prison, then it has to be something that's contained within the bounds of his earthly life here in this earthly flesh. What he's saying is, "What I'm rejoicing in is something that's not tied to life or death." And he goes on and he continues in that vein in verse 21 when he says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. I could live, I could die, either one." And he goes on and he keeps talking like this. Verse 22, "But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me," if I do, but then he says in verse 23, he leaves that behind and says, "I have the desire to depart and be with Christ for that is very much better." So, "Do I live or do I die? I'm gonna rejoice. To live is Christ, to die is gain. Either way, I rejoice. If I continue on in the flesh, I rejoice. If I die, I'm with Christ and I rejoice." Do you see it, beloved? His mind has shifted into a different realm. This is a delicate nuance, perhaps it is subtle, but in my opinion it fits with the fullness of the context and leads us into something that is verified for us in multiple, multiple places in the thoughts of Paul elsewhere in Scripture and even in other biblical writers. And beloved, here's what I want you to see, here's what I want you to see: Paul is expressing a stunning when you think about it, a stunning ambivalence to what happens in this earthly life. "I live or I die. I'm rejoicing either way. I'm good." Something, then, better than life is motivating him. Something outside the realm of time, something outside the realm of the earthly window of his earthly existence is what is feeding his heart with this expectation of future joy. It has to be, beloved, it has to be something more than deliverance from prison because he's saying, "Even if I die, this aspect of my joy is not going to be taken away." And I want to know what that aspect is. Something that is independent of life gives him a certain, abiding, unconquerable, unchanging, unchallengeable joy that cannot be taken away from him. I want to know what that is, don't you? His ambivalence about life or death tells us that his attitude toward his imprisonment is secondary. The exaltation of Christ is primary and his role in the exaltation of Christ is what is primary.

Look at the end of verse 20. He says, "Christ will," future tense, "even now, Christ will even now as always be exalted in my body. Now and in the future Christ will be exalted whether I live or whether I die." Whatever it is, this is going to happen whether he lives or dies and the sense of him saying, "My deliverance will be my release from prison," is telling you, that attitude, that interpretation says that Paul's joy is contingent upon something that happens in the realm of life. "I know that I'm gonna be released and I'm rejoicing in that." That's possible but, man, is that contrary to the spirit of everything else he says about whether I live or die. It seems to me that Paul is expressing something that will give him joy that is not based on a preferred earthly outcome. Paul is talking about a deliverance that is something more than distinct from his release from prison. The idea that his joy is bound up in a future release from prison is far too earthbound given his ambivalence about whether he lives or dies. There must be something else that's going on here.

What is it, then? Well, remember the future tense and hold that thought for a moment. Remember the future tense and hold that thought as we address something that is related that we bring out a little bit of a pastoral implication for our souls here this morning. When you're "trusting God," air quotes there, when you're "trusting God" that something in life is going to change within the bounds of life, this circumstance will reverse, this relationship will be restored, my health will be restored and all of that, you are hoping for and trusting in something that is contained within the bounds of time and, beloved, your faith is meant to grow beyond that, it's meant to be anchored in something more secure than that. Yes, God might restore that relationship to you and that would be wonderful if he did, but do you know what? You live long enough and you realize there will be other relationships that break down in the future, and you just start to realize that hoping in relationships within the confines of this earthly life are a rather unstable basis upon which to build your joy and contentment because they come and go. Same thing with material circumstances, same things with physical things, God brings a great miraculous healing to you, we'd all rejoice with you, but do you know what? If we live long enough, we're still gonna bury you one day because it's appointed to man to die once and after this comes judgment, and what I want you to see is that to have your hope in Christ be tied up with things that are related to things that are on this earth, you are trusting in that which is unstable, that which can be taken away, that which is uncertain, and whether you think it through all the way or not, the reality is that when you're hoping for something like that, even if it's something as noble as the salvation of your children, "I really want my children to be saved, pastor." Do you know what? I do too. I want your children to be saved but what if they're not? Then what? Is all hope for joy gone? Has your reason for joy been removed and taken away so that you have nothing upon which to rejoice because your children are lost or your other loved ones are lost? Is there no reason for joy, then? Is that what Christianity does? Is it simply conditioned on us getting what we want, even the things that really matter and are noble and right for us to desire? Is that what Christianity is about? To ask the question is to answer it, in my opinion.

What's Paul saying here? Look at verse 19 with me again. He says, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus

Christ." What is this deliverance of which he is speaking? It's about time that I answered that question, isn't it? Paul's perspective here is eternal, not earthly. That's why he says, "Life or death is secondary to this joy that I have." What he is saying is this, he is saying that – oh, this is so important – he's saying that the Spirit of God will deliver him from all of his earthly trials and bring him safely into the presence of Christ and that's why he's at peace. Whether he lives a little longer, he's still going to have this deliverance where he's in the presence of Christ. That's the deliverance. If he dies sooner than he's expecting, if Caesar takes away his life, he's going to die, he's going to depart and be with Christ and that's going to be very much better. Whether he lives a few more years or whether he dies tomorrow, it's all the same. There is this deliverance that is coming which is the deliverance of stepping out of the boat of present circumstances onto the hallowed ground of the eternal purpose for which God saved him in the first place. He will step from prison into glory. He will step from earthly life into the immediate presence of Christ. I'm going to show you this and help you see this. I'm giving you the summary so you know where we're going now. He's saying that, "Christ is going to keep me and receive me into His presence no matter what happens to me, and because that is very much better because to be with Christ is certain, cannot be taken away, and because it's very much better than anything in this earthly life, of course I'm rejoicing. I have an eternal inheritance that is mine and nothing on earth can take it away, and what happens to me in eternity in the presence of Christ is far more important than what happens to me in the course of time with these shifting and changing circumstances. And because what's more important is certain, what's more important is great and glorious, then I can rejoice now no matter what the secondary outcome of these earthly circumstances might be."

And beloved, every one of you that is a Christian can step into that realm of thinking and embrace it and know that it's true for you too. No matter what is on our hearts at the moment, no matter what is happening in life right now, beloved, you as a Christian have something that is transcendent, that is certain, that is glorious, that you have the title deed to, that is guaranteed and cannot be taken away from you. And whether life or death comes, whether prosperity or poverty comes, whether health or sickness comes, that great eternal inheritance is yours and one day soon enough, beloved, you will step off the boat of the tossing waves of these circumstances onto the firm ground of your heavenly home and all of these things will be left behind and you will be consumed with the presence, the glory, and the eternal love of Christ. And that is why he purchased you on the cross, he purchased you for that outcome, not to save you from earthly circumstances necessarily, although we get that from time to time, ultimately there is a final outcome on earth that you're not delivered from, right? Everyone that's older than 100 years old, basically speaking, proves my point. Every cemetery, every crypt, every sarcophagus proves the point. Eventually this life ends in death, eventually there is not a final deliverance in this life and, therefore, as Christians our joy must be rooted in something that is greater than life itself and that is what Paul is pointing to. This is the deliverance of which he speaks.

Look at Philippians 3:20-21, lest you think that I'm injecting things that are not in the four corners of the book of Philippians. Paul says in Philippians 3:20, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus

Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." Paul says, "As Christians," plural, "As a Christian, I," singular, he says, "Our citizenship is in heaven. Our home is outside the realm of this earth. It's outside the bounds of time." And that is what we are eagerly waiting for, the appearance of Christ when he comes for us whether in his second coming or whether he comes for us through the so-called angel of death, he will come for us and he will transform us, he will bring us into a different realm of glory and that is guaranteed by his omnipotence that he will exercise on behalf of all of those who have come to him by faith.

So your future, Christian, is this: what lies ahead for you, no matter what the cloudy circumstances of earth may be between now and then, the only thing that matters is that Christ has saved you for eternal glory and one day, although he's making you wait for a time right now, one day he will assert his power, he will execute his eternal purpose on you and you will be transformed, you will be in his presence, you will be secure and nothing will take that away, and you will belong to him forever and you will be in glory forever, and the weight of the wonder of the glory of that will transcend anything that could have happened in this life. Luke 16, the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man had his good stuff in this life, Lazarus ate the crumbs off his table. In eternity, it was reversed. Lazarus got the better end of the deal, didn't he, even though for a time the dogs were licking his sores and he was a miserable beggar outside a man who didn't want to give him the time of day. And the whole testimony of Scripture is that the nature of this earthly life is often broken, sad and miserable, but as a Christian, though we may have a figurative chain to our circumstances like that now, there's a coming deliverance which is the presence of Christ which makes it all worthwhile and will transform it all in the end. Jesus Christ will keep his own. He will keep you so that you stand approved before God, welcomed into his presence never to be subjected to the earthly trials again.

Look at 2 Thessalonians. Turn just a few pages to your right in the hard copy of your Bible, scroll down on your electronic Bible to 2 Thessalonians 2. What's the purpose of it all? Verse 13 of 2 Thessalonians 3, verse 13, Paul says, "we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation," there's our word, soteria, "from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth." Verse 14, "It was for this He called you through our gospel," what "this"? What purpose? "That you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." What's coming at the end of this painful process of sanctification for you is the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. To live is Christ, to die is to gain his glory, to die is to leave the presence of this world behind and enter into the presence of his glory.

Go a little bit more to your right to 2 Timothy 1. Paul's writing now from a different imprisonment, a darker imprisonment, his second imprisonment from which he would not escape and he writes to Timothy, passing the spiritual baton. These are the last words of Paul that we see in 2 Timothy and so there's a special poignancy to them. A few years have passed since the writing of Philippians and he writes to Timothy in verse 8 and he says, "do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join

with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God." Why would I rejoice if prison and suffering is my lot in the bounds of this earthly life? What's there to rejoice in if it's all suffering and sorrow, Paul? Well, keep reading. Verse 9, "[He] has saved us and [He's] called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity." Do you see it? It transcends time. It's beyond the bounds of life. Verse 10, "but now has been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher." Life. Immortality. Death abolished. This is transcending time, it's transcending life and death, and so he says in verse 12, "For this reason I also suffer these things, but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him until that day," that day that is coming, that day when immortality will burst upon the realm of my existence, that day when death is abolished and I am in the glory of Christ forever. That day is the purpose for which he was saved.

Beloved, that day is the purpose for which you yourself were saved as well. Do you see it? Paul's imprisonment and the opposition from Philippians 1 can't take that away from him, even death can't take it away from him. If he dies immediately, he's just ushered into the eternal purpose of God for his soul. And so, beloved, watch this, suddenly the Christian who understands these things suddenly is in a position where what happens in this earthly life is secondary and does not have the power, the potential to take away that joy because this future joy in the glory of Christ and with the glory of Christ in sharing the glory of Christ, is his eternal purpose that he's appointed us for and no one can take it away, and the omnipotent Christ who, remember, conquered death in his resurrection, the omnipotent Christ who is in sovereign control providentially of everything that happens in the universe, the omnipotent Christ who has a sovereign purpose in everything that ever happens to you, is taking all of that together, working for a still future purpose where you are in his presence and conformed to his glory and that will be your ultimate deliverance. That will be the occasion where even a conservative stodgy old guy like me will leap in joy and shout for glory in overwhelming response to the wonder of having stepped out of this life into the glory of that one, and the nature of Christian joy today is simply remembering the title deed that we have to that and importing it into our present thinking and perspective today. This is what the outcome is and that flavors the way I view everything else. I view everything through the prism, through the glasses of what is to come and now I see life completely differently.

Christ, beloved, if you are a Christian, Christ will deliver you from it all. All of the physical affliction, all of the financial affliction, all of the relational conflict, all of your sin, all of your temptation, everything about this passing earthly life, he intends to bring a final comprehensive deliverance by his power for you. This is why he saved you. So great are his loving purposes that he has an eternal purpose of glory to reach his hand down and take you out of it, which is what a deliverance is, right, to deliver you out of this broken mess and world and out of your own broken soul, your own broken heart, beloved, and his hand will powerfully, lovingly, gently usher you into that eternal purpose which he established before time and which you will enjoy after time comes to

its conclusion, and our privilege here as Christians based on God's inerrant word, is that we can have a confidence that that is real. Paul says, "I'm convinced that He's able to guard what I've entrusted to Him until that day. I have given Him my life. Everything that concerns me I've entrusted to His care. Everything that concerns me I've entrusted to Him and I'm confident that He knows that, I'm confident that He will keep and fulfill every good purpose that He has until that day. He'll protect it and when the end comes and I'm with Him in glory, it will be on full display for everyone to see that my faith was not in vain, that my confidence in Christ was not misplaced. I will not be disappointed." And that in what we've been talking about here this morning, throbs and beats the heartbeat of Christian living today.

Now go back to Philippians 1. You know, when I talk in these realms of thought, of biblical thought, I don't want to leave. I just want to stay there until the rapture, stay there until I die, but we can't do that.

Verse 19, look at what Paul says, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." He's indicating the means by which God will accomplish and keep him and preserve him through these earthly obstacles to deliver him to glory. God is a prayer-answering God. The Philippians had prayed for him and were praying for him. Paul's saying, "I know you're praying for me and I know God answers prayer, therefore I'm confident that I'll be delivered in the manner of which I'm speaking here. I'm confident in that because God's so good to answer the prayers of His people." And the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, God has given us his Holy Spirit as Ephesians 1:13-14 says, as a down payment, as the guarantee that what he has started, he will finish.

In fact, let's remember something else in our context here from Philippians 1:6. Go back there with me and you see how this is woven before and after; you see where the realm of Paul's mind is. He says in verse 6, "I'm confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus." The day of Christ Jesus. The day of Christ Jesus. That's what you were saved for, beloved. That was the purpose of God in choosing you and saving you. That's his purpose now in keeping you. There's an outcome to all of this. There's a purpose that unfolds and it's certain and you who have trusted Christ have put your, everything that is precious to you in the best possible hands and he will not let you down. You will not be disappointed. Scripture says over and over again, "He who believes in Him will not be disappointed." Christ says over and over again in different Scriptures, he will never ever leave you nor will he ever ever forsake you.

So the prayers of the Philippians, the presence of the Holy Spirit, was an indication that these purposes of God would certainly be carried out and Paul is confident that he will be glorified in the presence of Christ whether he lives or whether he dies. Whatever happens – beloved, watch this – whatever happens in the immediate future is secondary. Paul's ultimate future was safe in the hands of Christ and that is primary and the key to joyful, contented, Christian living is recognizing that distinction and trusting in the one who revealed it in his word, who laid his hand upon you to save you from your sins, and who

has said, "I am going to complete the purpose for which I saved you." And so Paul can say, "In Christ, I rejoice now," and he says, "In Christ, I will rejoice," looking to that great day of final deliverance that other Scriptures speak to that he's testified to even within the book of Philippians, so that, so that the message of what he is saying here is that, "Nothing on earth can take Christ away from me. Caesar wants to cut my head off, I don't lose Christ, and so I haven't lost anything. I keep living, I have Christ, I have everything. Whether I live or die, I have Christ."

Do you see, beloved, that he's rejoicing in and resting in something that is far more than obedience to a moral code? He knows Christ. This is not about a matter of external behavior, this is about a living reality mediated by the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit that is the reason that he lives, the reason of his existence and, therefore, if Paul were with us today in those exact same circumstances, knowing what he knows and expressing what he's expressed here and someone said, "Do you know what? We're gonna sing, 'It's well with my soul,'" Paul would open up the hymnal and he would sing out and his voice would be the loudest of them all, even if he was still chained to that Roman soldier. Beloved, the point of all of this is that that's true for every Christian. What is it that troubles you today? A broken body? A broken relationship? A broken life? Beloved, your union with Jesus Christ has an ultimate purpose that is yet to come that gives you grounds for joy even if life takes everything else away in the meantime.

Look at 1 Peter 1 and we'll close with this passage. Look at 1 Peter 1:3 and you see these same themes again. Writing to Christians who were suffering in life under the heavy hand of persecution he says in verse 3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain," future tense, "an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation," there is our word again, "a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Not fully disclosed yet, something yet to come, but this is why you were born again, this is why you were saved, you have this imperishable inheritance that is just waiting for you and with hands trembling with anticipation, we say, "Ah, it's just about there," and reaching forward.

But he goes on. He's not done talking about it. But that future deliverance is better than life itself and, beloved, I want you to listen to me carefully, please, it is more important than life itself and, therefore, it is more important than anything that life itself contains. This inheritance is more important. It is eternal. It's what you were saved for. It's God's eternal purpose. It's what is real. It's what is certain. It is what is true. It is what will come. It is what will last. It is outside the bounds of time in this life and, therefore, it is more important than life itself. And by means of what of just a natural extension, then therefore it is more important than everything that life includes. Everything that occurs within this parenthesis of time yields to in importance, yields to in our affections, yields in our aspirations, everything in life yields to this one great coming day of glory, being with him, and everything else is under that. Everything else is secondary to that. I didn't say it's not important but it's secondary to that which has ultimate importance.

These things are undeniable to the Christian so that in verse 6 in Peter, look at it with me, he says, "In this you greatly rejoice." In what? In what I've been talking about these prior three verses, this inheritance that's reserved in heaven ready to be revealed for you in the last time. "In this you greatly rejoice." Peter and Paul could have had a conversation about this and they would have been in complete agreement. Paul says, "I've got a deliverance that's to come that's more important than prison itself." Peter would say, "Yeah, that's right, Paul. In this I greatly rejoice, I greatly rejoice in this inheritance yet to come." Paul says, "Peter, that's what I'm talking about." Peter says, "I know. We're talking about the same thing. We're rejoicing in what's to come." Verse 6, "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials." "Oh," he says, "I know that this is distressing what you're going through right now and its various trials, they are of many different colors, they come in so many different shapes and they assault you at different times and sometimes it seems like the avalanche is just coming down on you," and Peter says, "But in this you greatly rejoice, so that," verse 7, "the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable," see the transcendence of it all? "Even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ," yet to come, "though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the," soteria, "the salvation," the deliverance, "of your souls."

Beloved, look to Christ. He knew how to save you from sin and he gladly exercised his power and gave his blood to do it. When it comes to the nature of life, he knows what he's doing. He has the power to keep you and preserve you through it all. He knows how to bring about this ultimate outcome which he appointed for you and he will most certainly do it. The outcome of your faith will be the obtaining of your inheritance which God appointed for you before the foundation of time itself, and in that, my believing friend, in that you greatly rejoice. When those things are true, then comes the imperative, "therefore rejoice," and you say, "Oh yeah, I know. Now I get it. In light of everything to come, of course I rejoice. My rejoicing now is an act of loving obedient response to what God has revealed in Scripture about what the future holds for my eternal soul."

Beloved, Christ knew how to save you from sin and in this mortal life, he knows how to keep you for eternal glory, and he will do it and in this we greatly rejoice. The one who loved you will never fail you nor forsake you.

Let's bow in prayer.

By faith we look to You, our Christ, to keep Your promise and to deliver us safe in the end. We rejoice in all of Your goodness toward us knowing that the best is yet to come. We ask You to have mercy on those who have not yet found their rest in You. Father, we pray that You would draw ones like that to repentance and faith in Christ so that they too might have this eternal life and rejoice with the rest of us as we glory in Your name, as we thank You from the bottom of our hearts for such a great salvation as this. Father, one day we will step off the boat of this earthly life and into eternal glory and we will

never look back because the land of our destination is fair, it is great, it is glorious, it is where our Christ is, and where Christ is, O God, is where we most want to be and we thank You that You will keep us until the day that that becomes ours in present possession. For now, we wait in faith, we thank You by faith, we trust You by faith, and we pray for every hurting trembling heart, every sorrowful heart, Father, that You would minister Your grace and that the promise of what is to come would soften the blow of this adversity in life and even if we look to You, if we look up with tear-filled eyes, O God, may they turn from tears of sorrow to tears of joy at the wonder of Your grace, Your mercy, Your patience, Your kindness, Your eternal love to our souls in Christ Jesus our Lord. We pray in His name. Amen.

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