

Rejoice in a Christ-honoring future (Philippians 1:18b–26)

Despite imprisonment and badly motivated preachers, Paul was able to rejoice. As he looked to the future, he would also continue to rejoice, because he was confident that Christ Jesus would be honored through him.

I. Rejoice when Christ is magnified by life or by death (1:19–24).

Verse 20 gives Paul's conviction that Christ would be "honored" in his body by life or death. "Honor" here has the sense of making something great, or "magnified." Paul anticipated that others would see Christ and Christ's glory predominately in Paul. In this Paul would rejoice.

1. *Paul would rejoice expecting his "deliverance" to magnify Christ (vv. 18b–19).*
 - a. "Deliverance" or "salvation" could refer to physical rescue, which is unlikely here since Paul includes death as an optional means to magnify Christ.
 - b. Paul might be thinking of spiritual salvation in the sense of sanctification (but not justification). Believing in Christ and abiding in Christ leads to not being ashamed (Romans 9:33; 10:11; Isaiah 28:16; 1 John 2:28) and ultimately to Jesus Christ being magnified.
 - c. Job 13:16 uses the identical wording; hence Paul might have that passage in mind. Just as Job argued that he would one day be vindicated, Paul also was confident that one day, in the present life or in the future, he would be vindicated, despite imprisonment and malicious brothers. To suffer righteously for Christ magnifies Christ, showing how worthy Christ is.
2. *Paul rejoiced understanding that "deliverance" would be the result of their prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.*
 - a. The "help" (ESV) of the Spirit most likely refers to that which the Spirit of Christ abundantly supplies. He supplies all that is needed for an eternally significant life. The work of the Spirit in believers witnessed to the great salvation which we have in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:3–4) and thus serves to magnify Christ. Giving glory to Jesus Christ is a work of the Spirit in this age (John 16:14).
 - b. Paul joins this with the prayers of the Philippian believers. That which the Spirit provides is in answer to their prayer.
 - c. The supply of the Spirit could include the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) and such things as Paul prayed, like a spirit of wisdom. Such spiritual virtues bring glory to Christ.
3. *Paul rejoiced being confident that his deliverance matched his "earnest expectation and hope."*

Paul's confidence matched that which he hoped and expected, that is, that he would not be ashamed but that Christ would be magnified in his body. It would have been shameful if Paul continued to live for himself rather than for Christ. But by God's grace he would live for Christ with "full courage" so that Christ would be magnified in his body whether in life or death.
4. *Paul rejoiced knowing that Christ would be magnified through him because for him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain".*
 - a. "To live" or "to be living" refers to the earthly existence (v. 22) with its circumstances (v. 12), in which labors for Christ bear fruit for His glory (vv. 22, 25–26). "To die" sees death as a singular act which is departing from this life, like breaking camp or striking a tent (v. 23, cf. 2 Corinthians 5.1–4). More significant for Paul and all true believers, "to die" means being with Christ. For Paul living was Christ and to die was to be with Christ; such a Christ-centered life magnified Christ.
 - b. Paul saw the positive sides: personal gain in death, fruitful ministry in living. But he also saw the negative: death stopped ministry and living delayed entrance into the presence of Christ. He concluded that it was most important for the sake of Christ to continue ministry to others.

Paul looked to the future and rejoiced because he was confident that whatever happened Jesus Christ would be magnified. If you abandon self-interest and serve Christ alone, than you too may confidently rejoice in the future, that Christ will be magnified.

II. Rejoice when there is fruitful labor to the glory of Christ (1:25–26).

1. The ministry need appeared enough for Paul to conclude that he would be released from bondage and be free to continue ministry. Paul expected his ministry to the Philippians to help them in their progress, that is, in their spiritual growth (cf. Colossians 1:28; 2:7), as well as help them in their joy in the faith, a special emphasis in this letter (cf. 3:1; 4:4).
2. Paul especially wanted them to have further reason to bring glory to Christ which they could do as a result of seeing God work in Paul's life by his release and visit to them.

Magnifying Christ Jesus or bringing glory to Him is the ultimate purpose of who you are as a Christian and what you do. When you magnify Christ with your life, you can confidently rejoice in the future.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- Are you striving to magnify Christ through all your activities? How can that be done at "regular" jobs or in the home?
- Can you look toward the future and with confidence rejoice? Why/why not?
- Why might a Christian not see death as something "far better"?