Who Can Finish This Life Well?

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[0:00] God's Word, Philippians 1, verses 18 through 26. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached, and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out from my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed.
But with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
But if I live on in my flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor. Yet what shall I choose? I cannot tell, for I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.
Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and the joy of faith.
[1:17] That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. The grass withers and the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.
Let's pray. Let's pray. O Holy Spirit, please magnify Christ.
Lord, please open our eyes to see your glory. To see our King Jesus alive, working, leading, ministering, and advancing his own kingdom.
For your glory we pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. I know several of you, like me, have been wrestling these weeks with the fall to sin or the disclosure of hidden secret sins of some Christians who are very well known.
[2:40] So my sermon title today from this text is, Who Can Finish This Life Well? I've shared with you before, and it continues to be true.

One of my greatest fears is that I would fall and bring shame to Christ in his name. I know many of our men have shared that as well. And we don't trust ourselves. We need the Lord to preserve us every day that we're alive.
Who can finish this life well? You probably heard that as Paul's focus in that passage I just read. He's afraid of bringing shame.
And he wants Christ to be magnified. And he's got his own imminent death in view. Can Paul finish this life well?
Without bringing shame to Christ? That's what's troubling him as well. My encouragement to you in two short sentences is this. Who can finish this life well?
[3:49] Some don't. You can. And I would like to walk through these phrases, really. Just these couple verses. And do our best to get at the meaning of the Holy Spirit as he inspired and breathed out these words for the church.

My first observation is this. To finish well, feed what you feel with what you know. To finish well, feed what you're feeling.
Feed that with what you know. Paul has a Christ-redeemed view of what has happened. I think verse 18 could very easily be divided into two verses.
He had just talked about how you look at the church all around and you see the evil motives exposed. He says, What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached.
And in this, I rejoice. And that's where we left off last week. He has a Christ-redeemed view of what has happened in the past. But then I think that next phrase, he shifts his focus to what will happen

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in the future.
[5:05] He says, Yes, and I shall rejoice. I look back at the confusion within the church, what's visible. And I choose to rejoice when Christ is preached. Now, looking forward, I shall rejoice.

It's a simple future verb. Nothing extra bold or confident. And it's simply a statement of fact. Looking forward, not knowing what will come. I shall continue to rejoice.
He says, For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance. Well, we've been seeing how Paul went and preached in Jerusalem, how he was also one misleading people, and he was arrested and attached to a chain to a Roman soldier ever since.
And most likely, his trial has several parts. He's not yet faced Caesar for the final verdict. But he has reason to be hopeful. As we read in our passage, he still has an inclination he might get to see the Philippians again and be released.
But he's also not very certain. He's sending his letter through others. He might not get to see them. But what he does know in verse 19 is that in this, no matter what comes of this, it will turn out for my deliverance.
[6:20] Well, what is it that is Paul's true fear here? He doesn't know if he's going to live or die. There's only one thing keeping that sharp blade of an iron axe from his sensitive skin on his neck.

And that's the whim of the emperor. He says, I shall rejoice for I know. His rejoicing is tied to his feeling.
To what he knows. He says, I shall rejoice. This will be my experience as a Christian. I shall in the future. I shall experience rejoicing. For I know.
Someone said it's like an umbilical cord. You know, the umbilical cord ties that baby as it comes out of the mother's womb. And inside the womb, this little cord into the belly button provides the food for the baby to live.
His rejoicing is fed through this umbilical cord of what he knows. It's not rooted in a mood. And it's also not rooted in his own stoic resolve by his own flesh and power.
[7:34] It's not. It's through the knowledge that God gives him through the word. That's what feeds his rejoicing. Christian joy is only fueled by true Christian doctrine.

To know God through his word. That's what feeds true Christian joy and true Christian experience. Now, it's possible to have a lot of knowledge about God.
And to have no experience of God. Someone said there's there's one foot that will keep you from heaven. It's that distance between the head and the heart.
If you know God only in your head, but not in your heart, you don't know God. It's possible, Al Martin commented, to possess Christian truth without feeling.
Whatever you think you know of God, if he has not shattered your heart and filled it with his own holy presence, then you don't know him savingly. But the other is also true that it's impossible to feel a genuine Christian experience without knowledge.
[8:45] See, first, the light of Christ comes through your head. You hear the gospel. And this is good news for you, too. And that light of Christ coming in through your understanding.

It warms your heart. It's light and fire. That's what it is to be a Christian. Paul says, I shall rejoice for I know what I know will not be taken away from me.
And I know that one way or the other, Christ will be magnified. That's his focus. You might wonder like me, well, is he referring here to the what I know?
Is it that he will have confidence? He will have boldness. He will have the strength in the worst of temptations. Those are more the gifts. Or does he know that it's the spirit of Christ that will be supplied?
And the answer is you can't separate the gifts, strength, boldness, confidence from the giver. If you have the spirit of God through Christ, you receive all of his gifts.
[9:51] And the giver is never separated from his gifts. So your confidence comes from knowing that Christ dwells in you by his Holy Spirit. And you can rejoice only when you have Christ.

So to finish well, feed what you feel with what you know. Number two, you'll want to walk out this life well. If you think of what you are stepping into next.
You'll want to walk out the very last steps, even if it's with a limp in this life. If you think about what you are stepping into in the next life.
In verse 19, he says, yes, I shall rejoice for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance. Do you remember in 2 Timothy 4.13, how Paul wrote to Timothy and he said, When you come, bring my

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cloak and my books, especially the parchments.
You remember that? And that was about two years later. That's at the end of his time in prison. Paul wants the word of God with him and the books explaining the truth of God to help keep feeding him, feeding his soul and his feelings.
[11:04] His body is cold. He needs a cloak. But it's the truth of God that keeps ministering to him. And even though Philippians is written much before that, Paul most likely had some portions of scripture or he had it memorized in his head and in his heart.

Because when he says this phrase in verse 19, This will turn out for my deliverance. He's quoting from the Greek Old Testament. That's a word for word for Job 13.16.
So Job, that's the book about the man who lost everything unjustly. And he's wrestling with the goodness of God. You think about Paul studying the book of Job for this time of imprisonment, this time of final trials and the suffering in his body.
And he's quoting back to the church from the Old Testament what God used to minister to him. This will turn out for your deliverance. That phrase will turn out, that verb, it literally means to come down from.
As in coming down from a ship. So here he is in Rome, you know, ships are coming and going. They're carrying merchandise all over the world. And you see people coming down from a ship onto shore.
[12:18] That same verb is used in John 21.9 where it says, As soon as they had come down onto the land, they saw Jesus who had prepared a breakfast for them with fish and bread.

You remember that story? So here's the word picture. Paul's on the ship over which he has no control. And it's the last years of his life.
But he knows when I get off of this ship, of this vessel, this life, I'm stepping onto the shore of the kingdom of heaven. And he's keeping that in the forefront of his mind.
This ride that I'm on now that I have no control over in this life. When I step off of this, I'm stepping into paradise with Jesus Christ. And that gives you strength to forbear and to long suffer.
You know what you're stepping onto next. Our confession of faith speaks of the perseverance of the saints. Really, if you look at how it's worded, a better description is the preservation of the saints.
[13:22] God preserves his people to the very end. Listen to this wording from 1689. The same God who first called you continues to still call you.

And he begets in you and nourishes in you more faith, more repentance, more love, more joy, more hope, and all the graces of the spirit until your immortality.
God provides all of that. He's the one who birthed those graces in you. He's the one who will continue supplying you with them. And though many storms and floods arise and beat against them, you who are saved by Christ in no way shall ever be able to be taken off of that foundation and rock upon which by faith you are fastened.
Let that come for you. Christ, he's the one who went on ahead and he's waiting for you on the rock of paradise. And you're fastened to him by faith.
And he's the one pulling you and preserving you and supplying you everything you need. And the storms and the winds and the destruction of the waves, it's pounding this vessel.
[14:34] But Christ is the one pulling you and he is a rock. He will pull you all the way to the end. When Paul says, This will turn out for my deliverance.

This word deliverance can be translated as deliverance, but mostly it's translated over 40 times in the New Testament as salvation. The exact same word. This will turn out for my salvation.
It can refer to deliverance from enemies, but it can also be more broad. It can refer to health and well-being of preservation. That which concludes to the soul's safety.
Future blessings in Christ for eternity. All of this, this ride, it will turn out for my final salvation in Christ.
What does Paul have in view? Well, we read in Acts 4.12, what the Holy Spirit poured out on all the churches is proclaiming through the early church and through Paul.
[15:39] Acts 4.12 is this salvation is none other than Christ, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

And this, even these trials will turn out for my salvation in Christ. Our confession goes on to say in the same chapter, the sensible light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from you.

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Some of you shared with me even this morning, you're in a time where prayer is cold. The goodness of God seems clouded. His light raised to warm you don't seem to be reaching you. The trials of life, our own faith that's so weak, and the temptations of Satan, they can obscure the good, strong, preserving hand of God from us.
It can be hard to feel that sometimes, can't it? But the scripture confirms, as our confession captures, that you shall be sure to be kept by the power of God unto your final salvation, because Christ purchased you as his own possession.
[16:59] He engraved you upon the palm of his hands, and before time, God wrote your name in the book of life. He will preserve you to the very end. He is longing for you to be with him, and he's preparing your soul for eternity.

So you will want to walk out this life well if you think of what you're stepping into next. Number three, to finish well, you and I need two things.
To finish well, we need prayers and the supply of the Spirit to empower us. To finish well, you and I need prayers and we need the supply of the Spirit to empower us to finish well.
That's what Paul states in verse 19. He says, through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, all of this will turn out to magnify Christ and for my salvation.
Through your prayer, church. What is prayer? Our catechism says, prayer is an offering up of our desires to God for things agreeable to his will in the name of Jesus Christ with the confession of our sins and thankful acknowledgement of his mercies.
[18:22] That's what prayer is. And Paul says to the church, to this congregation, through your prayer. prayer. Your is second person plural.

Collectively. All of you together praying. And the word prayer is in the singular. Through collective prayer of the church, offering up one prayer together, one voice to God for God's kingdom to advance.
It's the efficacy of congregational intercession. It's a body locally gathered, in person, together, supplicating, asking, crying out our desires to God with boldness, one voice lifted up, one spirit in the name of Jesus Christ because we stand forgiven by him and we're praying out of gratitude, out of the abundance of joy and confidence we have that Christ's kingdom is advancing.
And he says it's through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ. One Greek scholar said if we didn't have all the rest of the Bible to inform this doctrine of prayer and how God works, with only this verse, we would be, we would have to believe and conclude that the spirit only supplies that for which we pray.
I mean, he could not have linked congregational prayer and the supply of the spirit more closely than he did here. And how he used the language under the inspiration of the spirit. What does he mean by the supply of the spirit?
[20:01] The supply of the spirit. The ESV and the Christian Standard Bible translate this as the help of the spirit. The NIV translates it as God's provision through the spirit.

He says it's the spirit of Christ. In Ephesians 4.16 he describes how the whole body joined and knit together by what every joint supplies.
The same word there. Supplies for the whole body to function. So what does this supply mean? In Roman literature, this word was used to describe providing all that would be needed for the housing, the food, the clothing, and all of the other needs of generous supply for a choir that would serve in a Roman theater.
So you picture this troupe that sings together all the different parts in harmony, a glorious production. They're one unit, one voice, and you have a great patron that has plenty of money and he's going to supply all that they need to be able to exercise that gift and sing together as one voice.
Isn't that a beautiful picture for congregational prayer? fully supplied by the Spirit to use the gifts he's given to sing out the melody of the gospel.
[21:21] And you probably picked up on this and our focus has been Trinitarian this morning. He calls it the Spirit of Jesus Christ. From the one God proceeds the Son.

The Son ascended to the right hand of the Father Almighty and he pours out and from Father and Son proceed the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit acts in a different, a more powerful, more abundant way in the New Covenant than in the Old.

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The Spirit of Jesus Christ Himself with His people. And through the Spirit of Jesus Christ the Church receives a full provision of strength.
The more I've thought about what this means, the Spirit of Christ poured out for the church. I've come to the conclusion, I'd love to hear your thoughts. The finished work of Jesus Christ is what secures the blessings that the church needs.
So, the Spirit of Christ specifically has in view the active obedience of Christ on our behalf now applied to us as the energizing strength and power that we need to walk as His people.
[22:35] in other words, Jesus Christ came without any help. We have the Holy Spirit, the help, the provision, the supply, and Christ came without the curse of sin and with the help of the Holy Spirit but no help external, no help from any man.

And He accomplished what we need. His life was tested and He proved powerfully in the flesh that all that God requires of righteousness He has fulfilled and He will now supply the righteousness that He accomplished in His life to the church to use all of our gifts for His glory.
Paul had tasted this. He had experienced what this was. by His own flesh He was dragging out Christians throwing them into prison and beating them.
He thought He was serving God according to His flesh. And now the opposite has happened. Paul is the one drug away undressively tried and thrown in prison.
And where He is weak the Holy Spirit is strong. And in His weakness He's seen God minister to the Praetorian Guard to give Him an audience before Caesar himself and He's proclaiming the gospel of Christ in Rome.
[24:00] And how did He get there? What was the path? It was the path of the cross. It was strengthened by the Spirit of Christ that as He suffers and gets pressed lower and lower and lower and squeezed tighter and tighter more of Christ came out of Him for the glory of God.

This is a hard thing for me to apply and encourage you with because we're a small enough congregation I know some of the hard things that our congregation is going through right now.
But the same Holy Spirit that gave Paul this strength that Spirit dwells in every true believer. And because Christ is the one who has walked that path of the cross and it's the Spirit of Christ what you feel you are not strong enough to endure any longer the Spirit of Christ promises to supply you whatsoever God ordains for your life.
And I know right now there are some hard things that our body is going through. To finish well you and I need prayers. We need to pray for one another and we need to pray specifically that God will supply the Spirit of Christ to one another in those hard trials we're enduring.
Number four to finish well beware of your own weakness and fix your hope on God's grace.
[25:34] To finish well beware of your own weakness and fix your hope on God's grace. I believe that's what Paul does in verse 20. Paul says in verse 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope Christ will be magnified.

Let's look at these words earnest expectation it's to wait eagerly with your neck outstretched. You know what this is like if you've been around little kids and they haven't seen you for a while come up to that window and stretching the neck out just can't wait to see you when you're coming back.
Earnest expectation that Christ will be magnified. What does that look in our lives to live a life earnestly expecting Christ to be magnified?
Watching to see how he's going to do it next. Peeking out the window. I hear the story in a person's life I don't know what's going to come next. When the page turns what's the next chapter?
How will it read? I don't know. I'm going to pray for the supply of the spirit and I'm going to earnestly expect it. I'm going to try to watch very carefully and see how Christ will magnify himself in what seems to be impossible.
[26:48] In the word hope confident faith that God will provide all that he has promised. See when your hope is in the grace of God you will never be disappointed.

Grace has been the theme all along hasn't it? Paul keeps repeating the name of Jesus Christ and the grace of God. That's what he fixes his hope on and he will not be disappointed.
The source of hope is fixed on Christ and his grace. Well I said to finish well you need to beware of your own weakness. See the first thing Paul says in verse 20 is in the negative.
He says it's my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. In nothing I shall be ashamed. The word ashamed means disfigured.

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No matter what happens I don't want my face to get distorted. I don't want to get bent out of shape over whatever happens to me. And his real fear is that he would not bear witness faithfully of Christ. [27:57] That he would disgrace his Savior in his final moment of testing. 1 Corinthians 2 23 Paul wrote we preach Christ crucified to the Jews this is a stumbling block and to the Greeks it's foolishness.

And here he is in the capital in Rome itself proclaiming Christ crucified knowing that to their ears this is utter foolishness. But in Romans 1 16 Paul wrote I am not ashamed of the gospel it is the power of God to save.
So we get this insight that from his letters Paul is very worried about this he knows it sounds like utter foolishness but yet the spirit helps him to not be ashamed and to continue proclaiming Christ and him crucified.
To finish well beware of your own weakness. Paul does not want to bring shame to the glory of God he admits that to the congregation he asks for their prayers and he counts on them and then put positively to finish well we need to fix our hope on God's grace.
That's what he says next he says with all boldness as always so now also I have confidence that he who began a gracious work in me will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.
[29:20] We saw that earlier in Philippians in 2 Corinthians 12 9 he said my grace the words of Jesus to Paul my grace is sufficient for you and in Hebrews 4 16 he speaks of this boldness this confidence he says we go boldly to the throne of grace and we obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need he's fixed his hope not on his own strength he's aware of his weakness but his hope is fixed on the grace of God in this life there's a battle this battle is described in Romans 17 as the experience of every Christian I'm sorry Romans 7 it's the battle between the remaining sin in our flesh and the battle between the spirit of God inside of us our confession says that in this war between your renewed spirit and the sin that lingers in your flesh although that remaining corruption for a time may much prevail and yet through the continual supply of strength from the sanctifying spirit of Christ the regenerate soul in your inner being does overcome and so who

God's saints do grow in grace God perfects his holiness in you he energizes you to press after the heavenly life and to continue growing in evangelical obedience to all the commands which Christ as head and king in his word has prescribed to his people to finish well beware of your weakness this battle will not stop until you take your last breath but have confidence and fix your hope not on your strength but on the grace of God his grace his strength his energy will be with you till the very last day in the part of your soul that he has regenerated and he's working that out to the rest of your life that part will overcome by his grace my fifth and final heading is that to finish well in this life ask for that same grace to magnify
Christ in you more and more you will finish well if you live by his grace more and more to magnify Christ in verse 20 he says my prayer is that Christ will be magnified specifically he says in my body Paul had hopes of still visiting Spain he's going to continue to write letters from prison and he's going to continue praying for the advance of God's kingdom he's resolved these things however many days or years he has left so he's praying that Christ will be magnified in his body in Acts 20 24 Paul said I do not count my life dear to myself so that I may finish the race with joy and the ministry which I have received from the Lord Jesus which is to testify to the gospel of the grace of God and he prays that God will be magnified in his body in life so our life is not our own we belong body and soul to our faithful
Savior Jesus Christ and if he has you alive so that you can magnify him he stirs your heart to think of someone in the church someone in your life a loved one who you need to pray for you need to ask for the supply of the spirit for them and he wants to bring opportunities for you to show the love of Christ and to tell others of your Savior who lives in you you magnify Christ by your life but here Paul is also very aware that his death might be around the corner most likely when he says that Christ will be magnified in my body that's what he's thinking the most about right now and he wants the church to know don't be anxious about anything dear church if my head rolls off of my body into that basket you can know that it came off the body of a rejoicing man who wants Christ to be magnified and that I'm with him
Romans 6 5 says we have already become united with Christ in the likeness of his death so every day he gives us to live and breathe it's for his purpose for his glory to be magnified in you we don't fear death like the world fears death we're already spiritually united to Christ in his death and united to him in his resurrection I learned from our congregation this week of a family crippled by death the

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thought of death the anxiety medication unable to do normal life activities with such a fear of death such hopelessness I love how this Puritan explained the contrast Thomas Brooks we should lament over that dead man or dead woman whom hell harbors whom the devil devours whom divine justice torments we should lament and we should be earnest to proclaim
[34:50] Christ every soul that God brings into contact with you today and this week is a soul headed to heaven or to hell and Brooks goes on to write let us rejoice that's the theme of Paul's letter let us rejoice over those departed believers whom Christ embosoms and whom all the court of heaven comes forth to welcome let Christ be magnified in my body one way or the other because we rejoice when Christ is magnified that word magnified children you've done an experiment we get like a detective piece of glass that magnifies whatever's on the other side you can look at bugs up close some of you have have doctorates in the sciences and you've looked at microscopes you spent hours understanding magnification I thought about how a magnifying glass is never the object it's never the focus is it the purpose of a magnifying glass is to see the true object of interest through it that that would be enlarged and that the glass would be transparent that Christ be magnified in my body for Christ is the head and his church is his body and if we live we live in Christ in Christ we move and we have our being we as a as a church as a congregation we should be that way we should be transparent so that when people look they don't see anything of man they see Christ magnified through this little body we are a glass through which

Christ reveals himself to others and that's why we're alive still there's an old hymn that goes like this I serve a risen savior he's in the world today I know that he is living whatever men may say I see his hand of mercy I hear his voice of cheer he lives he lives salvation to impart in all the world around me I see his loving care and though my heart grows weary I never will despair I know that he is leading through all the stormy blast the day of his appearing will come at last he lives he lives salvation to impart you ask me how I know he lives he lives within my heart that's
Christ magnified in his people Ephesians 316 it's by his grace that Christ dwells in your hearts through faith to make you become rooted and grounded in his great love and from the riches of his glory God grants for you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner self so take courage church and take comfort God wants you to finish well he wants Christ in you to be magnified so put your confidence once again in his unfailing grace amen let's pray Lord I thank you for these dear brothers and sisters for this precious congregation the beloved bride of Jesus Christ you're preparing your bride Lord for you for that great wedding feast we long to be with you
Lord and we thank you that now we trust you by faith and you involve us in this glorious work you're doing of preparing your bride for yourself help us to pray with Christ for his bride and help our lives to magnify you more and more and more by your grace and by your strength for your glory we pray amen spend some moments reflecting and responding to the Lord

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