

Philippians 1:19-30

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning again, friend. I invite you to turn with me to Philippians chapter 1. We will continue this series in the book of Philippians 1.

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For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope, that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me, yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell.

I am hard-pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

[1 : 15] In the midst of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you, and that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I have, and now hear that I still have.

The grass withers, and the flower fades. The word of our God will stand forever. Last Sunday, in verses 12 through 18, Paul began speaking about his imprisonment, finally.

Finally began speaking about his imprisonment to the Philippians. He was writing where we left him, at the end of Acts chapter 28, under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial before Nero.

[2 : 47] Now part of his intent on writing this letter to the Philippians, we've already seen, is that he's here to reassure them, the Christians in Philippi. They cared for him, they worried over him, and he wrote in part to comfort them, guys, I'm okay.

Last week, he calmed their fears, essentially by saying, don't worry about me, my mission, honestly, it is still advancing, even though I'm here in chains.

The other Christians here have heard, that I am imprisoned, and the Lord has emboldened them, to keep preaching. And even some, who are kind of selfish, they see in my absence, like a leadership gap, and an opportunity for them to gain status, well how do they get that status?

They have to preach the gospel too. So they didn't need to worry about Paul's mission. God will see it through. But what about Paul himself?

He's still in prison. He's still in danger. And they care about him, not just his mission. And so that's what he turns to today. Now the paragraph break in your Bible probably splits verse 18 in half.

[4 : 04] And it really is two different sentences. The verse numbers aren't inspired. They're a product of the publishers, the age of the printing press. But you can see why the printers understood them to be related.

The last section ends, and in that I rejoice. And this section begins, yes and I will rejoice. There's a common thread here.

Paul is in prison. And he just discussed the status of his mission. Well it seems we're literally bound, literally tied up. And he's about to talk about his own fate under the house arrest.

And what joins those two things? It's joy. He's joyful about his mission because he has attached himself to a mission that can't fail. Just can't.

And he's joyful, or more properly, he says, future tense, I will rejoice, even in these circumstances. And before we begin thinking about how Paul can rejoice in prison, let me point something out about today's passage.

[5 : 14] It's not just about Paul. He begins talking about himself. The Philippians are concerned for him, so he's reassuring them about himself. But in verse 27, he turns from himself to them.

So this passage breaks down into two halves, one about Paul, one about the church. And what we're going to see is that Paul takes what he says about himself and shows the Philippians about how it's true about them as well.

If you speed ahead to verses 29 and 30, he's going to be using words like the same ministry. So with that in mind, let's see what Paul says about himself knowing that all these things that he's about to apply, to say about himself, he is about to apply to the church.

And so he's going to speak to you and to me as well. Let's see how Paul reassures the Philippians about his imprisonment.

Verses 19 and 20. And he begins again, the end of verse 18 says, Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be, or that not be at all ashamed that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

[6 : 52] Paul knows that he can be joyful. Why? Right?

He says, I'm going to rejoice for because I know that I will be delivered, he says. And what does he mean by that exactly?

Right? Is he being, is he talking about being delivered, like set free from jail? Or is he talking about being delivered, like saved from judgment on the last day? The word here is the normal word for salvation.

In fact, it's going to be used again and translated salvation at the end of the passage. The Bible uses this word to talk about both salvation from, deliverance from earthly dangers, like saving Israel from Pharaoh, and for the salvation of our souls before the righteous judge.

So which is he talking about here? On the one hand, if you look to like verse 25, he's going to go on and say that he knows that he's going to keep on living for a while, keep on serving for a while.

[8 : 07] But on the other hand, he doesn't actually say in verse 25 that he knows he'll be released, just that he'll keep on living and keep on ministering.

It could be that he knows he'll keep on ministering with words, like this letter. And in the immediate context, if you look at like verse 20, the way he describes his deliverance doesn't seem to have a whole lot to do with being released or even surviving.

He says, Now, as always, Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. Paul's probably not talking about his deliverance from prison.

He's not talking about his deliverance from the execution. He's not talking about being delivered by Christ from these earthly things. He's probably talking about being delivered by Christ from the second death, the final judgment.

And in this, he says he rejoices. And so like the summary of 19 and 20, if you kind of put it together quickly, whether he survives or not, verse 20, Paul will rejoice, verse 18, because he will be delivered for all eternity verse 19, and Christ will be honored, verse 20.

[9 : 32] And that bit at the end about Christ being honored isn't just tagged on for good measure at the end. Paul has set up here a contrast, one that Western eyes, my Western eyes, will easily miss.

But he's set up a contrast that actually governs the entire passage. He says on the one hand, it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed.

I will not be ashamed. But that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honored. Now, let's think through the logic here.

And friends, this is really important. Like I said, Paul's going to transition, verse 27, take all these things and apply it to the church. And we belong to Christ's church.

So when Paul says he knows he won't be ashamed, we need to know that's not just for Paul, that's for us too. Now, we're about to talk quite a bit about honor and about shame because that's what Paul's talking about.

[10 : 49] But honor and shame don't really factor into the late, modern, Western worldview much. We say.

We say that's for Asian cultures, that's for Middle Eastern cultures. Right? Once we leave middle school behind, perhaps high school, we leave honor and shame culture behind.

Which is why, like, honestly, my kind of just like default understanding of honor and shame cultures is that they're very juvenile. They're very immature because my experience of honor and shame culture was middle school and that's for immature people.

But might it be that our culture is the immature one? I have a friend from Germany who, you know, regularly passes by buildings that are older than our nation, sometimes older than Columbus.

Right? Might it be that the ancient cultures are actually the ones that have matured more? Now, for some of us, right, in my default setting as well, like, talking about shame and indignity, it seems rather inconsequential.

[12:00] people. But, here are a few thoughts. First, Paul, obviously, does not think that it is a small thing.

It's really important to him. That's why he wrote this. That is why the Lord included it in his scriptures. So maybe it should be important to me. Two. Second, there are many for whom this is actually a very big deal.

Quiet. Not because they're weak or because they are self-centered, but because of very heavy things that have happened to them. Like Paul in his imprisonment. That is a very heavy thing that has made it very important to him.

So many people have been ground to dust by the cruelty of others and toil under an immense burden of shame. So many people live with enormous indignities because evil has been done to them.

And some live with the shame of knowing that they have done what is shameful. And so for all these people, Paul's words, I will not be at all ashamed.

[13:20] You better believe that they're leaning forward listening intently. And you might not know all of this because, well, of course, they wouldn't mention it to you.

It would be shameful to do so. Honor and shame are everywhere. Our society has simply decided either to ignore it or to deal with it in the least mature way possible, like cancel culture, that kind of thing.

right? So, first, Paul does not hold this lightly. Secondly, there are many for whom this issue is actually a big deal. Third, if shame and indignity sound inconsequential to you, I bet you haven't actually considered how much you already operate by them.

When was the last time you chickened out and didn't share the gospel? Why? However you phrase it, it's just one way or another of describing risking shame.

And that specifically is going to come up again in verses 27 through 30 as Paul applies these things to the ministry of his hearers. And last, what are we doing here today?

[14:41] what is this? We are at a worship service. Now, when we say service, you are not here being provided religious goods and services.

That language of service, right, you are not here being served, you are serving. The language of worship service comes from the truth that the service, the vocation of the church is worship. You are here, you are commanded to be here for worship. And what is worship? Ascribing honor to the God of glory.

Which means that you have been commanded by your Lord to participate in an honor system. Not on the periphery, but at the very center of Christianity, of what it means to be a Christian, therefore what it means to be fully human, is worship, which means that honor, and sadly, in a fallen world, it's converse, shame, forms part of the fabric of the universe that you and I inhabit.

So when Paul brings up honor, maybe it is relevant to us, and shame as well. But when he says, when he says it, what he says, it defies our expectation.

[16:20] He says, I will not be at all ashamed, and he says, Christ will be honored. Does that make good sense of his circumstance?

is it honorable or dishonorable to be shackled and imprisoned?

Powerlessness brings a sense of shame. Some know about this, and sadly, some know this.

this. Is it honorable or dishonorable to be, as Paul might be here, beheaded?

Being judged is dishonorable. Being subjected to violence is to be violated. Having it done in public is disgraceful. And again, some know about this, and some know this.

[17 : 24] Paul is in a profoundly dishonored place, prison, and he might be moving towards even more disgrace, beheading, and yet he says, it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not at all be ashamed.

And when the biblical authors talk about their hope, they aren't saying, gee, golly, I sure hope that this happens. When the biblical authors talk about our hope, they say things like, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us.

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf.

When we hear, when we read from the scriptures about hope, don't think wish, think assurance, think confidence. As empty as the tomb is, so full is your future in him who emptied it.

And so Paul sets up this contrast. I will not be at all ashamed. Christ will be honored. and he sets that contrast and he sets that assurance on this hope, the unassailable confidence in the risen Christ.

[18 : 58] But how can his shameful imprisonment not dishonor him? How can it honor Christ? And how can the potential of being beheaded not shame him?

How can it honor Christ? how can that which is shameful glorify? I want to be clear here about what Paul isn't saying.

Because what he is saying is so contrary to our expectations that we might accidentally misread it.

Paul is not saying this imprisonment and the possibility of execution isn't really all that shameful.

he is not saying even if I am shamed it won't reflect that badly on Christ. He is not saying it is not that shameful because it really doesn't bother me that much.

Paul is saying that his shameful imprisonment will not shame him. He is saying that his shameful imprisonment will glorify Christ.

[20 : 09] He is saying that his potential beheading will not shame him and that it will glorify Christ. Remember friends he is about to apply this to all of us. How can that which is shameful not shame how can it bring honor and glory?

When Paul gladly suffers the indignity of imprisonment on Christ's behalf shame it testifies to the world Christ is more valuable than even freedom and so it honors Christ.

When Paul willingly risks the suffering and the shame of a public execution for Christ for Christ it testifies Christ is more valuable than life itself for of course he is the author of life and so it honors Christ.

that's how suffering indignity for Christ honors him. How martyrdom honors him.

It is the testimony that he is indeed worth more than anything in this world and indeed the world itself. that's only half the equation.

[21 : 50] That's only the Christ will be honored part. What about the other part? The other half? Paul not being ashamed because it looks like Christ being honored depends on Paul being shamed.

How then can he say it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed? I think that's why he brings up his deliverance his salvation which is where he goes next.

Look at verse 21. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labor for me yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better.

But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory because of my coming to you again.

[23 : 20] Paul didn't say in verse 21 here that it is my assessment that I am not ashamed today. He said that it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be future tense at all ashamed.

That's why it was important to lay out what Paul didn't say about his shame. Indeed he was dishonored shamed and disgraced by his imprisonment.

But his hope his confidence was that he would be rid of his disgrace because the message the way it honored Christ was by saying he is better than all this and he would one day be rid of his disgrace because it's actually true.

His imprisonment testified Christ is better than freedom and very shortly he would be enjoying that very true freedom in Christ. Freedom from death and sickness and sorrow and want in Christ's presence forevermore.

his disgrace would turn to vindication as the one who is better than freedom welcomed him home. [24 : 49] The potential beheading testifying that Christ is better than life itself very shortly he would be!

In sense enjoying him who is the resurrection and the life and his dishonor would turn to vindication and that is the antidote to shame vindication but Paul knows he won't be able to vindicate his own name not before the likes of Caesar but final vindication and ultimate exoneration that cannot be contested or diminished or undone is coming for Paul and for all who hope in Christ and I've got to ask is that true for you can be the scriptures say that for all who have repented and believed by that we mean repent inwardly turn away from turn against our sinfulness and our self righteousness and believe that is see that

Christ has borne the penalty of all that sin and self righteousness on his cross and offers everlasting life by rising again to all who have called upon him for mercy he offers heaven to be your home forever to be your life the church to be your family child of God to be your name and himself as your great game and you say death is game for you and even as I say that we're very close to making the turn with Paul and applying all these things to ourselves but briefly I need to remark about how not to use it scripture is powerful so it's misuse is also gravely serious when Paul says verse 21 for me to live as

Christ and to die as gain to some people perhaps to those very same people who struggle under a severe burden of guilt of shame of suffering that can look like a way of escape when Paul says verse 23 my desire is to depart and to be with Christ for that is far better for some that can look like a way of relief and for clarity's sake I'm talking about suicide the scriptures are clear these very verses are so clear that there is extraordinary comfort for the believer in death comfort and joy that we cannot now even begin to contemplate which means that friends that our loved ones who have died in Christ presently enjoy glories and joys that we don't yet even understand and it means Christian that you need not fear death there is coming a day when your eyes will close your breath will cease and your heart will stop it will be one last time and if you trust in the one whose tomb is empty that day will be for you a day of great gain greatest gain but please do not read this passage please do not hear this sermon and see death as a way for you to make an escape of shame and suffering and pain if rejection make you read these words and think that's the way out that's how I can make what's intolerable cease!

Please understand that's the opposite of what Paul is saying here he's saying because I have this unshakable hope I can suffer today future glory tempers present suffering and actually Paul's not even contemplating a decision here at all when he says in verses 22 and 23 yet which shall I choose I cannot tell I'm hard pressed between the two it's not like he actually has a choice here he's talking about his preference and he's saying that he can't choose like he's saying that even if I could go to be a Christian I actually would like to stay here and care for you he knows he's not in charge of his own fate this isn't about him choosing who's going to determine his case Nero not him right and who governs Nero there's only one so when he says he can't decide between serving and going to be with

[30 : 07] Christ he's not talking about a decision that he is going to make when he mentions choice choice has to do with preference he's telling them guys don't worry about me there's no outcome here where I will be disappointed even if the worst should happen glory awaits and I can still serve you even in this moment of suffering so guys don't worry we can't lose so if this passage looks to you like an escape please understand that it's actually encouragement to keep going on and if you need help if self harm if suicide seem like the way out there is help so please talk to somebody today I am not a mental health professional but I can get you to the immediate help you need and this church will walk with you the whole journey in the moment of crisis and all your life long and so with that this whole time

I've been telling you that Paul is going to take his own ministry and apply it to his hearers to the church and so to us so here it comes look to verse 27 he says only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents this is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake engaged in the same conflict that you had and now hear that

I still have Paul does something extraordinary here especially thinking about the last two verses 29 and 30 the Philippians have been praying for Paul's release I'm certain of it we would be for like Randy Matthews if we were if he were to be detained on a gospel cause but in verses 29 and 30 Paul puts his arms around them they're praying for his release but he puts his arms around them and draws them into his cell and says I want you to see that you're in here with me you have been granted this same ministry I'm not coming out to you come on in here with me engaged in the same conflict you saw I had and I hear that I still have right so what

Paul is doing here is saying guys we're doing the same thing here and so that governs how we understand verses 27 and 28 the what you're doing bit right so when he says in verse 27 let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ he can't mean be worthy of Christ no one is no one can be the whole point of the gospel of Christ the good news of Christ is that the worthy one died for the unworthy ones that he might cleanse us and set us before the father in glory and so letting our manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ can't mean earn it or pay it back or something like that means live in accord with what has actually been true of you now that you have been set before the father in glory and he doesn't leave us guessing but what that looks like he sets it forth he explains it means two things first it's a commitment to the gospel he's a standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the gospel and second he says to stand confident with the same attitude that he has been showing in his imprisonment in the face of opposition so let's look at those two things in turn and then we will close first he says in verse 27 that it is a worthy thing right he says let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of

Christ it is a worthy thing to hold fast to the gospel of Christ verse 27 says only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you that you faith of the gospel what unifies the church of God it is not our demographics or our politics or our shared interests or any other thing to the gospel of Jesus Christ that's what he's saying here in the faith of the gospel at this point he's talking about faith as in not our trusting God but the doctrines of the gospel his priority for the church is that it be centered on the gospel of [36 : 01] Jesus Christ may that always be true of us and by centering on it are engaged in the same ministry that he is because his ministry at the end of the day he says is to honor God and by centering ourselves on Christ and his gospel and the proclamation of it to the world we are honoring Christ and holding him above all he says standing firm in one spirit in one mind striving side by side there is something here that is very community focused he cares that the church loves the church that each love the other that each is caring and concerned for the other and that testifies to the watching world that

Christ is all in all because I mean Christians can be weird and we love them anyway we love each other anyway for Christ sake remember we were helping someone at Shoreline move and suddenly they had a friend from work come and actually help as well that friend was like where did all these people come from like like why are they giving you their whole day and you don't have to pay a moving company and stuff yeah I mean like my church loves me that's weird right that was a testimony a very tiny one but a true testament of what Paul is looking at here in verse 27 your dedication to your brothers and sisters here your faithful participation in the church of Christ is one form of your witness that is a weighty thing don't think that just showing up on

Sunday morning is like I guess I could go receive some religious goods and services recognize that just participating in the gathered worship of the church is part of your witness to the world in ways that you and I can't even necessarily see one second he says verse 28 not frightened in anything by your opponents this is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God now we're going to hear more about their opponents later in the letter but there's something to see here that hearkens back not forward remember how Paul was talking about not being ashamed about Christ being honored in his own case remember how I've been telling you over and over again he's saying we're getting to verse 29 and 30 that this is the same ministry that you here's where it comes to bear he says here that contending for the faith that proclaiming the faith that offering the gospel to the world is a sign of our salvation salvation remember the same word that he used for his own deliverance in verse 19 he's back to this vindication idea again this honor shame idea again we see that here our salvation is in part a vindication that we are right to trust in Christ that we will not at all be ashamed and destruction is well among other things it is shameful so the same thing that applies to his ministry is at the center of giving us the power to join in this same ministry that's what he's saying here I'm suffering for the sake of the gospel you can stand firm in

the face of opposition in this same ministry how does that work there are lots of ways I'm not going to recount them here today there are lots of ways that our culture that an individual might oppose the proclamation of the gospel in the wider world that goes from indifference and sidelining all the way to verbal attacks all the way in some places to physical attacks and murder in some cultures not likely here thank the

Lord when you take the risk of sharing the gospel and in our culture looking like a bigot that is the shameful thing that is the opposition that comes in one form or another you either look like an idiot to the world around you or a bigot or some other thing it is a judgmental spirit that you are risking not always risking it as much as you might think people are perhaps more open to the gospel than we might think but when you take the risk sharing the gospel and looking like a bigot one of several things will happen and it has all to do with what Paul has already been saying about his own ministry so I'm just going to briefly explain how those couple things can work out in our lives and we'll be done when you take that risk you take the risk of facing opposition by sharing the gospel one of several things will happen they might embrace

[42 : 22] Christ they might repent and believe and find salvation in his name and Christ will be honored and you will not be ashamed because the glory of Christ will be shining more in this world that's one act Christ will be glorified Christ will be honored and you will not be ashamed or they might shrug their shoulders and Christ will be honored that you risked condemnation just like Paul's imprisonment was a testimony that Christ is better than freedom and in so doing you will have done what is honorable towards that person and you will be vindicated on the last day and so you will not be ashamed or they might react negatively in many different ways and

Christ will be honored again in the same way that Paul's imprisonment honored him Paul's imprisonment testified Christ is better than freedom I'm risking my life he's worth more than life itself and in the negative reaction he will be Christ will be honored by the testimony for us we're risking our reputation Christ is better than reputation and just like Paul you will be vindicated shortly when the king says well done good and faithful servant you will not at all be ashamed I promise you all throughout

Paul has been saying these are meant all to be words of comfort if you boil them all the way down Paul is saying look guys don't worry I can't lose here it is literally not possible for me to lose here and at the end he turns it to them says you are sharing in my ministry look guys you can't lose either let's pray Lord we look to this passage and see that we have nothing but gain ahead of us because of

Christ Jesus and all that he has done to rescue and redeem us so Lord may we live like we have nothing but gain in store for us as we think about holding fast together to our proclamation of faith and walking side by side and as we speak words of love to a watching world we ask these things in the name of him the worthy one who died for the unworthy ones and who walked out of his tomb amen