

The Future Is Guaranteed

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Well, our earthly lives are fragile, aren't they, and they are often filled with trouble. Psalm 39:4 says, David prays and says, "Lord, help me to know how transient I am." James 4:14 says, "you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away." In some ways, one of the enduring challenges, I think personally, of pastoral ministry is to repeatedly remind people of the transient nature of life so that you and I would not put our hope in what happens within this earthly parenthesis. Things come and go and people live and die and fortunes wax and wane, we understand those things and we emphasize those things or try to emphasize them here at our church because it is so important for us to understand and to realize that our trust and our hope about what happens to us cannot be tied ultimately to anything in this earthly life. We cannot hope in this world because even this world is passing away, 1 John 2 says, and so we are people who are passing away in the midst of a world that is passing away, and so we must have that fundamental perspective shaping everything so that our trust is placed elsewhere outside of the realm of this life if we are going to have a hope that is secure and a hope that is well-founded.

But beloved, having said that, I want to tell you as I speak to the people of God who have trusted in Christ, this is what's true for Christians, it is so fundamental also to keep that in balance and to realize that our existence as Christians is not vulnerable. Our hope, what we live for is not subject to be taken away but we must always remember what exactly that hope is. Whether we are young on the front end of life, just entering into college and starting to pursue our aspirations, or if we're on the end of life, on the back end and have only a few short days left by earthly calendars to live, our existence is not vulnerable because our future is guaranteed.

And what is that ultimate future? Turn to the Gospel of John with me, John 17. I just want to place a couple of thoughts in your mind here because this thought determines everything else. This is the North Star of our existence. This is the orientation point. This is the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega, so to speak. In John 17:24, Jesus Christ is praying on the eve of his crucifixion and he is looking beyond his death, looking beyond even his resurrection, looking to that time which is still future to us and the purpose for which he came which is tied up with our future in him, and he prayed in John 17:24, speaking of those who would believe in him, he said in John 17:24, "Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they

may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world."

That is a very profound prayer. Let me just point a couple of things out by way of introduction to our text that's coming up in Philippians. This is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son, praying to his eternal Father and committing the future of his immediate future and what would come as the result of his death and resurrection, committing it to the Father and I want you to think with me, if anyone's prayers ever are the ones that get answered, when Jesus Christ, he who is perfectly righteous and in perfect union with his Father, when he prays, his prayers get answered. There is a certainty to the outcome of his prayers. He knowing the will of God, he having power before the Father, what he prays for is answered in the affirmative and what he is praying for here from his Father is for his disciples, that one day still to come for us even, he says, "My desire is that My disciples would be with Me with you, and that My disciples would see My glory. O Father, it's been veiled in this Incarnation and it will certainly be marred by the upcoming crucifixion but, Father, I pray for that day when I am resurrected, I pray that when I am with You in heaven, I pray that You would gather up all of those people that You have given to Me before the foundation of the world, that not one of them would be lost but that all of them would be with Me one day and see My unveiled glory, and that they would be with Me to see that and share in that with Me forever and ever. And Father, I trust You for that. I know that You've loved Me before the foundation of the world and, Father, I am praying for that ultimate outcome of all of this, the ultimate outcome of all of this, his impending death, his sufferings on our behalf, that the ultimate outcome would be the deliverance of His people to a future glory." And when Christ prays that his people would see him in future glory, beloved, I'm here to tell you, God the Father will answer that prayer and those of us who are in Christ will one day see his future glory, we will see it face-to-face, it will be unveiled and our faith and hope will be realized, faith and hope will be seen. We don't hope for that which we experience, one day hope itself will pass away because our hope will be fulfilled and we will be with Christ and we will see him in all of his glory. He will be glorified. We will see his glory, indeed Scripture says we will share in it, we will partake in it. That is the outcome for us.

Look at Philippians 3. Again, this is all by way of introduction. Philippians 3 at the end of the chapter, Paul speaking about the future, speaking about believers and where their true home is and what the true outcome of their destiny is, in Philippians 3:20 says, "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." You know, when we ask each other, "Where do you live? Where is your home?" all of us would talk about the city in which we live, we might give our street address, "I live in northern Kentucky. I live in New Richmond," or whatever the case may be. But understand that we're answering that question on a superficial level in a particular context, and that that is not meant to define biblically where our home is, where we ultimately belong. Scripture says that our citizenship is in heaven, our real home is in a place yet to come, and that is where our aspirations are, that's where our affections are. That is the only place, Christian, my Christian brother and sister, that is the only place

where ultimately you are going to feel completely at rest and completely in that realm that we call home; that this is where I belong; that this is my destiny; this is what I was created for. And what happens in this earthly life is a passing vapor waiting for the fulfillment of that heavenly home to be brought to us. That's our home, future glory. That's the phrase I want you to remember today, future glory, and it says here in Philippians that our Lord Jesus Christ who loved us and gave himself up for us, has as his plan that he will carry out without fail, that he will bring us to that heavenly home, he will exercise his power upon us, and we will be changed so that we are conformed to his resurrected glory. We will be like him in a way that transcends our ability to fully grasp and understand right now. 1 John 3:2 repeats this promise. It says, "we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is."

Now beloved, as we've talked about these things from Philippians 1 in the past week or two or three, however long it has been, and we've emphasized this, I want to give you just a little point of application, a little hint of something that I think you'll find helpful as you walk through this earth with all of its valleys and mountains and the changing circumstances that come with it. When things are really good and you are really high and you're young and you're in the vigor of youth and you have your strength, you have your beloved spouse at your side and all of the world is at your footsteps, all of it is in front of you and everything looks positive, that's great. Praise the Lord for his goodness and his blessing, but echo this thought in your mind, future glory. Future glory. Remind yourself of these aspects of future glory so that your heart does not attach too much to this world and that you realize even as you are grateful for what the Lord has given to you here, that there is something better yet to come that is your ultimate hope, that is what you really desire which is the reason for which Christ saved you. As you go on in life, things come more difficult, health starts to fail, life starts to frustrate, life starts to hinder you, life starts to isolate you and you know something of the groan that accompanies that as relationships have not worked out the way that you had hoped, and careers have not gone the way that you dreamed, and bodies break down and hurt and ache and tomorrow will be like today only worse, to remember in that time and to say to yourself, "Ah, but future glory." But future glory, that this transient time of suffering and disappointment yields over into something better; that this broken body of mine is not my ultimate destination; this isolation that I feel is not my ultimate destination; this regret that I feel over the way that I've squandered my life is not the final destination. Future glory for me because I belong to Christ. I am his and he is mine and he will keep me and he has prayed for me to be with him and to see his glory in the end.

And beloved, when that day comes, when that moment occurs and you are in the presence of Christ, all of this other stuff is going to be so incidental by comparison, and to be with him in glory, to be in the presence of the resurrected eternal Son of God, to see him unveiled, to see him face-to-face, that's why we're living and nobody can take that away. Satan cannot take us away from that. He cannot snatch us out of the Father's hand, John 10 says. Jesus died, he rose again, he redeemed us so that we would certainly enter into that. Your temptations and your sins cannot keep you from that for which Christ saved you. Your enemies cannot take that away. Oh, they can make life miserable and difficult here in the present but they can't take away future glory from you. Sin can't take

it away because Christ paid the price of sin, right? These earthly bodies and their decay can't take it away because we have a resurrection coming that fits us for future glory. The opposition of men can't take it away. Satan can't touch it. Men can't touch it. We have this heavenly treasure reserved in heaven for us. It is ours and it is being kept by the power of God and we will most certainly enter into it. That's why we're living, beloved. Everything else is secondary by comparison. The greatest of earthly highs, secondary to it. The deepest of earthly lows are transformed as we look forward to that coming day. The ultimate glory of Christ and our presence with him informs our entire view of life and the ultimate glory of Christ informs our view of today's text as well.

Philippians 1:18, and as you're turning there to Philippians 1:18, is that we just have to rehearse this in our minds again and again and again, that we're anchored in this and not in the changing circumstances of life. Philippians 1:18, the Apostle Paul says this,

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. [And he pivots to the future tense as we looked at last time.] 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.

Here in this section of Scripture, Paul has been writing to his friends at the Philippian church telling them about his circumstances. He has been in prison for quite a while. They're naturally concerned about him. They're wondering how he is and so he writes this letter to be carried back by Epaphroditus and it will deliver to the congregation news about Paul's condition. He tells them in the early verses of this section, "The Gospel's going forward in unexpected ways. I'm rejoicing in that." He says, "There are Christians who are trying to make life difficult for me, but it's okay because Christ is being proclaimed and I'm not wrapped up in the petty emotions and the petty jealousies of earthly contention. There's something greater that animates me, it's the glory of Christ and Christ is being proclaimed and that's all that I care about. And so I'm fine, my Phillipian friends, as I sit here with a Roman guard chained to me, I'm doing fine. It is well with my soul." And then we saw last time that he pivots to the future tense and he says in verse 19, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance." And we said that that word "turn out" is the same idea, the same term that is used of getting off a boat and stepping from sea onto land, and that you're disembarking from one condition into another, and Paul says, "I am going to disembark from these difficulties and I am going to enter into my deliverance," and his deliverance, we said, was something that was more than his mere imprisonment.

He's anticipating a deliverance that is greater than anything that could happen in earth, and we pointed this out last time but I want you to see it again, especially those of you that are visiting with us for the first time, maybe didn't hear last week's message. Notice as we pointed out last time, that what Paul is hoping in and what this deliverance is, is

something that transcends life itself. He says at the end of verse 20, "What I'm hoping in, my deliverance is whether by life or by death." Verse 21, "To live is Christ and to die is gain." Verse 22, "If I'm to live on in the flesh," verse 23, "I have the desire to depart and be with Christ." Again and again and again in this short section, he has this stunning ambivalence about life or death. He says, "What is sustaining me in these circumstances, my Philippian friends, is something that's greater than life, it's greater than death. I have a deliverance that is coming for me that will far transcend it and will pluck me, as it were, pluck me out of these circumstances and deliver me into that for which I was ultimately saved." That coming deliverance is his future glory with Christ and the glory of Christ set his perspective on everything else.

Look at it there in verse 19 with me. He's looking to his deliverance. Verse 20, this is a verse we're going to look at today, "It's my earnest expectation and hope that Christ will be exalted in my body whether by life or death. To live is Christ and to die is gain." And so stepping back here and taking a breath because these things have a way of being pent up inside me and they just kind of gush out when I finally have opportunity to speak of them, is that Paul is saying, "I'm looking beyond life for that which sustains me and gives me joy right now," and what I want you to see here today in this room, beloved, or over the live stream, what I want you to see is that the same hope that animated Paul in his imprisonment is the exact same thing that animates you in your earthly life, whatever the circumstances may be. Future glory. Future glory.

You say, "But pastor, you don't know how sad and lonely I am." Future glory, my friend. Remember, you're gonna see Christ face-to-face if you're a Christian, and that makes all of the waiting worthwhile. That means that you're not condemned to live in this isolation. Future glory. "Oh, but my bones are aching and it's so hard just to get out..." Friend, future glory. Future glory. "You don't know what a pain my spouse is." Future glory, my friend. Future glory so that this realm yet to come shines into our present circumstances and gives light to everything else where there might otherwise be darkness. This is what you must lay hold on. This is what you must lay hold of and grasp and make it as the very reason that you live because it is the reason for which Christ died for you, is to bring you into that eternal glory; it is the reason for which Christ prayed for you in John 17, future glory; it's the purpose, it's your ultimate destination, future glory, Romans 8, to be conformed to the image of Christ. This defines everything for us and then turns perspective on its head so that earthly circumstances are no longer viewed in the same way.

What Paul is saying here in this passage with words that we could echo 2,000 years later despite the different circumstances, is this: what Paul realizes is what future glory means, what this deliverance that Christ will effect for him means is this, God would not leave him in the hands of his earthly foes forever. Deliverance is coming and he will be vindicated before Christ. God, Christ, would deliver Paul from this earthly realm into this realm of glory and that defines the way that he views everything else. This is ultimate, this is eternal, this is the sure outcome, and so no matter how meager it might seem in the present life, the outcome is splendid, it is magnificent, it is stupefying. It will be beyond what earthly words could describe and, beloved, what I want you to see is that when you

lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold of you, it transforms the way that you view everything else. It's why you can, so to speak, whistle joyfully in the dark. It's why you can persevere in hardship. It's why a person laying on, it's why a Christian laying on his deathbed perhaps wracked in pain can still sing with joy because the land promised to us is just ahead. The departure point is about to come and when we enter into that realm of glory, it'll be worth it all. And as I've said time and time again in recent weeks and somebody told me recently, said, "You repeat yourself a lot," and they said it in an affirming way and I appreciated that, but the reason I repeat it is because we're so slow to grasp it. I'm so slow to grasp it, to live on it, to make it the very bread of our souls, is that the one who has believed in Christ ultimately will not be disappointed. You will not get to glory and say, "Man, this isn't at all what I'd hoped. What a let-down this is." You know, you might say that about an earthly vacation, you will not say it about your heavenly destination. It will be greater than you imagine and that hope governs everything else that we think about life. That is our anchor point. That is our cornerstone. That is the way that we view everything else from that perspective.

Now let's look at it, then. Let's look at it, then, here. Last time we looked at verse 19. Look at it with me, "I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ," and then he goes on in verse 20 for our text and he explains what it is that is governing his outlook, what is it that determines his perspective in these adverse circumstances. He describes it for us in verse 20 when he says, "according to my earnest expectation and hope." According to my earnest expectation and hope. Beloved, his joy, his satisfaction even in prison was in accordance with something, it was according to something. In other words, his joy was in full agreement with something that he is about to say. He says, "I have this joy and it is according to," it is measured by the standard of what immediately follows as the object of the clause. What follows is the standard of his joy. What follows this word in English, "according to," what follows is what informs his joy. It tells you how high and how deep and how broad it goes. "My joy is according to my earnest expectation and hope," he says. He's telling us the basis, the foundation, the reason for his glad certainty in the midst of this adversity. It's according to something.

So what is it? Look at it there in verse 20 with me, he says, "it's according to my earnest expectation and hope." My earnest expectation and hope. Now these two words in English that you see there, "earnest expectation," is actually a single word in the original language, in the Greek. It's a compound word that gives an idea like this, it gives the idea of turning your head from one object to look at something else and to give your attention to it. So there's this sense of expectation that results from having turned from one perspective to another one. "I have turned my head from here to there." In other words, my thinking, my perspective, my mental work here is not focused on this present circumstance of prison, but I am focused on something that I am expecting in the future to come.

Expectation, look at it there with me. "My earnest expectation and hope," this phrase is really combined in the language; they are two words that are joined together in a way that they're describing a single idea and you can see this in this way. When you say, "I'm

expecting something," what are you saying? I'm looking for something to happen in the future, right? I expect something that's not here yet but I expect it to come. Same thing with the word "hope," biblically speaking. Hope is looking to the future, looking for an expectation of something to come. So Paul says, "I have this earnest expectation, I've turned my attention to something else and it's in the future and I'm looking ahead. I'm looking ahead as I sit here."

So what I want you to see, we're walking through this rather deliberately, I know. It's a reflection of how important it is. Paul's inner gladness, his satisfaction, his joy and his delight come from – watch this – turning his attention away from the present toward the future. Toward the future. He says, "I'm looking forward." Now let me just remind you because this is so critical, that he has been speaking in the future tense throughout these verses. At the end of verse 18, look at it with me, he says, "Yes, and I will rejoice," future tense, looking to that which is yet to come. "This will turn out for my deliverance," future tense, yet to come. "My earnest expectation and hope," expectation and hope, looking for something that is not yet present. "I will not be put to shame in anything," future tense, looking to something yet to come. "Christ will be exalted in my body," future tense, still to come. Do you see it?

Now I've been in pastoral ministry for a while, several years, and just as a general rule when you're counseling people in pastoral ministry, I think without exception you're always counseling them about what's happening in the present, and that's okay. I don't mind that. It's a delight to be able to bring God's word to bear on people's circumstances in a way that give them encouragement and hope, okay? So don't misread what I'm saying here, but it is the nature of counseling, it is the nature of the problems that people have that it is usually tied up with what is happening in the here-and-now. In the here-and-now, this relationship is causing me grief. In the here-and-now, this is a problem. In the here-and-now or in the here-and-now I have regret about the past and I've wasted my life and I've squandered relationships and it causes me grief in the here-and-now. You get the idea and you people are looking for hope and it's right that they do, and it's a privilege as a pastor to try to give that to them out of God's word. I have never, I have never counseled someone who needed help when they were focused on the future glory of Christ. I've never counseled anyone who was depressed when future glory and the coming presence of Christ was at the forefront of their thinking because that turns away everything else. It dominates everything else. I've seen people on their deathbeds rejoicing in Christ.

I've probably told you about my friend, Roy Anderson, who died many years ago back in California. What a lovely gracious man he was. I walked into his bedroom, if I've told this here before, I apologize but many of you haven't heard it, so it's okay. I walked into Roy's bedroom at his home. He only had, he knew it was terminal, he only had a few days, maybe a few weeks to live as we sat there. We knew that we were seeing each other for the last time on earth and Roy was laying on his bed because he was too weak to get out of bed, and in a splendid scene which is one of the great privileges of pastoral ministry are scenes like this, laying next to him was his wife of some 60 years, Jessie. Jessie's mind had betrayed her as it does in old age for so many people, and I walk into

this beautiful scene and Roy in his clarity of mind is holding hands with his wife of 60 years and she probably doesn't even really know where she's at, but they are just there together waiting for the end of life to come, and I knelt down besides Roy's bed, we had known each other for a long time, he was sweet to me and I trust I was an encouragement to him in the moment. His wife is gone. His health is gone. Everything about earthly life is behind him. You just need to understand the moment to get the full import of why this matters. And I knelt down beside his bed and I'm looking at him as he's laying there and I'm at eye-level with him and I said, "Roy, tell me your thoughts. What's on your mind?" And he said, "Don, I just want to be with the Lord. I just want to be with the Lord." There was no discouragement in his voice. There was no complaining about his circumstances. There was no looking over to Jessie and regretting her condition because she was going to outlive him. He knew life was at its end and he was full of hope, beloved. He was full of anticipation. "I am ready," he didn't say it this way but in the words of the Apostle Paul, "I'm ready to get off the boat. I'm ready to disembark this life, Don, and step into glory and see my Lord. That's my hope." And it was well with his soul.

He was in perfect peace when he had nothing left to live for. He had an earnest expectation and hope. That is to which you and I as Christians have title deed to, whether we live in light of it is another question, but that is what is true for every Christian and we can view all of life through that perspective, "I just want to... You know, why am I living? What am I hoping for? What gets me through discouragement? What gets me through bad times? What gets me through cancer? What gets me through financial hardship? I'm gonna see Christ." Future glory and everything else is redefined by that perspective.

Paul says, look at it there with me in verse 20, what is the specific content of this hopeful earnest expectation that he describes? Look at the text with me here in verse 20, "according to my earnest expectation and hope, that," that. The word "that" is introducing the specific definition of his hope, the object of his hope. "I have this hope." Paul, what is your hope? "My hope is that," and then it follows, "That" simply introduces what the hope is and he gives a two part explanation of his hope, negative and positive. First off in a negative sense he says, "My hope is that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness," contrast here, "I won't be put to shame in anything but instead Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."

So first of all, he says, "My earnest expectation and hope, what I am certain is going to be the outcome of this situation is this: I will not be put to shame in anything." And what Paul is saying here, remember his Christ-centered focus. This is so important. Look at verse 21 here, he says, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." He is not concerned with the opinions of men here. He's not concerned with public opinion. He's already said earlier in the chapter that he's not concerned about people who are trying to cause him distress in his imprisonment. He says, "That doesn't affect me. That doesn't influence my thinking about anything." So Paul is not talking about being ashamed before men, but rather he's thinking about his position and his standing before God and in Christ what he is saying is, "I won't be put to shame. I won't stand before God and be ashamed because Christ has saved me and I know that Christ will be faithful to me and

sustain me for the task at hand. I'm confident of that. I'm certain of that. And He will so work in me and He will so use me that when I stand before God, I will not have cause to be ashamed before Him." His circumstances, in other words, the current adverse circumstances of Paul – watch this, wow is this important – the present adversity in his life would not frustrate the purpose of Christ. Christ intended to bring him to glory and that was certainly going to happen and the things and the aspects about this present earthly life would only accumulate to the accomplishment of that great end where Paul is conformed to the image of Christ, so that everything about life is working toward this culmination where he is in glory with Jesus Christ. So how could it come out for shame for him? How could it come out in disappointment for him? That cannot happen and he's earnestly expecting that and he's trusting in that.

I'll read this slowly. Christ would fulfill his purposes in Paul's life and vindicate him in the end. Christ would show that Paul was in the right despite how he was treated at the hands of men. Men had thrown him in prison and degraded him, so to speak. He was in a degrading circumstance, chained to a Roman soldier, no freedom of movement, but the outcome of that, Paul would disembark from that into glory and when he is in glory, there will be no shame associated with that. All of these circumstances will be worked out by Christ to fulfill the purpose of Christ to the glory of Christ, and Paul would be exalted in his body whether by life or by death. Christ would be exalted in Paul's body, I mean, whether by life or by death. "Do I live beyond this imprisonment? Great, Christ will be glorified. Will I die as a result of this imprisonment? Great, Christ will be glorified. Either way Christ is glorified. I will be with Him in glory. This outcome cannot fail."

But beloved, what I want you to see here is this, is that there is so much rich, deeply textured nuance in these verses in 19 and 20 and that's why we're taking time with them. It's important to understand that Paul's concern was not preeminently himself. That's not his preeminent concern. We already saw in verse 21, "to live is Christ." Everything about Paul's being and essence and his concerns was subordinate to the greater purposes of his Master, the one who had saved him. But even in the way that he expresses the contrast, he says, verse 20, "I won't be put to shame in anything." Look at the contrast, he says in verse 20, "But instead with all boldness, with all openness, without being hindered in any way," now he's talking about Christ instead of himself, "Christ will even now as always be exalted in my body whether by life or by death." He talks about himself in the first clause, the negative clause, but he pivots and he's talking about Christ in the second. His preoccupation is with the person of Christ, not the outcome of his earthly circumstances. What happens with the esteem and the reputation of Christ is what matters to him and he says, "Whatever happens to me, Christ is going to be exalted."

Paul's live, beloved – watch this – Paul's life, his affections, everything that he cared about was subordinate to the glory of Christ, and since Christ's glory is the outcome of creation and world history and is the goal of eternity and that will certainly take place, since the glory of Christ is what he cares about and Christ will be glorified in the end, then Paul's greatest aspiration in life will be fulfilled. He will be made great. He will be seen as great, maybe better stated. "Christ will be glorified and that's enough for me. I'll

be there to share in the glory, that's enough for me." In the words of John the Baptist in John 3:30, "He must increase but I must decrease."

Going back to my counseling thing, I don't know if I've ever counseled someone who was so preeminently concerned with the glory of Christ that I had to counsel them and help them in that. This glory of Christ is its own answer to the problems of life and when our satisfaction is wrapped up in the glory of Christ, then the other things, yeah, we still sometimes need help but they don't dominate, they're not overwhelming in the same way because they, the circumstances, the adversity of life, this adversity of life which tends to overwhelm us humanly, horizontally in our own flesh and strength, that adversity is overwhelmed itself by the greater glory of Christ as we meditate on this and make it our own. Paul was in prison saying these things. He wasn't writing from his personal palace in Rome. He wasn't writing knowing what his immediate outcome would be. He's writing from a greater perspective, one that is sure, one that is certain in Christ.

Now look at this with me where he says, "Christ will even now in these circumstances, as always, He will be exalted in my body." This word "exalted" has the idea of "to make something large; to make it big; expansive; awesome," and Christ is the subject of that exaltation. Christ will be seen as glorious in the end and it will be an overwhelming manifestation of spectacular proportions and Christ, when we are with him in glory, we will see that he was far much greater, far far bigger than even our highest thoughts here on earth could have ever thought. So Paul is merely an instrument in the hands of God to that end, and what happens in Paul's life is an instrument to that end. Whether he lives or dies, he's an instrument in the hands of Christ for the exaltation of Christ. And he says, "Because I understand that purpose and I understand that outcome and it's certain and that's what I care most about, that's why I'm so joyful. That's why I can rejoice now and know that I will in the future. My joy" – watch this – "is in accordance with the greatness of that glory and since that glory has no bounds or restraints, my joy has no bounds or restraints either. Picture," he says, "remember the glory of Christ, how great and how large that is, and understand that my joy now and in the future is in accordance with that. That's the standard. That's what lifts it up. That's what makes my joy great, is that the certain outcome of all of that is great." Because Christ's glory is the outcome for sure of all creation, Paul cannot go wrong. Paul's desire is that Christ's glory be made manifest, be made know; that he would receive the praise of which he is worthy from his people. That's going to happen. Paul says, "I'm just an instrument of God to that end. God will be faithful to me, God will bring this about. I know the outcome before it comes and I rejoice in it. My Lord, my King, my Savior, my Master, will be seen as great and all of my aspirations are enveloped in the manifestation of his glory. That's what I care about. These other things are so secondary by comparison." It will be with all boldness. Christ's exaltation will be open for all to see. It happens even now as always, in other words, everything is continually moving forward toward this great goal and the vicissitudes of American politics have nothing to do with it. The vicissitudes of men that stray and fall from Christ do not diminish that ultimate outcome. Christ's exaltation will happen in Paul's body. In other words, it will happen through his whole being and so circumstances in time and the totality of Paul's existence are all moving toward this great lifting up of

the name of Christ and Paul says, "That's what I care about. That's where my joy is. This is certain and, therefore, I rejoice."

Beloved, the certain glorification of Christ permeates all things comprehensively for all time. Let me remind you, in fact, I'd like you to turn there, turn back to Ephesians 1 for just a moment and let me just repeat that comprehensive statement I just made. The certain glorification of Christ permeates all things comprehensively for all time. We may not see it now in the present but Ephesians 1:10 says this, that God is working "an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." That's such a mouthful, but all things, God is working all things in the heavens and the earth, visible and invisible, he's working all of them toward the goal of the glory of Christ and that's why I say the glory of Christ is being accomplished as God works through all things to achieve his purpose in the honor and glory of his Son. It is the ultimate perspective, then, through which believers are to view everything else. What starts in this life will continue clear through to final vindication when believers are glorified with Christ, and this is what gives hope to all of creation itself. This is what gives hope to our lives. It is not, beloved, that God will fix an earthly problem in earthly time. That may or may not happen. This ultimate outcome is the goal.

Look at Romans 8. Oh, as we let Scripture interpret Scripture, we just find this repeated over and over again. Romans 8, beginning in verse 18, Paul says, "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing," that's the same Greek word that's translated "earnest expectation" in Philippians 1, "For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God." Do you see it, verse 18, the glory that is to be revealed to us. Verse 21, the freedom of the glory of the children of God. The present sufferings, the present corruption of this life yielding over into that glory which God has appointed to be the ultimate end of creation, and it may seem like it is being diminished and frustrated from our limited earthly perspective but God is certainly bringing this to pass and there won't be a single detail that is lost in the process, it will all be gathered up and Christ will be glorified and he will share his glory with us.

Look at verse 28 of Romans 8, "we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." We quote that a lot. We often don't keep reading what the outcome is that's the good in mind. "For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son." Verse 30 for the sake of time, those "whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified." What works together in the end is that this glory is achieved, that Christ will glorify us and share his glory with us and that's what Paul's hoping in and, beloved, that's what you

need to hope in too, one single hope which is enough to define everything else in life, to change the perspective on everything else that is happening. Paul peacefully accepts whatever his uncertain earthly life would bring in light of the guaranteed future. The future is guaranteed. It is certain. It is determined beforehand by the purpose of God who is working all things together to that ultimate end.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones says this, he says, "Paul is not looking at himself, he is looking for Christ and the glory of Christ. The Gospel is what he is concerned about. It is not, 'Why am I chained to these men?' Or, 'what I am suffering and enduring.' He has a healthy attitude toward himself. He says, 'I am in Christ and it is not self that matters, it is the kingdom, it is the King.' Paul is freed from the whole vortex of unhappiness that is such a curse in this life." I love that closing phrase, "He is freed from the whole vortex of unhappiness that is such a curse in this life." Why? Future glory. Future glory is the answer to it all.

Beloved, are you in Christ? Christ, then, saved you from sin, death and hell. You will see his glory. That is why Christians rejoice, it is because the future is glorious and because Christ is risen from the dead and therefore every earthly power has been conquered, every spiritual hostility has been conquered, then by the power of the risen Christ, beloved, your future is guaranteed. This is the outcome for you. And my unsaved friend, Christ offers this blessedness to you if you'll come to him in repentance and trust him and repent of your sin and put your faith in Christ. This glorious hope can be yours too. It's offered to you as a completely free gift, through faith in Christ is how it's received. Faith alone. You can't work for this. You can't earn this. You couldn't possibly earn something like this. This is the love and grace and mercy of God on display that he has appointed this end for such unworthy creatures like us, right? And when we have this hope, we have a future guaranteed, we have grounds for endless, boundless joy in Christ.

Let's pray together.

Dear Father, how inadequate are earthly words to describe the glory that You have in store for those that You have redeemed in Your Son. All we can say is thank You and that we trust You for that outcome. We pray that the reality of this hope would infuse each one of us with a renewed perspective of optimism about what the future holds, and would convey to us an ability to patiently endure whatever adversity we're facing because future glory. Future glory. Future glory. That is our earnest expectation and hope, Father, that what You have promised You will perform and that we who have believed in You will not be disappointed in the end. We pray for those still in need of Christ. We pray, Father, that by Your hand You would draw them to faith in Christ; that You would open their eyes, as it were, to the glory of Christ and that they would seek Him and find Him as Your Spirit leads them through the testimony of Your inerrant word. We love You and we offer our praise to You in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

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