

Philippians 1:18b-30
For Christ Above All Else

Introduction:

Though as Christians we may face much opposition and deprivation in life, stand united in Christ because our salvation is secure in God.

I. The context for rejoicing v.18b-20

- Paul had just been noting that there were people preaching Christ in order to diminish his ministry and promote their own...
 - And yet he says that he will nevertheless rejoice...
 - Of course he rejoiced b/c Christ was still being preached...
 - That's important to remember if we're to understand what he's saying in v.19...
 - Here he says that "***this*** will turn out for my ***deliverance***"...
 - Now, what's the "***this***" he's talking about, and what's his "***deliverance***"?
 - By "***this***" he means both his **imprisonment**, and the preaching of the gospel by both **true** and **false** teachers...
 - So, these difficulties will turn out for his ***deliverance***...
 - Now, commentators are divided over what Paul means by deliverance...
 - Some believe he's talking about freedom from prison...
 - Others believe he's referring to the salvation of his soul...
 - Both of these groups admit that the other side could be right...
 - Now, I'm not going to get into their reasoning for their opinions...
 - I'm just going to tell you where I think the context takes us...
 - If you read v.19 along with v.20 Paul's ***deliverance*** corresponds to *Christ being honored in his body, whether by life or death*...
 - So Paul's highest good, his greatest benefit in all he does in life, and even in death is...
 - ...that Christ is magnified in **all he is & does** – **i.e.** body...
 - But notice that he's rejoicing (v.18b) because this will occur through the prayers of the saint in Philippi, and...
 - ...the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...
 - So Paul isn't merely rejoicing over the outcome of his trials, but the means through which the outcome takes place...
 - These Xians are working in concert with the Spirit of Christ to bring about the very thing Paul most earnestly desires...
 - ...**i.e.** the praise of Jesus through the preaching of the gospel...
 - Do you ever consider that when you pray for the Church – missionaries, pastor, ministries, one another, that...
 - ...the ultimate result of your petitions will be that...

II. Christ will be honored v.20

- Paul's greatest longing – **i.e.** eager expectation & hope was that he'd not be disappointed...
 - Rather, he fully expected, that through the prayers of the faithful, the Spirit of Christ would strengthen him...
 - Come life or death he would never deny His Lord...

- And isn't that what was happening in his situation?...
 - Under house arrest ... chained to guards ... He's still proclaiming Christ...
 - And if he were to live on or die, he expected to honor the Lord Jesus...
- This attitude is reminiscent of the early martyr **Polycarp**...
 - Given a choice by the Romans to either deny Christ or die, Polycarp said...
 - *Eighty-six years have I served X, and He has never done me harm...*
 - *How, then, could I blaspheme my king who saved me?...*
 - Paul understood that the work of the Holy Spirit to to magnify Christ...
 - When the Spirit brought you to salvation ... Christ was magnified...
 - When you live for God's glory, Christ is honored...
 - And when you die in faith in Christ, your savior is honored...
 - You see, during the whole course of life, whether in trouble or comfort...
 - ...or even on the day of our funeral...

III. Christ' honor should be our purpose (21-23)

- Here, when Paul says, "*For to me to live is Christ*"...
 - He's contrasting his own ministry with the false teachers who preach out of selfish ambition (v.17)...
 - So, he's not focused on himself, but rather on Christ...
 - But what does he mean when he says, to live is Christ?...
 - It means that whatever our **attitude** ... our entire **source of strength** ... all we **do** ... our approach to **any situation** ... our entire **relationship** with God...
 - ...everything depends on Christ and is lived for Christ...
 - And to die is gain is simply to be home with the Lord...
 - Death for the Xian is a gain b/c being in the presence of Christ it the apex – the pinnacle of everything for which he/she exists...
 - ...everything to which he/she has been called...
 - ...everything for which Jesus has come as your Savior & Redeemer...
- No wonder Paul could say, *I cannot tell whether I would choose life or death*...
 - He's weighing his options...
 - Like a someone with a most difficult decision, drawing a line down a page...
 - On one side he writes "*Live in the flesh*", and the other he writes "*Life with X*"...
 - In the flesh, he serves the Lord ... It's fruitful ministry...
 - Souls will be saved, churches planted, believers encouraged – Jesus is honored...
 - That's what Paul had been called to ... It's his whole purpose – to live for X...
 - But to depart this earth and be with Christ...
 - O, that's far better...
 - In glory before the Lord ... shared, mutual love with your Savior...
 - ...no suffering to draw your attention from your King...
 - ...no sin to inhibit your relationship...
 - ...just a permanent overflowing joy and rejoicing...
 - Acceptance by God, & gazing upon the beauty of the Lord...
 - But can't you just relate to Paul?...

- Have you ever been so tired of the struggle with sin and...
 - ...the misery of the world that you think, *How good it will be to be home with Christ!...*
 - And then you remember ... You remember your loved ones, and...
 - ...your heart is pulled in two directions because...
 - You know you're here for a reason...
- That's where Paul was as he wrote to these beloved saints...
 - He knew that God had called him to...

IV. Live for the benefit of others v.24-26

- Paul was convinced that his work on earth wasn't yet finished...
 - In fact, it is thought that he was later released and visited Philippi once more...
 - So here he's convinced that he'll live to strengthen their progress in *joy in the faith...*
 - He's deeply concerned about their spiritual progress – **i.e.** their sanctification...
 - Throughout the letter, he wants to see them grow in love, in knowledge, in fruitfulness, and obedience...
 - After all, if we're not growing, we tend to stagnate...
 - And invariably causes us to lose joy...
 - So Paul's hope is that after his release he would join them again...
 - He would carry on his ministry, and they'd experience further spiritual growth...
 - And in this way they find joy in the faith...
- So while Paul sees death as a doorway into Christ's presence...
 - His work on earth isn't done ... He could stay for the benefit of the Church...
 - It's been said, *until God's done with you, nothing can take you from this earth...*
 - But once God's work for you is done, nothing can keep you here...
 - I've seen that attitude with some Xians as they neared death...
 - **Illustrate:** Mr. G seeing his work on earth finished after his wife died....
 - But until our work is done, we're to...

V. Press on in the life Christ has for us (27-30)

- As they await Paul's return what are the Philippians to do?
 - The ESV says, "Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel"...
 - **Literally** that text could read, *Let your citizenship be worthy of the gospel of Christ...*
 - And then he goes on to describe what that should look like...
 - Basically, they should be in **united** ... **firm** in the **spirit**, having **one mind** ... **side by side** for the **faith** of the gospel...
 - There's strength in numbers ... Together they can withstand their opponents...
 - I just read a book, *The Boys In The Boat* ... It's about the 1936 US Olympic Gold Medal winners...
 - One of the main points in the book was that a shell, a boat of 8 oarsmen could only win if they focused on the boat and worked together...
 - That's a good illustration of the church...

- It's able to stand against those who oppose it, when it stands together...
- And the church needn't be frightened or surprised by opposition...
 - ...b/c opposition by the world signifies that Xians are not of this world...
 - They're citizens of the gospel & the Kingdom of God...
 - And so there will be conflicts ... The world won't run to embrace you...
 - But that's b/c those of this world are the children of wrath...
 - But not so for you...
- And yet, that means you'll often have to suffer for the sake of Christ...
 - But you don't suffer alone ... You are one people who share in the faith and its trials...
 - But in that you can still rejoice, for it leads to your salvation which is from God...
 - Sometimes that suffering might be to suffer with the world – like we do now with COVID-19...
 - And sometimes we suffer as Paul did – rejection b/c the world rejects Christ...
 - And yet, even then we can rejoice, b/c Christ, who is our life, is honored in us and through us...
 - And together we can be assured that our salvation is secure in God.

That's why I began by saying...

Though as Christians we may face much opposition and deprivation in life, stand united in Christ because our salvation is secure in God.