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Not Disappointed **Philippians 1:19-20**

Intro: In our last study, Paul finally began to inform the Philippian believers of his present condition but not in the form of a complaint or as a matter of concern. No, Paul introduces the theme of rejoicing in the midst of difficult circumstance (like being in prison). He contends that, though his current life status was completely unexpected and unwarranted, it actually resulted in the gospel being carried to places in Roman society that he had never dreamed possible. But, just as he begins this theme, Paul makes a brief digression concerning the motives for evangelism in Rome. This was not by accident, for it serves an important purpose. It seems that this was a hint to some degree of division or conflict in the Philippian church itself. Paul will deal with this later but he paves the way here by showing his own attitude to Christians who oppose him. The inference is that, if he, in prison, can rejoice even over his critics and detractors, then surely the Philippians can deal kindly with each other in their disagreements.

Again, this is not Paul putting a nice face on a bad situation. Paul could honestly and sincerely possess this attitude because he had his eye on a much bigger picture than the portrait of himself and his life. Paul's divine calling and commission was to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, so opposition could be tolerated if it leads to a furtherance of the primary goal of his life. Paul wasn't concerned about who received the credit for spreading the gospel; all that mattered was that the true gospel was spread and sinners were brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In our text today, Paul returns to the theme of rejoicing and develops it further.

19 – Despite his continued imprisonment and impending trial before Caesar Nero, Paul knew that the Lord was in control of all the events of his life and because of this, he is certain that his present dark circumstances would work out well. We might logically assume that Paul is referring to an acquittal before Caesar here but that is not so clear. The Greek word that Paul uses, translated as deliverance, is *soteria*: salvation, healing, vindication or wholeness. For Paul, *soteria* is generally something that

occurs at the end of times (day of the Lord) and refers to the final salvation that comes with God's acquittal of His people and the complete healing of the final resurrection.

Besides, Paul's phrase is a direct quote from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the OT, which was popular in Paul's day. Paul quotes the Septuagint version of **Job 13:16**, "even this will turn out for my deliverance..." In this passage, Job is declaring his certainty that his present undeserved suffering will end in his vindication by God. Paul knows that this will also be the case for him even though he's not sure if his trial before Nero will end in life or death (**20**). Paul is confident that whether he lives or dies, he will stand before God as one who is innocent, and more than that, as one whose life testimony will have done credit to the gospel as he proclaims it boldly.

Now, while we can't be certain if Paul is referring to a near acquittal from Nero or a distant acquittal and glorification before God, we can see that he is certain that the Philippians themselves will play a role in his deliverance. He was certain of this because he knew the Philippians were praying for him and he believed his deliverance from his present situation was connected to their prayers. Now, can we say that if the Philippians failed to pray for Paul that his deliverance would be hindered? That's hard to say but it really seems like Paul thought this way. Even without a definite answer, this still shows us what a serious matter prayer actually is.

Still, it wasn't the prayers of the Philippians in and of themselves that would meet Paul's needs. In truth, what Paul needed and desired most was the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ in fresh measure for this occasion. Paul's needs were met by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit; but this provision of the Spirit to Paul was facilitated in part by the prayers of the Philippians. God gives the Spirit to His people constantly, in response to prayer and the demands of the situation faced by His people. Here again we see the idea of cooperation with God. Through prayer, His people become co-laborers or sharers in God's work and God works as they are prepared to share in the work.

20 – There is a great deal of disappointment in this life. It's an experience common to the human condition. We learn disappointment early in life when, as children, we fail to get something we really want. As you mature,

it's almost as if life is just a progression of ever changing disappointments: in employment, business, relationships, life goals, etc. Everything human is stained with disappointment.

A perfect example of this is in the last song we sang: It Is Well. It was written by a man named Horatio G. Spafford, a successful lawyer and businessman in Chicago in the 19th century. He had a lovely wife and 5 young children but this wonderful family was no strangers to tears and tragedy. Their only son died of pneumonia in 1871 and in that same year, much of their business was lost in the great Chicago fire. In 1873, Mrs. Spafford and her 4 daughters sailed to Europe on a French ocean liner while Mr. Spafford was delayed in Chicago with an unexpected business problem. His plan was to follow them on another ship a few days later.

4 days into the crossing, the French ocean liner collided with another ship. Within 12 minutes, the French ship sank into the dark waters of the Atlantic along with 226 passengers, including the 4 Spafford children. Mrs. Spafford was pulled alive from the water and eventually made it to Cardiff, Wales. She wired a telegram to her husband saying, "Saved alone, what shall I do?" Mr. Spafford booked passage on the next available ship to join his grieving wife. With the ship about 4 days out, the captain called Spafford to his cabin and informed him that they were over the spot where his children went down. According to a daughter, born after the tragedy, Mr. Spafford wrote "It Is Well With My Soul" while he was on this journey.

That is, of course, an extreme example and yet, Paul declares in [v20](#) that there is no disappointment with God. How can he say this? Paul had carried the gospel of Jesus Christ through much of the Roman empire, and now he was imprisoned in Rome. He wanted to preach the gospel in the western part of the empire, but instead it looks like he may soon be executed for his faith. From a human perspective, everything seems to be going against him. But despite this, Paul remains confident that God's purpose for his life will not be shaken.

To understand this verse, we need to understand that the word ashamed didn't always have the meaning for the biblical writers that it has for us today. The primary biblical meaning is not even in most of our dictionaries. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines shame as a "painful emotion excited by a consciousness of guilt," "disgrace," or "dishonor." When you

make a fool of yourself publically, you are ashamed. (Baseball) But this is not the biblical understanding of shame. The biblical understanding has to do with disappointment. According to Scripture, the person who is not ashamed is the person whose trust is not misplaced and who, thus, is never disillusioned.

This meaning is clear in several important places in the Bible. In **Rom 5:5** Paul writes about Christian hope, saying that “hope does not disappoint.” Another verse that requires this translation is **Isa 49:23**, which is quoted twice in Romans. Here God says, “Then you will know that I am the LORD; For they shall not be ashamed (disappointed) who wait for Me.” There are 3 verses in the Bible that explain in detail of the great ways in which God does not disappoint His people. All contain the word ashamed and all teach that there is no shame (or disappointment) for believers.

The 1st verse is **Rom 1:16**: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes: first for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” Paul says he has never been disappointed in the gospel, for whenever and wherever it is preached the power of God accompanies it and produces supernatural results. What’s the gospel? It’s the message of God’s grace revealed in Jesus Christ, and is centered on His death, burial, and resurrection.

Notice, Paul speaks of the power of the gospel in his letter to the church at Rome. Paul was unique in his day as he was entirely at home in 3 conflicting cultures: Jewish, Greek, and Roman. What’s more, Paul successfully preached the gospel to each of these diverse groups. Each had its particular difficulty in accepting the gospel. The Jews came with centuries of religious training and tradition. They lived within a fixed, inflexible spiritual system, and Jesus had no place in that system. Thus, for the Jews, Jesus was a stumbling block. It was necessary for Paul to show that Jesus, far from being a stumbling block, was actually God’s foundation for the entire structure of revealed religion.

The Greeks didn’t pride themselves on religious traditions. They were proud of their wisdom. The Greeks traced their intellectual ancestry to Homer, Plato, Aristotle, the Cynics, the Epicureans: competing systems of knowledge that predated Paul. Most of these systems spoke of an

unbridgeable gap between the spiritual and physical worlds, between God and man. Thus, to the Greeks, the preaching of the birth, death, and resurrection of God's Son was foolishness. Paul needed to show them that the cross of Christ was actually the wisdom of God, a wisdom that exposes the foolishness of human understanding.

The Romans took pride in their power. The power of Rome's army had conquered the civilized world, and it was the strong arm of Rome that guaranteed Roman justice throughout the conquered dominions. To the Romans this was real power and the gospel of Jesus Christ was weakness. Paul had to show them that the gospel was actually the power of God. The gospel possesses a power that doesn't disappoint the Christian.

The word Paul uses for power in Rom 1:16 is not the Greek *exousia*. This refers to power that comes from authority. It's also not *kratos*: the naked power of rule, which may be exercised with or without the legitimate authority to do so. Paul uses the word *dynamis* which gives us the explosive words dynamite, dynamo, and dynamic. This is the word that Paul commends the gospel of Christ to the power-conscious Romans. He says that it's the effective, explosive power of God. He knew the gospel always accomplished the purpose for which God sent it forth.

It still does today. It takes the native from the jungles of South America, frees him from the slavery of superstition and fear and makes him a missionary of Jesus to other tribes. It takes the immoral reprobate and gives them a purpose in life in which they can contribute to society instead of tearing it down. It turns the pious, hypocritical churchgoers into prophets and witnesses for Christ. The gospel can change you. It can transform your life and satisfy your deepest spiritual longing.

The 2nd verse that tells how God won't disappoint us is [2 Tim 1:12](#). The idea here is that of banking; and the verse actually means, "God has the power to keep that which I have deposited with Him." Every now and then we hear of some financial tycoon who has engaged in dishonest practices and whose financial empire has collapsed overnight. A man like this has often sold stock to unsuspecting people while pushing the price of the stock to unrealistic heights through dishonest dealings. The value is there on paper, but not in reality. The warehouses turn out to be vacant lots. The storage tanks turn out to be empty. The tycoon has no power to preserve what has

been committed to him. All that the stockholders have invested is lost beyond recovery. (Bernie Madoff, Enron)

That's not how God operates. People insist on placing their deposit with those who can't protect them—with cults, with schemes for world government, with dreams of human betterment. But all these things will fail the investor. Only God is able to guarantee our deposits.

Have you trusted in God through faith in Jesus Christ? If so, think of the capital investments that you've placed on deposit with Him: your faith for salvation in eternity. Can God keep that? Of course! (Jn 10:27-28, Rom 8:38-39) You have also placed your faith in the fact that God can accomplish His purposes in you for this life. Can God keep that? Of course! (Eph 2:10). We've committed to Him our faith that He can see us through temptation. Can God keep that? Yes, that too (1 Cor 10:13). Certainly God is able to keep our capital assets.

And think what marvelous dividends He pays on our investments. It's not just that we are secure in Him for this life and for the future but that we also partake so richly in God's present blessings: His love, joy, peace that passes understanding, and a thousand other things besides. God delights in paying dividends. Some are major and we rejoice in them but many are hard to see but they are just as amazing and often entirely unexpected. How could we not be grateful to such a loving and detail-oriented heavenly Father? Besides, God's daily dividends are just more evidence that He is guarding our spiritual deposits.

The 3rd verse that tells how God will not disappoint us is our text. Paul's on trial for his life. But only from a human perspective is the outcome uncertain. On the spiritual level Paul knows that whatever happens will work to his salvation. He won't be ashamed, for "Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (20).

Think of the scope of that statement. 1st, Paul knew that Christ would be magnified. Paul lived in a society where pagan gods were worshiped and all power seemed to be on the side of pagan Rome. But he knew that Christ would ultimately be exalted and would rule in power until He had crushed all enemies beneath His feet (Ps 2:1-2; 110; 1 Cor 15:24-25; Phil 2:9-11). This was the basis of Paul's confidence. 2nd, Paul knew that God's determination

to exalt Jesus also extends to those who are united to Him by faith. Paul didn't just say that Christ would be magnified. He said that Christ would be magnified in him. If you're a Christian, you should know that the Father is determined to exalt Jesus in you! He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (6). This is one more thing in which the Christian will not be disappointed. 3rd, Paul recognized that Christ would be magnified in him whether he lived or died. Paul was so confident that God's will for him was perfect—it was the best possible thing for him—that he was able to accept it willingly even if it meant death at the hands of a Roman executioner.

When life is smooth it's easy to say that, "all things work together for good to those who love God." It's easy when you have everything you want, when God blesses you and your family. But it's not so easy to say this from a hospital bed or at a grave site. It's not so easy to say this in the face of bitter disappointment and pain; but even in times as these, it's still no less true. If you want to have confidence in God in such moments, you must learn to trust Him in the small disappointments of life. (David and Svea Flood)

You may never experience the disappointments of life as Horatio Spafford or David Flood did but you will face many in this life just the same. At each point, you'll be required to make a choice: you can either choose to get bitter or you can choose to get better. Life may be filled with disappointments but God doesn't disappoint, the gospel won't disappoint. It will accomplish exactly what God has determined for it to accomplish, in your life and in the lives of all those you share it with.

You may not see it at the time. You may even resist God's will and drown yourself in pity, even in legitimate sorrow. But the day is coming when you will see it as you stand before your loving heavenly Father. You will look back from a vantage point in eternity millions of years from now and recognize and confess that God knew all along what He was doing in your life. You will see that Jesus Christ was certainly exalted, and you will not be disappointed. 😊