

Paul's letter to the Philippians



Paul reflects on his imprisonment

Philippians 1:19-30



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1:19 ~ Paul's hopeful outlook

- **"I know"** (*oida*) ~ knowledge based on what he had experienced during his previous years of Roman incarceration, as well as on what he had perceived from others around him at the time.
- **"this will turn out"** (*apobainō*) ~ a word that was used for disembarking from a ship, picturing his current situation as a rough sea voyage that will come to an end when he steps onto the shore.
- **"deliverance"** (*sōtēria*) ~ "salvation," used in several different ways. Paul probably has his ultimate preservation and deliverance in mind, since in the following verses he will express uncertainty concerning the outcome of his immediate situation.
- Paul relied on God's answers to the Philippians' prayers, and on the strength provided by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

1:20 ~ Paul shares two possible outcomes

- **“earnest expectation”** (*apokaradokia*) ~ from “head” (*kara*) and “to suppose” (*dokeō*). It seemed reasonable from his personal viewpoint to hope that “this will turn out for my deliverance” (1:19). Specifically, he hoped that he would not **“be put to shame”** (*aischunomai*) in any way.
- **“boldness”** (*parrhēsia*) ~ confidence in speaking. Paul was looking ahead to his trial and he desired to speak the truth freely.
- Christ will be **“exalted”** (*megalunō*) ~ magnifying or extolling His greatness.
- Paul shared the two possible outcomes of his trial: **“whether by life or by death.”** This is the first time Paul mentioned that he could be executed, and he was not certain how his case would turn out. He might be acquitted and released, or the decision could go against him and he might be executed.

1:21 ~ To live is Christ, to die is gain

- If he were acquitted and released, he would continue living for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He would give God all the credit and praise for his physical deliverance and he would renew his devoted service in the cause of Christ.
- **“to die is gain”** (*kerdos*) ~ business terminology which can mean interest earned on money lent, or profit secured and advantage gained. Paul pictured his death as cashing in both his principal and his interest in order to have even more of Christ than when he was living.
- Some of the advantages gained through departing include being set free from the sin nature, from fleshly temptations, from sickness and pain, from attacks by Satan, from grief and sadness, and from the fear of death itself.

1:22-24 ~ Weighing both alternatives

- In view of the advantages of being with Christ, Paul is unsure which he would choose. Living would bring continued fruitful labor in ministry, and both of these options were pressing in on him.
- His “**desire**” (*epithumia*) or eager longing was to “**depart**” (*analuō*), which pictures the act of weighing anchor and sailing away in a ship. From his personal perspective this would be “**very much better**” (*kreisson*) ~ more profitable, advantageous, or excellent.
- “**to remain on**” (*epimenō*) ~ prolonging a stay or continuing to persevere. The advantage of this option is that it is “**more necessary**” (*anagkaios*) for the sake of others.

1:25-26 ~ The good of others is the higher priority

- When Paul considered that remaining in the flesh would be of more benefit to others, it seemed that the choice would be clear. He would accept either option, but his reasoning had “**convinced**” (*peithō*) or persuaded him that the best choice would be for him to “**remain.**”
- “**progress**” (*prokopē*) ~ pictures cutting or beating a path forward in order to advance or make headway (see 1:12). Paul was convinced that his ministry to them was not yet complete.
- “**proud confidence**” (*kauchēma*) ~ a reason for abundant glorying, boasting, and exultation in Christ Jesus. If Paul were acquitted and released, he would come to Philippi in answer to their prayers.
- Although the *Book of Acts* ends before the outcome of Paul’s first trial in Rome, other passages indicate that Paul was released (1 Tim 1:3; Tit 3:12).

1:27 ~ Strive together for the sake of the gospel

- Paul turned from discussing his own situation to how his Philippian readers should “**conduct yourselves**” (*politeuomai*) ~ literally, “to behave as a citizen,” to live according to the laws and principles of one’s governing authority. They are to behave like citizens of the heavenly “empire” to which they now belong in Christ.
- Whether Paul is present or absent, they were to “**stand firm**” (*stēkō*) and “**strive together**” (*synathleō*). They were to be well-grounded and to coordinate their efforts for “**the gospel of Christ**” and “**the faith of the gospel.**” These phrases identify sound doctrine and the truths of the faith.
- “**in one spirit, with one mind**” ~ Paul urged them to have a single-minded focus in striving together for the faith of the gospel.

1:28-30 ~ Stand up for the truth despite opposition

- **“opponents”** (*antikeimai*) ~ adversaries they must resist and overcome. Believers should not be **“alarmed”** (*pturō*) or startled by opposition, which is a clear **“sign”** (*endeixis*) or proof that opponents are facing destruction but also a sign of the believers’ **“salvation”** (*sōtēria*) and deliverance.
- God **“grants”** (*charizomai*) not only that they believe in Christ for salvation, but also that they stand firm in the truth to the point of suffering for their faith if necessary.
- Paul offered himself as a personal example of what he had just shared. Those who put their faith in Christ and stand up for the truth are likely to experience conflicts similar to his own.