

Ready For Heaven but Needed on Earth

Philippians 1:21-26

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- “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

A Roman Prison at Salonica



Ready For Heaven but Needed on Earth

- He was in a Roman prison for two years - Phil. 1:7
 - Unable to travel and preach
 - Subjected to less than humane conditions
- He was in sorrow over brethren who were doing harm - Phil. 1:15
 - Sleepless nights in prayer, fear for the cause of Christ
 - His work could have been undone - Phil. 1:12

Paul's Dilemma

- He is in a “strait” - sunecho: “to hold together, to compress with a crowd or siege, or arrest a prisoner; to compel, perplex, afflict, preoccupy, constrain, hold, keep in, press, lie sick of, stop, be in a strait, straiten, be taken with, throng” (Strong's)
 - Used of a besieged city. The people with are trapped and destitute
 - Used of a strait between two points that forces a ship into a narrow channel. The current moves faster and the waves are more violent. There is danger of being driven against the shore
 - Used of a cattle chute that forces the animal to be stationary while the farmer burns horns, castrates the animal, etc.
 - Used of a prisoner confined within the walls of his cell.

Paul's Desire

- 2Cor. 5:1-7 - “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, 3 if indeed, having been clothed, we shall not be found naked. 4 For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. 5 Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee. 6 So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.”

Paul's Desire

- He wanted to “depart” - analuo
 - It was a military term used of soldiers taking down their tents.
 - It was a sailor's term meaning to loosen a ship and set sail.
 - It was a farmer's term used to refer to taking the yoke off of oxen at the end of the work day.
 - It was a traveler's term used to speak of putting the horses into the barn at the end of a long journey.
 - It was a political term used to speak of setting prisoners at liberty.

Paul's Desire

- Paul longed for the Lord -- to be with Christ
 - Rev. 5:6-14
- He would know this
 - 2Cor. 12:2-4 - “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know such a man--whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows-- 4 how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

Paul's Desire

- He said that it is far better
 - 1Thes. 4:16-17 - “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”
 - Rev. 21:4 - “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.”
 - 1Cor. 2:9 - “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Paul's Debt

- Paul understood that he had a debt of service to perform for the Lord.
 - Phil. 1:24-26 - “Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

Paul's Debt

- While our hearts are being tugged homeward, there is a great work to do here. If the need was great then, how much greater is it today?
 - John 4:35 - “Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!”

Paul's Debt

- God saved us to work
 - Eph. 2:10 - “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”
 - James 2:17-18 - “Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. 18 But someone will say, You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”

Paul's Debt

- Every Christian has a job
 - Eph. 4:16 - “From whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love”
- Every Christian is in debt
 - 2Cor. 5:14 - “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died”

Paul's Debt

- Every Christian will be rewarded in proportion to his labors
 - 2Cor. 5:10 - “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
- Every Christian lives in a world that is still lost
 - 2Kings 7:9 - “Then they said to one another, We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, and we remain silent. If we wait until morning light, some punishment will come upon us. Now therefore, come, let us go and tell the king's household.”

Paul's Debt

- Paul felt the weight of this debt.
- He possessed the greatest outlook on life in this world. It is summed up in verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."
 - He knew that while he lived, others would see Jesus living in him.
 - He knew that if he were to die, then he would be the better for it.
- Would to God that all of us would have a faith like his.