

SERMON NOTES

By Pastor John Paul Miller

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians

Philippians 1:20-26 – “The Believer’s Death Benefit”

Philippians 1:20-26, *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.”*

Paul was in prison awaiting trial. His future was uncertain, he knew not, if he would live or die.

But for Paul it made little difference ...” *whether it be by life, or by death*” as long *“...Christ shall be magnified in my body,...”* because for Paul, *“...to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

Because of Paul’s chains: Christ was known (vs. 13)

Because of Paul’s critics: Christ was preached (vs. 18)

Because of Paul’s crisis: Christ was magnified (vs. 20)

For Paul, Christ was his source of life; his strength in sorrow, and his reward in death.

Like Paul we should earnestly desire Christ to be magnified in our bodies (vs. 20)

Philippians 1:20, *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”*

Illustration:

It’s like:

A microscope – making small things big

A telescope – makings things far away close

Notice that Paul talks about death.

(vs. 21) *to die is gain*

(vs. 23) I “...*desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*”

There are three comparative adjectives in this phrase. Literally it reads, much more better in every way.

Heaven is far superior to earth,

Because heaven was far better in every way, Paul wanted to go there.

Philippians 1:22-23, “*But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*”

Notice the word, ‘desire’, it’s a constant inner compulsion – it’s the problem we face today, no desire!

Frederick Langbridge pictures two men who are both in prison but are a universe apart in their thoughts in the memorable line, “two men looked through the bars, one saw the mud, the other the stars.”

How wonderfully these words express the triumphant outlook of the believer as he faces death.

For the Christian there is no fear of death.

Psalms 23:4, “*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*”

Not so for the unbeliever – Proverbs 14:32, “*The wicked is driven away in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death.*”

Psalms 116:15, “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*”

John Knox – “Live in Christ, die in Christ, and the flesh need not fear death.”

Paul’s two-fold desire:

1. *to depart* (vs. 23)

Philippians 1:23, “*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*”

It’s a description of death.

What is death?

The word *depart* was used four ways:

1. the unloosing of a prisoner
2. the removal of the yoke (from an ox)
3. the loosing of a ship
4. the breaking up of a tent.

2 Corinthians 5

Death for the believer means freedom from sin, sickness and sorrow.

Revelation 21:4, "*And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*"

There is a land of pure delight,
where saints immortal reign;
Infinite day excludes the night,
and pleasures banish pain.

Isaac Watts, 1707.

2. *to be with Christ* (vs. 23)

Philippians 1:23, "*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:*"

Where does a Christian go at death?

with Christ

2 Corinthians 5:6-8, "*Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*"

There is no soul sleep or purgatory.

1 Corinthians 13:12, "*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known.*"

1 John 3:2, "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*"

Face to face with Christ, my Savior,
Face to face --- what will it be?
When with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me!

Fact to face --- O blissful moment!
Face to face --- to see and know;
Face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ who loves me so!

Carrie E. Breck

Paul wasn't trying to escape the suffering of this life, he wanted to be with Jesus!

It's where faith gives way to sight.

Notice the words," ... *which is far better.*"

Not for the unbeliever!

"Nevertheless..." (vs. 24)

Notice the change:

Philippians 1:24-26, *"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."*

It's not time to go to heaven yet, there's still work to be done.

Paul was willing to postpone heaven to help others on earth.

Heaven is not just our future destination; it should be a present motivation.

Paul's inner desire for heaven gave way to his love for others and his calling to be a servant (Philippians 2:1-4)

C.S. Lewis – If you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next. ... It is because Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this one.

Adoniram Judson was the first overseas missionary sent out from America. In the early nineteenth century, he and his first wife went to India and, a short while later, to Burma,

where he labored for nearly four decades. After fourteen years, he had a handful of converts and had managed to write a Burmese grammar. During that time he suffered a horrible imprisonment for a year and a half and lost his wife and children to disease. Like Paul, he longed to be with the Lord, but, also like the apostle, he considered his work for Christ to be infinitely more important than his personal longings. He therefore prayed that God would allow him to live long enough to translate the entire Bible into Burmese and to establish a church there of at least one hundred believers. The Lord granted that request and also allowed him to compile Burmese-English and English-Burmese dictionaries, which became invaluable to the Christian workers, both foreign and Burmese, who followed him. He wrote, "If I had not felt certain that every trial was ordered by infinite love and mercy, I could not have survived my accumulated suffering."

Nearing the end of his life, Paul wrote, "*For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*" (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

He looks back over his life - *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*

He looks forward - ... *there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*

Paul was ready to be poured out like a drink offering.

Keep your heart in heaven, and your feet on earth.