

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-25

A Study

By Mike Burnham

Philippians 1:20-25 (KJV) *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. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. 23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: 24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. 25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;*

Paul is in prison awaiting the verdict of his trial and he isn't preoccupied with his fate but with the desire that whatever happens may result in the glory of Jesus Christ whose name alone is worthy of being magnified, v-20. There is no purer desire than this, that the whole of our life and Christian service may magnify the glory of the one who alone is worthy.

If Paul is released, Christ will be magnified by a continuance of his ministry, and if the verdict goes against him, it will still be true that Christ is to be glorified in his martyrdom by his faithful witness unto death. Paul was content with life or death as long as Christ was glorified.

"For me to live is Christ", life is worth having only so far as the life of Christ was realized in Paul's life. His real life was hidden with Christ. His true life was the life that lived within him...Col. 3:3,4; Gal. 2:20

Paul made Christ the end of his life, the purpose of his life.

Everything in his life was a means of toward the advancement of the glory of Christ. Everything was set aside as useless which could not be directed to Christ, Phil.3:7,8. Paul believed and lived Col. 3:17,23,24; 1 Cor. 10:31. It was the ambition of Paul that Christ should be magnified in his body by life or by death.

What was there in Paul's case that made it his duty to live such a way that does not exist in the case of every sincere Christian on earth? No believer, when he comes to die will regret that he has lived for Christ; but how many regret that this has not been the aim and purpose of their souls?

Why should Christ be the end of our life? 1) for by him, as well as for him were we brought into existence...col. 1:16; Rev. 4:11; Rom. 11:36. 2) we owe it to Christ that, by coming into our nature and dying for us, he has made our lives worth living...Heb. 2:14-18; John 10:10,11; 3) he bought us and we are no longer our own...1 Cor. 6:20; Acts 20:28

One man said, "living and existing are two different conditions of being. All who breathe, sleep, eat, drink, and follow their sin nature, exist; but none but those who have some dominate purpose that fires their passions and drives them, live. To live means earnestness in some pursuit; the pursuit may be political, literary, artistic, or religious, and all who are earnest in their quest may be said to live. But this kind of life is rare. Millions exist on this earth and do not in this sense live one day. But while it is rare for men to live at all, it is far rarer for men to live for Christ.

Paul lived. He had a fire and a passion in him that drove him in his pursuit of glorifying Christ...Phil. 3:13,14

Right living ensures happy dying.

"To die is gain" the word "gain" here means "profit, advantage". There would be an advantage to Paul personally, should he die. Death is

a great loss to a carnal worldly man; but to a good Christian it is gain. Whether living or dying Christ is the gain or advantage or profit.

V-22. "But if i live in the flesh" or if I continue to live magnifying Christ is the fruit of my labor.

"Yet what i shall choose I wot not." had I the two conditions left to my own choice, to live or to die, living for Christ, and being with Christ, i don't know which I would choose.

V-23. "For i am in a strait betwixt two" or pulled in two directions.

"Having a desire to depart" Paul's inclination was for death. He speaks of it as a departure, it's a nautical term meaning "to loose anchor." (2 Tim 4:6). He seems to have regarded his mortal life as a vessel fastened and confined to port and death as the loosening of all the bonds that restrained it.

He speaks of it as being with Christ. This mortal life, he felt, kept him to some extent away from Christ and that death would conduct him more immediately into his presence...2 Cor. 5:6-8.

Paul desired death. On a personal basis it was by far the more preferable. The desire of death is not sinful, but a sign of faith. It's a desire to be with our saviour, to be with the one we love even though we have not seen him. The one who loved us enough to die for us. But there is a longing for death on the part of the miserable, who are "weary of their life," and only anxious to escape from its hardships and pain. This longing sometimes deepens into the madness that leads to suicide. This longing is sinful because it's selfish and has no regard for God and his plan and purpose.

Any idea of an unconscious state following death or of a purgatorial discipline in the next world is denied by the sheer simplicity of Paul's expectation.

V-24. As Paul weighs his natural desire to depart with the needs of

his fellow believers; he comes to the conclusion that the needs of others weighed heavier than his personal desires. It was more needful for them that he should remain.

V-25. All of a sudden Paul seems to have confidence that he will be set free and not killed. That God would deliver him for the churches sake. That the Lord still had work for him to do and therefore preserve his life.

Hers before his own personal desires...Phil. 2:1-5

Phil. 2:3: "In lowliness of mind" humility, from a foolish admiration of ourselves arises contempt of the brethren. What we should be doing is correcting and detecting our own faults and when we look at others see whatever goods points they have and by means of love bury their faults...Prov. 10:12 love doesn't stir up strifes, as hatred does, but promotes peace and harmony by forgiving and concealing sins. Kind words and deeds check the work of sin; intercessory prayer brings down forgiveness of God. Also see 1 Pet. 4:8; Rom. 13:10.

V-4 We are not to regard only our feelings and desires but those of others as well...Rom. 12:10.