

Philippians 1:19-26

Summary: Paul continues to reflect on his own situation with a vignette on the two possible outcomes of his imprisonment. We see how Paul wrestles with whether it would be better or worse for him to perish.

(^{18b} Yes, and I really am going to celebrate): ¹⁹ because I know that this will result in my rescue, through your prayer and the support of the spirit of King Jesus. ²⁰ I'm waiting eagerly and full of hope, because nothing is going to put me to shame. I am going to be bold and outspoken, now as always, and the king is going to gain a great reputation through my body, whether in life or in death. ²¹ You see, for me to live means the Messiah; to die means to make a profit. ²² If it's to be living on in the flesh, that means fruitful work for me.

Actually, I don't know which I would choose. ²³ I'm pulled both ways at once: I would really love to leave all this and be with the king, because that would be far better. ²⁴ But staying on here in the flesh is more vital for your sake. ²⁵ Since I've become convinced of this, I know that I will remain here, and stay alongside all of you, to help you to advance and rejoice in your faith, ²⁶ so that the pride you take in King Jesus may overflow because of me, when I come to visit you once again.

Paul briefly quotes the Book of Job here; "I know that this will result in my rescue" directly quotes the Septuagint (Greek) version of Job 13:16. Why would Paul make a reference to this book?

The Book of Job is largely a book about the theology of suffering. Through no fault of his own, Job loses his wealth and family. Paul, of course, probably can identify with that to some extent as his circumstances are out of his hand (being imprisoned) and he is cut off from his former life. However, Job is also hopeful that God will provide an answer for him, and just two verses later he says "I have indeed prepared my case; I know that I shall be vindicated" (13:18). This attitude is similar to the one Paul expresses about his own future.

Paul often speaks about the bodily resurrection of the dead and how God will reconcile heaven and earth. He only rarely speaks of the time in between death and the new earth (i.e. what happens immediately after death), though makes reference to it in verse 23. What aspect of this afterlife does Paul look forward to?

We often think of heaven in terms of it being a perfect place to live. Paul's focus, however, is the intimacy that he will have with God. Paul is certain that his death would bring him into a state of rest and refreshment with Jesus.

Why does Paul include his internal conflict here to the church in Philippi? What does he hope they learn from it?

For one, Paul wants it to be clear to the church that even if he is wrong and he is executed, he has still been saved to eternal life. Paul may also want to demonstrate the proper thinking under hardship (see for example 2 Corinthians 11:23-28, where Paul lists his own trials), knowing that the church may face trials as well. It may seem like the better path to simply allow death to come and receive the deserved intimacy with Christ, but

Paul instead stresses instead the greatness of what can be accomplished on earth before death and why that is a more appealing option.

How does Paul's view on life and death challenge your idea of the value and importance of our earthly life with Christ?

We saw in our first study that Paul prays for the church in Philippians. Note verse 19 here, where he now solicits their prayers. This is a good reminder that a healthy spiritual relationship with our fellow Christians includes a healthy prayer relationship.