

Philippians

Dr. Charles "Buddy" Parrish

June 3, 2020



Philippians 1:21-30

Vs. 21

- One of the most profound verses in all of Scripture. For Paul, living was Christ and Christ was living. That day on the Damascus Road was the day his life began. Paul, by intentional and constant prayer, lived every moment with Christ. This is what he meant when he instructed the Thessalonians (and US!) to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17), understanding prayer as a constant, ongoing conversation with Christ. And He *KNEW* that Christ was with him. In Acts 18:9-10, Christ came to Paul after a violent reaction of the Jews in Corinth and told him, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city." For Paul, Christ's constant presence had given his life meaning and purpose, life itself.
- But death, death was gain. Paul had completely surrendered his life to Christ and death, which he saw as a doorway to the full presence of Christ, would be the final act of surrender. In our culture we cling to physical life with every fiber in our body, because the physical, material life is all our culture knows. Death is the dark Grim Reaper that leads you out of life into...what? We exercise, we diet, we undergo plastic surgery, we do everything we can to cling to youth and life and medically we have the technology to go to extreme lengths to preserve a heartbeat, while constantly searching for the chemical/technological Fountain of Youth. Paul knows nothing of this desperate clinging to physical life. And don't write this off to a pre-scientific mindset. What year was it that Ponce de Leon came to Florida looking for the Fountain of Youth? A people who do not recognize their Creator have forever been terrified of death. But for Paul, the only death that mattered was the one where we die when we are

“baptized into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3). Once you have been saved and have been baptized and have lived the life of an ever-maturing disciple, then the death Paul awaits at the hands of the Romans is indeed gain.

Vs. 22-26

- Paul is conflicted. He sees two pretty clear possibilities and he honestly doesn't know how to pray, whether toward one or the other. He says he is caught between two desires. Literally, when he says in vs. 23 that he is “hard-pressed from both directions”, he is saying that he caught between a rock and a hard place. The word *senechomai* gives the picture of someone walking in a very narrow path with solid rock on either side. For himself, he would prefer to “depart” (as if just getting on a boat and heading off) but for the sake of the Philippians and his other churches, he would like to stay.
- It seems his conviction is that he will stay and be a *paramenien*, one who waits beside you, ever ready to be your help. You and I would likely say the same thing, that we will choose to stay, as that is what the Philippians really wanted to hear.
- And he wants the consequence of his return to them to be that their “proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus”. It's not about Paul, he's saying. It's about Jesus. So that when he returns to them, it is Christ who gets the glory, not Paul.

Vss. 27-30

- BUT the key point he wants to make is that whether he returns or not, Christ is glorified. What we translate “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy...” means to behave as a citizen. Remember, Philippi had been made a Roman colony. That's one reason why there was no synagogue there when Paul first arrived. You virtually had to be a citizen of Rome to live there. It was a retirement town for Roman soldiers who had earned their citizenship. And with that citizenship came benefits, responsibilities, and expectations. In a place like Philippi the civic consciousness would be very highly developed. So later when Paul reminds them that their REAL

citizenship is in Heaven, they will understand that just as they order their lives one way to live in Philippi as Roman citizens, so too must they order their lives on a higher level as citizens of Heaven. So whether he comes to see them or not, he will know that for the cause of Christ they stand firm in one mind and in one spirit. Just as the Roman army was made up of soldiers from 1000 different tribes and countries, but moved and acted as one unit, so too must the Church of Jesus Christ.

- Paul is supremely confident that by this unity, with the Holy Spirit granting courage, the Church cannot be defeated, will be unconquerable. By this their enemies will fail and they will prove out their salvation.
- But the battle will not be easy. The word “granted” means they have been given an honor and high privilege: to not only believe and be saved, but also to suffer for Christ as they saw Paul suffer and as he is now suffering.
- Paul has been long convinced that a level of suffering for Christ strengthens one’s faith. Many have said that the problem with the American church, why we don’t see the evangelistic results that are seen in other countries, is that our life is too soft. We may suffer pains of circumstance, but it has been a long time since anyone in America truly suffered because of their faith. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 Paul uses a series of athletic metaphors on spiritual discipline, on how he is making his body his slave in order to better serve Christ. So even when he wasn’t being jailed, beaten, or someone was trying to kill him, he was inducing his own suffering to strengthen his faith and make himself a better servant for Christ.
- In Acts 9 we have the story of Paul meeting Jesus on the Damascus Road. When Jesus departed, Paul was left blind, with something like scales covering his eyes. He was led into Damascus where he was to wait. Jesus sent a man named Ananias to heal Paul, but Ananias had heard of him and was not sure he wanted to go. In Acts 9: 15-16, Jesus tells Ananias, “ Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine, to bear my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for my name’s sake.” Anyone who is going to do anything worthwhile for Christ is going to have to experience some suffering and pain for Christ.