

## THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“Living Christ”

Philippians 1:20-26

### Introduction

1. The letter begins with a gracious word of thanksgiving (vv. 3-5), confidence (v. 6-7), and prayer (vv. 8-11).
2. Then the apostle addresses his prison status (v. 12). He avers that this has resulted in the furtherance of the Gospel (v. 13) and the proclamation of Christ (v. 18), albeit with problems (vv. 14-17).
3. Paul is convinced that there is more to the matter. So he writes about five major issues concerning himself and the Philippians.

#### 1. SALVATION v. 19

##### a. Its Explanation

This is the reason for “rejoicing” (v. 18). Besides the proclamation of Christ, Paul’s own ultimate spiritual good will be realized. This is something known and concerns his life-long preservation in Christ.

##### b. Its Realization

1) Through Philippian prayer. This is a powerful statement about intercession accomplished by men.

2) Through Divine provision. Supply is the term used in reference to costs of a theatrical performance. Hence, the Resource of that supply is the eternal personal Holy Spirit sent by the Lord Jesus (Jn 15:26).

#### 2. EXPECTATION v. 20

##### a. Its Standard

The preposition employed means Paul’s “longing expectation” is clearly known. The “outstretched hand” of the watcher is almost seen in the Greek term. The “hope,” therefore, of Paul is to bring glory to Christ. That is the possessing interest of his life.

##### b. Its State

The future passive verb affirms that in nothing, Paul will be put to shame. Practically: he would not be disappointed as one who reckoned badly to his own shame.

#### 3. MAGNIFICATION vv. 20, 21

##### a. Its Testimony

The prepositional phrase “with all boldness” means boldness of speech. So Paul is concerned about openness (cf. Jn 7:4) of his testimony to his Lord.

##### b. Its Expression

The phrase “as always, so now” gives emphasis to the “now.” Paul so wants the Lord to be exalted so as to be praised in two alternative directions -- life or death. This may indicate Paul wrote at a time of uncertainty regarding the issue of his trial. It must be noted that in either extremity, it was “in my body.” The body is the soul’s vehicle for action to be seen by others. The body alone visualizes the words of one’s lips, looks of one’s face, action of one’s limbs.

##### c. Its Assertion

1) Respecting Life. The interests of living is for Paul so full of Christ, so occupied with Him and for Him that Christ just sums it all up (cf. Col. 3:17). The present tense infinitive is awesome as it sees life as a process.

2) Respecting Death. The aorist infinitive denotes the act of dying. For the Apostle, the dying hour is the gateway into the large room of Christ’s presence. It is not only no harm, but a positive gain. To die thus is to get both principle and interest at once. It is to have more of Christ than when living!

#### 4. RESERVATION vv. 22-24

Note: To this point the argument of Paul is that there are good results from his prison chains. If he lives, it is Christ. If he dies, it is actually gain. In this dilemma, he has reservations.

##### a. Its Alternatives

1) #1 To live in flesh. This is an alternative to “to die is gain.” There is charm to still live in the body. It provides more time for fruitful work for Christ. Under the conditions of mortality, this Paul finds to be full of fruit of work. Thus, living means working, working means fruit-bearing for Christ, and a life so lived is worth living!

2) #2 To be with Christ. If life subserves Paul’s apostolic usefulness, there rises a difficulty as to choice (v. 22b). The text is: “I do not clearly perceive.” Reason? Paul finds himself compressed by forces acting from both sides upon him so he is fixed in the middle! To the Apostle, life and death are two blessings (not evils) and he does not know which is the better.

##### b. Its Proposal

Apparently Paul has a personal preference (“my” desire which he now feels). The verb “to depart” can be variously translated, but is best considered as the undoing of a cable, to set sail, or the breaking up of a camp (cf. Luke 12:36, 2 Tim. 4:6). The other side of the Christian’s death is “to be with Christ” and this is “much rather better” (double comparative). Yet (not “nevertheless”) to abide (hold by the flesh for a protracted stay) in the flesh was, for Paul, a recognized duty of the Lord on account of the Philippians.

#### 5. CONTINUATION vv. 25, 26

##### a. Its Confidence

Paul actually went to Macedonia, hence the knowledge of Paul (I know) was verified by the event. That is why the text records his “having been persuaded” (perfect tense). The verb “continue” is in the KJV a double compound noting his stay “with and beside” the Philippians. The goal is such a stay is with a view to their furtherance (progress or advancing) and also their rejoicing in the faith. No wonder, then, that Paul is persuaded of his commitment to live and not die -- yet!

##### b. Its Rejoicing

Here purpose is patently stated. He affirms that the act of exaltation, of glorying, may abound in Christ Jesus, the only legitimate sphere in which glorying has place. All is on occasion of Paul. He is their occasion of glorying. Why? Because of his return to them and presence with them.

Conclusion So what is learned here? His bonds have been manifested as “in Christ” in the palace (v. 13), among the brethren (false and true) (vv. 14-18), and the issues of life (body presence) and death (presence with Christ) have been carefully discussed (vv. 19-26). The Apostle concludes he will live to the end that the Philippians will rejoice abundantly in Christ due to his release from prison and return to Philippi. Amen.