

# Philippians 1:22-26

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/phil/phil-1/philippians-122-26/>

*Paul admits he wants to be with Christ, for that will be far better than remaining on earth. But he is convinced that he will be set free from imprisonment so that he can continue his ministry. Specifically, Paul anticipates returning to Philippi to further grow and mature the believers there.*

Paul has just stated that “to live is Christ and to die is gain” fully revealing his eternal perspective on life. Now Paul contemplates the reality that he might in fact die in the near future. Paul exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar to escape false charges against him (Acts 28:30). He is now under house arrest, awaiting his hearing at the time of the writing of this letter to his faithful disciples in Philippi. A possible outcome of his appointment before Nero is that he will die. Paul now reflects that *if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me*. Paul’s reason for desiring to continue to live on the earth is that it will allow him more time for *fruitful labor* in the service of the gospel of Christ. Paul is not looking forward to retirement. He is not seeking comfort for himself. He only sees a continuation of life as an opportunity to lay up more treasure in heaven by seeking more benefit for people through the spreading of the gospel.

Paul reflects that it is hard for him to “root” for one outcome over the other. He says *I do not know which to choose*, speaking of life vs. death. Paul has just stated that “to live is Christ and to die is gain.” There is clearly benefit either way. Paul says he is *hard-pressed from both directions*, in considering whether it is best for him to live or to die. Nero will decide. But of course the heart of a ruler is in the hands of the Lord (Proverbs 21:1). Paul notes that he has *the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better*. Paul apparently had a sneak preview of heaven. He was not allowed to speak much of it, but it apparently was sufficiently compelling to lead him to desire to go there (2 Corinthians 12:2-5). Paul considered that dying and going to *be with Christ* was *much better* than any life that could be conceived on earth.

However, Paul has a great tug on his heart *yet to remain on in the flesh*, meaning living life on earth in his current body. He already told us one reason, because it would be *fruitful*. Paul recognized that serving and benefitting others was the thing he could take with him and possess forever. That is “fruit” Paul can harvest that will last for eternity. Paul reasons that him remaining alive for the time being *is more necessary for your sake*. Paul’s reason for living is tied with his belief in what he can contribute to others, including the believers in Philippi.

Paul adds: *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith*. Paul is convinced that he has some ministry with the Philippian believers yet to accomplish, and believes his life will be spared for that reason. Paul was released, as he anticipated. However, he was later rearrested and martyred. He wrote 2 Timothy while awaiting his execution, during his second imprisonment in Rome.

Paul's reason for believing he will *remain with* the Philippian believers was to help along their *progress and joy in the faith*. It is completely consistent with all Paul has said to this point that he would desire to aid the Philippian believers to *progress in the faith*. But Paul says he believes he will *continue* with them for their *progress and joy in the faith*. Paul considers it a *joy*, a great privilege to have been given stewardship of the gospel. He does not consider the great hardships he has endured as being worthy to be compared with the glory he will gain from the approval and rewards of Christ for his faithful obedience (Romans 8:18; Philippians 3:7-11). It is accordingly *joy* to live and work *in the faith*, in spite of difficulty.

Paul's hope to live rather than to die will result in him *coming to* the Philippians *again*. Paul brought the gospel to Philippi along with Silas, on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40). Paul hopes to be released from prison, and that he will be able to visit them in person again. Paul says that in his *coming to you again*, the Philippians' *proud confidence in* him might *abound in Christ Jesus*. The Philippians had a *proud confidence* in Paul. There were many former Roman soldiers in Philippi. It seems likely they would have a particular appreciation for someone who did not fear death, and who was willing to serve a mission so fully. Paul was a dedicated soldier of Jesus.

Paul in fact used faithful soldiers on multiple occasions as an illustration on how believers should walk faithfully with the Lord (2 Timothy 2:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-20). Paul hopes their *proud confidence* will *abound in Christ Jesus*, because that is Paul's primary hope and objective for his disciples in Philippi. He does not desire for them to follow him. Paul desires for them to follow Christ.

It is worth noting that Paul's imprisonment was of great benefit to us. This letter is a part of scripture, and serves to build us up in the same way Paul sought to build up in the Lord those whom he brought to faith. The occasion of imprisonment led to Paul's necessity of writing rather than visiting in person, which was his preference. We are the great beneficiaries of this circumstance.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>22</sup> But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. <sup>23</sup> But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; <sup>24</sup> yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.**