

“Certainty and Uncertainty” ***Philippians 1:19-26***

INTRO:

How tolerant are we of uncertainty? We know the Bible says we do not know what tomorrow will bring. Because of this the Apostle James tells us we need to make our plans with an awareness that God may change them. He says we must say, “If the Lord wills, we will do this or that.” Most of us do not tolerate uncertainty well.

The Apostle Paul, when he wrote this epistle, was living in uncertainty. He wrote from a Roman Prison cell, probably chained between two guards. He did not know whether he would eventually be released or executed. Laws were arbitrary. Emperors were fickle. God alone held Paul’s destiny in His hands. How could Paul write a book about Christian joy and contentment in this situation? He could because he was certain of his future in the middle of his uncertainty about his present.

I. Future Certainty (v. 19-21)

II. Present Debate (v. 22-26)

I. Future Certainty (v. 19-21)

A. ***“Yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” (v.19).***

Paul knew the Philippians prayers and the Lord’s supply to him would mean his deliverance.

B. He did not know what would be the result of his legal case, but he did know the principles he lived by in the present **(v.20)**.

“According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”

Paul’s desire was to never bring shame to the name of Christ. Instead, he wanted to live so that his life was a giant magnifier of the Lord’s person and glory, whether he lived or died. Is that our desire in our lives? If we sat down and wrote out goals for our lives, would this be the primary goal? Would it even be on the list?

C. Because the Apostle Paul had this goal, he could sum up his life in one sentence **(v.21)**.

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.” Live is living for the Lord Jesus Christ. Death is to be with Christ. This makes an uncertain life bearable. If we don’t know what is coming next, we do know what will happen in our future. Nothing and no one can ever change that future if we are in Christ.

II. Present Debate (v. 22-26)

A. Paul could endure present uncertainty because he knew his future was secure and certain. It was so certain he could think and write about the options. He introduces the debate in **verse 22**.

“But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell.”

1. Paul’s first certainty was, if he did not die yet, God would bless his ministry with results for his labors. This was sure because results did not depend upon Paul. He depended upon God. Paul could not sit on his hands and let go and let God and expect fruit. Still, he knew if he was faithful, God would be faithful to bless.

2. Introducing the debate, Paul wrote as if he had a choice. In actuality the choice was out of his hands. Yet, if the choice was up to him, He did not know which way he would lean.

B. Option one was to die and be with Christ (v.23).

“For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.”

1. Death was not an unknown commodity to Paul. He wrote often about what happens when someone dies. **(2 Corinthians 5:6–8)**

“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.”

This is the testimony from someone who had been lifted up to the third heaven and had seen and heard things that a man cannot speak.

2. He also wrote how death will be swallowed up in victory in **1 Corinthians 15:54-55**.
“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?’”

Death was not something to fear for the Apostle Paul. It was a reality to be embraced. What happened when he died was certain. He would be ushered into our Lord’s presence.

C. Option Two was to remain alive and in the ministry. **(vs.24-26)**

“Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

1. Self-interest did not drive Paul's interest in the second option. His concern for what was best for the Philippian believers and others motivated it. He wanted to stay if it was best for the church.

2. What motivates our choices? Does self-interest or God loyalty stimulate the choices we make? Do we choose because it is best for ourselves or because it is best for God's church?

D. Is God so real to us that we like Paul believe there is no uncertainty in death? Does our certainty about the future help us live in the uncertain times today? We sing, "***My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus Blood and righteousness.***" Do we believe it?