

Lord's Day Morning

Date 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles Ps/Hymns Ps 95 v1-7 Stracathro, 394 203 382, Read: Philippians 1:20-26 Text Philippians 1:20-26

Series: Philippians (34) Title : Comparing, living Christ on Earth, or To Be With Christ Heaven (2)

When the Apostle Paul wrote in **Philippians 1:21** *for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*, he was laying a solid foundation, for what he would say next, why *to live is Christ, and to die is gain*.

Paul was under sentence of death, waiting to be executed for preaching the gospel.

In his prison cell, Paul's thoughts are like a fire work display, there are explosions of rejoicing, and thanksgiving to God for redemption through His Son Jesus Christ.

Paul realised he was in a blessed situation, whichever way he thought of living or dying he was brought back to Christ,

The longer God grants Paul to live on earth he'll spend it living Christ, but if God has appointed his death sooner, he'll go to be with Christ.

connect the end of **verse 22** with **verse 23**, Paul said "*yet what I shall choose I wot not. <sup>23</sup> For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.*"

The words "*strait betwixt two*" means **to be pressed in, helmed in, surrounded, or constrained**.

The idea is that which presses against you, or upon you, and it's what you think about, you can't get away from it, your surrounded by it.

Paul is *in a strait betwixt two*, the matter of serving Christ on earth or to be with Christ in heaven pressed upon Paul's mind.

He continually thought about it, because on earth, Paul wanted to encourage God's people in the faith, but above all he desired to be with Christ in heaven.

Paul was bound, limited but still usable and willing to be used for gospel ministry.

Paul rests in the sovereignty of God, until He calls me Home, ill serve on earth.

**In Comparing living Christ on Earth, or Being With Christ in Heaven** we have noted **PAUL'S DEED**, from **verse 22**. His deeds or works means serving Christ with his body on earth, by **living for Christ, labouring for Christ** and **likeness to Christ**.

Now in **verse 23**, Paul turns his focus from the earthly to heavenly, His **DESIRE** to be with Christ.

***For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.***

**II SECOND PAUL'S DESIRE.**

**1 Paul's desire was STRONG.**

***For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ;***

The word **desire** is a strong word, it is to have a **strong desire for something, a longing after something, to crave for.**

It is also interesting to note that this word **desire** literally means **to lust**. And so, we could read the words, **having a lust to depart.**

**Now to our minds that lust does not seem right.**

But once again, Paul takes a word that would normally be used negatively in connection with sin, desires or lusts after the works of the flesh,

and he takes the same word and meaning, but uses it in a good way, a positive way to show how strong his desire was, and who

the desire of his heart is, who it is that thrills Paul's heart and motivates him to action.

And all that thrills Paul's soul is Jesus.

Paul strongly desired, lusts after, craves after Christ, to be with Christ, that's why he knew to die was gain, to his advantage.

Heaven for Paul is all about Christ, being with Christ, and seeing Christ by sight.

Furthermore, the word **having**, is in the present tense indicating this was Paul's continual mindset in prison. He continually desired, and strongly desired to be with Christ, and to see his Saviour face to face.

In fact, this same word **desire** and its strength of meaning, was used by Christ speaking to His disciples, in **Luke 22:15 And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer**

**John 4:34, Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.** The word **meat** is an expression of that which satisfies. When you eat meat or food, it fills you up, it satisfies.

So Christ is saying, my meat, my food, what satisfies me is the will of my Father which is to perfectly obey His law by living a sinless life and paying the penalty of the law by dying a substitutional death. When these two matters are dealt with and finished, God will be honoured and sinners be saved.

I'm glad Christ has finished the work, shed His life saving blood, to forgive sinners for whom He died.

Paul's desire was Christ, that's why he used the same phrase **strait betwixt two** in **2 Corinthians 5:14** but translated by the word **constraineth**.

***“For the love of Christ constraineth us.***

The supreme and sacrificial love of Christ in His life and death for sinners He came to save, ***presses upon me***, causes me to desire Him more, surrounds my thoughts to be taken up with Him, to Love Him, enjoy Him, dwell in His presence, to serve Him, desire to be with Him.

Believer if your heart is not warmed, stirred up and pressed upon, by Christ's love in giving Himself for you, nothing else will stir you up.

The motivation to assemble on the Lord's day services is Christ's love pressing upon our hearts, to come hear His word and fellowship with His people. The desire to serve God is Christ.

Sinner, if forgiveness of sins doesn't rest in Christ alone, then you will never be forgiven.

If the agony and sufferings of Christ to save sinners, does not cause you cry out for salvation, nothing else will, and you will be forever lost.

## ***2 Paul's desire was SPLENDID***.

***having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better***

Where was Christ? He was in heaven, in glory, as He is at present.

Where was Paul? on earth, therefore, his desire was a change of location, that's why he desired to depart.

The word **depart**, is also an interesting word, packed with spiritual nutrients.

It means ***to loosen, break up, undo, return.***

It carries two illustrations, to set sail on a ship and to take down a tent.

It speaks of taking a journey to another destination by ship.

The anchor is pulled up, the ropes are undone, and then the ship is loosened from the harbour setting sail to another place, a new destination. **It leaves one harbour for another.**

In this case **from the shores of earth to the splendour of heaven.** When the ship leaves, it will set sail at a certain time, an appointed time.

Paul used the same word in **2 Timothy 4:6** “***the time of my departure is at hand.***” the time when I will set sail from earth to heaven is soon approaching.

Likewise, believer, the gospel ship of our life, having sailed around many of earth’s destinations serving God, will one day depart for Emmanuel’s land.

What a journey that will be, Christ the captain of our Salvation will steer us safely home.

But there are some who are out of Christ not on board the gospel ship, that will depart for heaven, rather you will perish in the waves of God’s wrath, you are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, tossed forward and backward because your sin.

Unsaved one you are sinking deep in sin, sinking to rise no more, because you are overwhelmed by sin, the guilt of sin is a burden too heavy to bear.

However, sinner, the gospel net is cast out for you, because the only one who lifts out of sin’s despair death and destruction, is Jesus Christ.

The word **depart** is also illustrated by a tent in **2 Corinthians, 5:1-8, Verse 1** “***For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.***”

The word **house** means **a tent**. He is therefore speaking of **an earthly house, tent, abode, a home** in which his soul dwells during his time on this earth.

The body is temporal it will decay and die, but the soul is eternal it can never die, it lives on.

At death the soul leaves the body, if the soul before death was saved by grace, the soul will enter heaven's praise, but if the soul before death was not saved by grace the soul will go into hell's punishment.

Sinner, you have a soul to be saved. **That's why Paul refers to death for the Christian, as a departure from earth to heaven, because death to the unbeliever is damnation from earth to hell.**

Paul said if his body, the physical frame, **were dissolved**, the word **dissolved**, means **torn down, to loose down to take apart**

in the sense of all the different parts of the body being broken down and coming apart the one from the other. This is why he compares the physical frame to tent.

Paul was a tent maker, therefore, he makes parallels, between a tent and a physical body.

For instance, whenever a tent is set up, and used for a period of time, it is temporary, it is then at some point taken down,

The tent was not designed to last forever, but for a certain time.

**But how is a tent taken down?** It is taken down piece by piece, part by part.

this is what Paul means when he refers to his and every human body, it is dissolving, dissembling, it is being taken down, piece by piece.

It may be the loss of hair style, teeth are missing health weakened, it may be poor eyesight, hearing loss, aches and pains, more frequent.

No doubt there are many things you could have done in your youthful days, but now the energy is not just the same.

Why, the body is breaking down, bit by bit, like the tent soon to be put away.

Paul actually looked forward to the time of his departure, he said in **verse 2** “**earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.**”

The word **desiring** means **desire, craving, longing,**

Paul longed for this exchange from the temporary house to the permanent house, the reason being, **v8**, “**We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.**”

Paul is writing from a prison in Rome, his body is weak, he’s been through so much, but a day of departure, a day of sailing, and day of exchange is coming for Paul, that which temporal will be permanent.

He looked forward to finishing the race that was set down before Him.

Because this was the path His Saviour ran. Leading up the cross, Christ knew His departure was at hand, to return unto the Father.

He said in **John 12:23** “**The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified, John 13:1 Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end**

Christ finished the race set before Him. Having endured the cross and despising the shame, Christ offered one sacrifice for sin forever, and He went to be with His father in heaven.

Paul desired be with Christ, because Christ is in heaven.

Believer you are equally as sure of being with Christ in heaven, as Paul was and now is, because saving faith rests fully on Christ Himself, He purposes His people be with Him at death.

### **3 Paul's desire was SUPERIOR.**

Paul's summary, it is all wrapped up, in these words, ***to be with Christ; which is far better.***

The word ***far better*** read in the original Greek ***very much far better***. It may not make much sense in English, but it's to emphasise being with Christ is superior than being on earth.

It is far better or much better to be with Christ in heaven than dwell on earth.

**Its far better to absent from the body and to be present with the Lord, than our present state to be absent from the Lord and to be present in the body.**

As Paul awaits his execution, he redeems the time preaching Christ, he lives Christ and serves Christ on earth.

Paul was thankful to God and he counted it an honour to be put into the ministry to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ and to share with sinners the greatest gift any one could receive, eternal life through Christ.

Yet above any earthly desire, ***to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better*** was the superior desire for Paul.

Unhindered, unbroken and unending fellowship with Christ.

To be with Christ is infinitely superior to all the joys on earth.



There are some listening, and Christ is not their desire, to depart earth is not far better for them.

That's why you must come to Jesus Christ now, as Paul said in **Romans 10:9** ***"if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."***