

SOUTH GROVE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH LONDON

Lord's Day Morning

Date 5<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Preacher Rev Philip Knowles Hymns Psalm 46v1-7 1<sup>st</sup> version, 97,113, 335. Read: Philippians 1:20-26 Text Philippians 1:24-26

Series: Philippians (35) Title : Comparing, living Christ on Earth, or To Be With Christ Heaven (3)

From **verses 21-26** the Apostle compares serving Christ on earth or enjoying Christ in heaven.

The Bible commentator, Matthew Henry (1662-1714), said *"The apostle's difficulty was not between living in this world and living in heaven; between these two there is no comparison; but between serving Christ in this world and enjoying Him in another. Not between two evil things, but between two good things; living to Christ and being with Him."*

Paul desired to be with Christ, it was far better, to be free from the presence of sin, no more sufferings or sorrows, however Paul understood for the need to remain to encourage struggling saints at Philippi.

For this reason, Paul said in **verse 24** *"Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."*

Paul's ministry was taken up with others. If you look at the last two words of **verse 24** *for you*, they mean *for the sake of, for the benefit of*.

Paul desires heaven but he's concerned for the sake of and benefit of the people of God.

Only God knows how many days he's granted Paul to live, however, Paul puts the needs of others above his own desires.

Paul concludes, **to abide in the flesh is more needful for** the saints at Philippi. The word **abide** means **to remain, to stay at or with, to continue, to tarry still**.

Therefore, connect the two thoughts together, **to remain in the flesh**, to **stay on earth**, for sake of Christ's church is needful.

Paul didn't lose out, if God appointed Him to heaven at this time, it was in answer to Christ's prayer in **John 17:24** "**Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world,**

or if God willed him to abide on earth in service, it was still in answer to Christ's prayer **John 17:15** "**I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.**

Having considered **firstly PAUL'S DEED** in **verse 22** and **secondly PAUL'S DESIRE** in **verse 23**,

now we will consider **thirdly PAUL'S DISCERNMENT** from **verses 24-26**.

### **III PAUL'S DISCERNMENT v24-26**

#### **1 Paul's strong compulsion**

**verse 24** "**Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.**

The phrase **more needful for you**, means **it is necessity**. The idea is compelled to meet a need.

Paul is stating its essential, that I remain for you.

Here is a term that is of extreme importance. It centres around serving others, meeting the need of others. Such a need is impressed upon Paul.

Remember, Paul is an Apostle, whose teaching, doctrine, message came from the Lord who is the head of the church and the Saviour of His body.

There was a need for Paul to remain for God's people to instruct younger believers and ministers in sound teaching, and gospel preaching.

Believers, needed to learn that through suffering they can rejoice in Lord.

Circumstances change, but Christ never changes. They needed to learn Humility, how to labour together, how to deal with issues in the local assembly, end division between believers and deal with false teaching.

They needed to learn to be content in whatever state they were, and through Christ they can do all things.

I often think we are blessed with preachers like Dr John Douglas 90 years old, Mr Stephen Toms 91, Rev Ivan Foster, Rev John Greer, late 70's, men like the apostle Paul, who has served, and suffered for the gospel.

God has given these men to us a little longer, ***to abide in the flesh is more needful for you,*** and me.

I think of those within this congregation many in their late 60's, 70's and 80's, still serving Christ, and while they desire heaven, and look forward to eternal rest, yet to help this congregation, the young people, this pastor ***to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.***

This same phrase ***more needful*** is used 8 times in scripture. For instance, Paul said in **Philippians 2:25** "***...I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus...***" it was needful Paul send ***Epaphroditus.***

But Paul also used this word in connection to Jesus Christ as the Great High Priest, and Great Apostle.

**Hebrews 8:1-2 We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; <sup>2</sup> A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.**

Christ is infinitely above all other priests. He now exercises His priesthood in heaven itself.

But the point is this, Christ could not enter heaven, until His earthly work was completed. He had to abide in the flesh for a time, as it was more needful for Him to die the death of the cross to secure full redemption for sinners.

Paul in referring to the role of the priest said in **Hebrews 8:3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.**

***In the OT tabernacle the priests as they entered the presence of God they offered continual sacrifices to God, for the sins of the people and their own sins, otherwise they would not be accepted.***

***However, this man Christ entered the presence of God, with the sacrifice of Himself. Christ only offered one sacrifice to God, for the sins of the people, because He had no sin of His own. His one sacrifice was sufficient to forgive all the sin of All His people.***

The death of the cross, was a strong compulsion for Him, death by crucifixion was essential for the sake of saving sinners. He was required to meet the demands of the broken law.

It was needful for Him to abide in the flesh, to be obedient unto death even the death of cross, to purchase and provide salvation for sinners given to Him.

That is the same language Paul uses, to be with Christ is far better, he desires heaven, yet it is needful for him to remain on earth for such a time for the sake of believers.

**2. Paul's settled confidence.** **V25** *And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.*

The word **confidence** that Paul uses mean **to be persuaded, to be settled.**

(for that is the original wording, *being persuaded.*)

It is in the **perfect tense** meaning to come to a particular point of view or course of action.

Paul had been considering the matter and he had come to a **settled persuasion**, Christ has more for him to do. Christ is not finished with him yet.

You see only when a believer has finished the work God has given them to do, and when God has accomplished His purposes through their life, will their time end on earth and the Lord bring them home.

Paul's mind is settled, he is persuaded, that while he still has breath, God has a work for him to do in the lives of the Philippians.

Paul has not been giving dying grace, because God has not brought him to than point in life yet, rather He enjoys serving grace, in all its sufficiency to continue on.

**He confidently stated, *I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.***

We have come across the word **furtherance**, in this **chapter 1**. It means **advancement or progress despite obstacles**. The idea is growth, to drive, move or press forward.

Remember **1:12** *that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.*

In other words, **resist giving in, and giving up**. Though there are persecutions, dangers, distractions, and diversions, yet the gospel message progresses, advances despite every resistance.

**Paul is persuaded God has permitted him to remain on earth for the progress, advancement, furtherance of the gospel in the lives of the Philippians.**

**By Paul's labour and love, service and supplication, work and witness, by his letters and presence,** God's people will be strengthened in the gospel and receive instruction how to live to out the gospel, growing in grace, and serve together in the gospel.

That truth is brought out in **verse 27** *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*

The word **conversation** means *conduct, behaviour, life style living out the gospel.*

When you live out the gospel, you will advance in the **joy of faith**, notice the words, **and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.**

This joy comes from faith in Christ, applied by the Holy Spirit.

***Faith in Christ is the foundation whereas joy is the fruit of that faith in Christ.***

Always go back to the context, the Philippians are discouraged, troubled, they can't understand how the gospel will be furthered as Paul is in jail.

Paul writes to assure believers, God is in control of every situation, His gospel witness is marching on, believers in Rome have the courage they lacked, sinners for whom Christ died are being saved.

Paul rejoices through his circumstances, because His joy flowed from faith in Christ, the seed of joy sown by the Spirit is developed by the Spirit as it blossoms mostly during sufferings and sorrow, because joy rests on Christ not circumstances.

You think of Christ, His joy didn't rest on His circumstances, rather, ***who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.***"

Christ's joy was to honour God and save sinners.

Believer as I labour among you, I so do for your advancement to live out the gospel and for your joy in faith, to learn whatever happens in your life it's for the furtherance of the gospel, therefore we are enabled by the Spirit to rejoice in the Lord in every circumstance.

But also, every day God permits you to remain on earth it's to live for Christ.

### **3. Paul's solemn commitment.**

**V26 *That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.***"

The word **rejoicing** in **verse 26** is a different Greek word in original Greek that the normal word rejoicing meaning joy.

This word **rejoicing** in **verse 26** means ***boasting, to boast or glory.***

I like that! The words in the Greek language literally reads ***that your boasting many abound in Christ Jesus.***

In fact, the same word used in **Philippians 2:16**, but to show the difference in meaning turn to **Philippians 3:1&3** there the word **rejoicing** is used.

**Philippians 3:1** “*finally my brethren, rejoice in the Lord.* The word **rejoice** in **verse 1** means *joy, glad, cheer, rejoice.*

**Philippians 3:3** *For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* The word **rejoice**, in **verse 3** is the word *boast, glory.*

Paul’s solemn commitment was to help believers to focus and follow Christ, not himself. Glory, boast in Christ’s work not mine.

In fact Paul uses the same word in **Galatians 6:14** “*But God forbid that I should glory (boast), save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* The word **save** means *except.*

(The words **abundant** mean *to overflow, to raise higher*, as a river bursts its banks, the water continually overflows out in abundance.)

**Paul’s Solomon commitment before God** in the gospel, was never for people to boast in him, rejoice in him, follow him, preach up Paul, rather continually boast and glory in Christ.

This is where some believers failed in **verses 15-17**, as some preached Christ out of **envy, strife, contention, adding affliction** to Paul, in other words, they preached Christ to boast in themselves, to rejoice in themselves, attract others to themselves.

See how a spirit filled believer lives, Paul desires that believers rejoice, boast in Christ.

This was the same point John the Baptist made, when preached Jesus the Lamb of God, he said in **John 3:30-31** **He must**



**increase, but I must decrease <sup>31</sup> He that cometh from above is above all..."**

The same with every preacher of the word, their solemn commitment to Christ is that in all things Christ will have the pre-eminence.

The preacher doesn't preach so that people will follow him, but rather follow Christ.

The greatest encouragement the preacher receives is when the people gather to hear the word, and can say **God spoke to me today, there was a word for me from the Lord today**, you boast, glory in Christ.

We desire more people to attend the services, to follow Christ, boast in Him, who He is, and what has accomplished by His life, death, burial and resurrection.

Unsaved one, you may be committed to your religion, church, culture, and beliefs, you may rejoice, boast and glory your religious works, but it will be to your eternal destruction.

Full Salvation, pardon from all your sin, rejoices, and boasts in Christ's finished work upon the cross of Calvary.