



PHILIPPIANS

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For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, Philippians 1:19

Paul's words in this verse are debated, but the intent is not uncertain when looked at from his perspective. He says, "For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance." The word "deliverance" is also translated as "salvation." It is the word which indicates both, *sótéria*. Because of this, some argue that it must mean his "salvation" from captivity. This is what one would expect, especially when translated as "deliverance." But this is not correct because this was completely uncertain to him, as he will note in the next verse. However confident he was in his heart, he was still uncertain in reality concerning what would happen to him. This is seen in verses 25 & 26. His confidence notwithstanding, it is not speaking of specifically his deliverance from captivity.

The term "salvation" or "deliverance" is also not speaking of his salvation in regards to his state before God. That was determined when he received Christ. And so there is only a third option left to consider. His words actually quote Job 13:16, which he then applies to himself –

"Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.
Even so, I will defend my own ways before Him.
16 He also shall be my salvation,
For a hypocrite could not come before Him." Job 13:15, 16

Understanding this, we see that he is speaking of the simple form of the word as we would think of it. There is nothing specific in the "salvation," such as release from captivity or standing approved before God. Rather it is the fact that through good or bad he will be

delivered. If he is to be executed, he will be delivered from that death. If he is to go on living, he will be delivered from whatever trial or trouble he faces. He may have to go through those trials or troubles, but they will not be the end for him. A good example to think of is a man standing at the side of his wife who is on her death-bed. There is no doubt that she will die, and yet he says, “We will get through this.” It is a simple statement of fact that deliverance is at hand, regardless of the outcome. This is the intent of Paul’s words.

And he notes to them that this “deliverance” is to come “through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” There is an intimate connection in the Greek between the two nouns, “prayer” and “supply.” This is accomplished by the use of one preposition and one article. As Jamieson-Faucett-Brown states it –

“Through your prayer and (the consequent) supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (obtained for me through your prayer).”

He is aware that they are praying for him, and he earnestly believes that those prayers help him in the process of his deliverance. The prayers are raised, and the Spirit is returned in answer to the prayers.

Life application: We should never underestimate the power of prayer. Paul didn’t, the other apostles and the prophets didn’t, and even more – Jesus didn’t. They are all recorded as praying and expecting that those prayers were heard. If this is so, and as we are now sealed with God’s Spirit unto salvation, why should we think that our prayers are not heard? Let us be people of prayer, willing to expend those prayers for the needs of others and for the desires of our hearts as well.

...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. Philippians 1:20

The opening words of this verse tie back to Paul’s note in the preceding verse that “this will turn out for my deliverance.” That was not speaking of deliverance from prison, nor his salvation as a Christian, but rather salvation as a simple fact. No matter what occurs, he would be saved through it. Understanding this, he says that it is “according to my earnest expectation and hope.”

The word translated as “earnest expectation” is found only here and in Romans 8:19 when speaking that “the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.” It is a word, *apokaradokia*, which comes from three separate words – *apó*, “away from;” *kara*, “the head;” and *dokéō*, “thinking.” And so it gives the idea of “thinking

forward” as if the head is literally outstretched. And so, in turn, it refers to eager and even intense expectation. One would then mentally think of the eager straining of a marathon runner, running with his head outstretched and his eyes only on the finish line. For Paul, it means that he has ignored all that is lesser and has his eyes focused solely on that which is greater, the exaltation of Christ in his body.

This is why he next says, “that in nothing I shall be ashamed.” The word for “shall be ashamed” is in the passive in the Greek. It is better rendered, “I shall be put to shame.” He is in prison, and yet he finds no shame in this, but to let down his Lord while in prison by not preaching the gospel would be accounted to his shame. By failing to represent Christ, he would then “be put to shame.”

Instead of such a thing, he makes a contrasting proclamation that “with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body.” Again, he uses a passive word for “will be magnified.” He has just spoken of boldness in his actions, and so one might expect him to state this in an active form, such as “I shall magnify” Christ. But he chooses rather the passive. “Boldness of speech was to be his part, the glory should be Christ’s” (Pulpit Commentary).

Thus we see in Paul’s view of his walk (and which should be ours), the idea that when failure comes our way, it is our own fault, but when success, triumph, or glory comes our way, it is the work of Christ. As Charles Ellicott notes, “If he fails, it must be through his own fault; if he triumphs, it will be through his Master’s strength.”

Paul finishes up this marvelous thought with the words, “whether by life or by death.” Thus, we see that the “deliverance” or “salvation” which was referred to in the previous verse is one which is a simple fact. He will be saved through any circumstance; he will get through it, and it will be by the power of Christ working in him and for him.

Life application: We should never fear that we will not get through any and every ordeal we face. It may not be the way we expect, but we will get through it as Christ has ordained. What we should fear is failing the Lord along the way. All error and failure is to be reckoned to our account. All glory is to be reckoned to Him, simply because if we do something right, it is because He has already ordained that the right thing is the thing we are to do. We are merely showing obedience to our heavenly Master in doing that which is appropriate. This begs the question, “How can we know what is the right thing to do? Anyone?... Yes, you I the back row. What do you say?”

“Know your Bible.”

“Very good! Excellent! A++++! No homework for you tonight!”

For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Philippians 1:21

In the preceding verse, he said, “Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.” To now explain that thought, he gives one of the most comforting verses ever to be given by him to the saints in Christ. He begins with “For to me...” The words “to me” are emphatic. To him, it didn’t matter what others thought about this physical life. To him it was only about one thing – “...to live is Christ.” It was Christ and nothing else. This is complementary to his words of Galatians 2:20 –

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

Paul regarded his life complete and solely as that of being in Christ. This state is not that Christ is merely the source of our life (which He is, meaning our true life), nor is it that He is the main life which is in us (which is also true), but rather Paul is saying that He is (or He should be) the absolute state of our lives so that He is manifest in all we are and do. When we are seen, people should see Christ. When we speak, people should hear Christ. To live is Christ, or as the Greek literally reads, “The living is Christ.” Our lives should be lived for Christ, and to His glory, at all times. This is what Paul means in his words.

But in addition to that marvelous state, he next complements the words “by death” of the previous verse with the thought, “...and to die is gain.” Here, he is referring to the state of death rather than the occurrence of death. When we die, a new state will be realized. It is one that will make our current state pale in comparison to it, thus the word “gain” is used. Elsewhere, he speaks about the gain which is found in our deaths. In 2 Corinthians 5, he states the following –

“So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight.” 2 Corinthians 5:6, 7

For those who die in Christ, there is a completely new state which we enter. If this life is to be lived as Christ, and our death is gain, then it is not just an emulation of Him, but it must be an even more intimate uniting with Him. It is that state which Paul now speaks of. And it is a state which will be even further highlighted when new bodies are given to those who are dead in Christ. This is referred to in detail in 1 Corinthians 15, but it is also alluded to in Colossians 3 –

“When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”
-Colossians 3:4

Life application: Christ has risen from the dead, never to die again. He promises the same to all who die in Him. And so, let us not fear the passing of our mortal, fallen bodies. When we die, we will be in a state far more wonderful than we are now. And at some point after that, He will give us new and eternal bodies which will be more glorious still. Thank God for the sure promises which are found in Jesus Christ our Lord!

But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. Philippians 1:22

Greek scholars note the immensely complicated nature of this verse, admitting that it could be translated in a variety of ways. It is as if Paul was laboring to express himself in a manner that would convey both his heart for his apostolic position which required him to bear fruit, and yet his great desire for his life to end in order to be with Christ. He was torn between the two. In choosing one, he might show that the other was unimportant to him.

Imagine the dilemma! If he were to say, "I desire to stay and continue with my apostolic duties" then his audience may feel that death was an unknown and even scary thing to him. Thus his words concerning what it is like after death were not grounded in any true hope. Further, they might assume that holding onto this life was something that even an apostle desired the most. What would that speak of his relationship with the Lord?

On the other hand, if he were to say that he just wanted to go and be with the Lord, then it would mean that his duties as an apostle meant little to him. They may even think that he was running from the responsibilities of this life that the Lord had placed him in. This could even be taken as a streak of disobedience to his calling.

And so he is faced with expressing himself in a manner which was as difficult as any other he might face. Because of this, his words are most difficult to translate. Charles Ellicott notes that "The construction is clearly broken by emotion or absorption in thought; it can only be supplied by conjecture."

Understanding this, any commentary must also be that of, at least partially, conjecture. The basic intent, however, is not difficult to grasp. He is caught in a dilemma concerning remaining alive or dying. If he is to continue on "in the flesh" then his labors would continue to bear fruit. The term "in the flesh" indicates the fallen world in which he is and of which he participates in. The "flesh" speaks of that which is earthly and fallen, and yet it is the life which we currently live in. To cast off the flesh means to cast off corruption, trouble, trial, and difficulty. But to remain in the flesh, at least for Paul, would mean benefit for others. As the scholar Bengel notes, "Another seeks fruit from [by means of] his labour; Paul regards the labour itself as the fruit."

Understanding the dilemma, he next pens, "...yet what shall I choose I cannot tell." He is being caught up in the difficulty of expressing one choice over another, and it is one which he is actively evaluating, even as his words flow from his mind – "What shall I do? What is right? How do I express this difficult situation?" In essence, he has come to the point of simply saying, "If I know that living will be the best option for the church as a whole, then my personal desire must go unspoken, and I will refrain from stating it. I must be obedient in whichever occurs."

Life application: The words of this verse should be the same struggle that every Christian faces. This may be true especially with pastors and preachers, but every Christian should say, "I really, really want to be with Christ, but I know that my work here may necessitate me staying." How unfortunate that neither thought fits the minds of most. They neither "want to be with Christ," nor do they "want to bear fruit for Christ." They simply live for this world, clinging onto it as if distrusting any of the promises of the word. They distrust that their labors now will be realized in eternal rewards from Christ, and they distrust that death is truly "gain."

For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. Philippians 1:23

This verse is referring to Paul's internal conflict concerning living on in the flesh or dying and going to be with Christ. He now gives highly emphatic words – "For I am hard pressed between the two." The two options were both straining at him. To him, he was hemmed in by both as they called out to his soul.

It is as if he were a miner working in a camp. His tent is tied down and there was safety and much productive work to be done which would bear fruit. His work there would be profitable and a great help to the other miners. And yet, there was the finest gold awaiting him in the mountains, calling to him. The wealth there was more than could ever be imagined or realized while staying in the camp. And so he was being pressed heavily by both options, only one of which he could pursue.

Understanding this dilemma, he continues by saying, "...having a desire to depart and be with Christ." The word "depart" here means, "to unloose for departure." His desire was to head to the place of the most precious riches of all. In so doing, he would have to unloose his tent and strike off towards his destination. In this, he is equating life as the movement of a tent where there is the pulling up of the restraining cords in order to move. In order to go to the mountain of riches, he would have to pull up the cords for the last time. This move is equated with his death, but he says that this option is "far better."

Some scholars see the unloosing for the departure to be a nautical one. He was equating himself with a ship being drawn out to sea. No matter what analogy one makes, Paul faced a decision which truly pressed on him from both sides. The two called out to him and vexed him in his soul.

Among other things, this verse shows us quite clearly that the person who dies in Christ is immediately transported to be with Him, even if it is without a body. It will be a place of great gain. People may argue over the details of what occurs, but the simple surety that we will be with Christ in a far better place is made completely clear to us.

Life application: There should be no fear for the believer in Christ concerning death. This world is a temporary one, and our lives here are to be productive for His kingdom, but the unloosing of our tent cords is to be a happy occasion. The move we will make is one which will take us to the place of highest joy and eternal riches. Let us not fear death as the world does. Instead, we should be in the greatest anticipation that we will be in the presence of Christ; the most wonderful place of all.