Paul’s Burning Desire

Read This Week’s Passage: Philippians 1

THE FAR BETTER OPTION

Paul wrote Philippians during his first imprisonment in Rome (cf. Phil. 1:7, 13, 14) around the year AD 62. At this point, he was not totally certain about what awaited him, although he hoped to visit the Philippians once more. He was not sure whether he would die at the hand of the Romans or be released and allowed to live. Most Protestant commentators use these verses to “prove” that Paul wanted to die so his immortal soul could go directly into the presence of Jesus.

In our last lesson (2 Cor. 5:1–10) Paul described three options. He could be absent from the Lord in the “tent,” be present with the Lord in the “building,” or be “unclothed.” In this lesson we will study Philippians 1:21–24, which is similar to 2 Corinthians 5:1–10. The options in both passages are three: to live here, to die, or to be translated. Explanatory notes have been added in brackets to show the link between the two passages:

“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh [in the tent], this will mean fruit [do what is pleasing] from my labor; yet what I shall choose [to live or to die] I cannot tell. For I am hard pressed between the two [living in the tent or dying], having a desire to depart and be with Christ [at translation], which is far better [than the other two options]. Nevertheless, to remain in the flesh [to live in the tent] is more needful for you” (emphasis supplied).
Read Philippians 1 from the translation of your choice. Write out Philippians 1:19–26. You may also rewrite the passage in your own words, or outline or mind-map the chapter.
Go back to your scribed text and study the passage.

Circle repeated words/phrases/ideas

Underline words/phrases that are important and have meaning to you

Draw Arrows to connect words/phrases to other associated or related words/phrases

What special insights do your marks seem overall to point to?

Memorize your favorite verse in Philippians 1. Write it out multiple times to help with memorization.

How can we calibrate our life values so that we address life-death questions as Paul did?

If Paul’s life revolved around the gospel preached to others, what purpose does your life revolve around?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead05-3
After looking at your scribed and annotated text, what special insights do your marks seem to point to overall?

What questions emerge after studying this passage? What parts are difficult?

What other principles and conclusions do you find?

How is translation a real factor in your life? Why or why not?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead05-4
What relationship do the following verses have with the primary passage?

1 Corinthians 15:20–23
John 21:18, 19
Acts 7:59, 60
Revelation 14:13
Philippians 3:8–11

What other verses/promises come to mind in connection with Philippians 1?

Review your memorized verse from Philippians 1.
Meditate on Philippians 1 again and look for where Jesus is.

How do you see Jesus differently or see Him again?

What is He saying to you through these texts?

How has God been glorified through the seemingly negative experiences of your life?

Prayer: How do you respond to seeing Jesus in this way?

Read more at www.inversebible.org/dead05-6
Review the memory verse. How does it apply to your life this week?

After this week’s study of the chapter, how can you adopt Paul’s burning desire?

What are the social ramifications of this type of thinking?

Read more inSight from the Spirit of Prophecy at wwwVERSEbible.org/DEAD05-7
inQuire

Share insights from this week’s memory verse and Bible study as well as any discoveries, observations, and questions with your Sabbath School class (or Bible study group). Consider these discussion questions with the rest of the group.

What is the meaning of the word *martyr*? What did the apostle mean when he wrote that “to die is gain”? How is it possible for someone to glorify God by suffering a martyr’s death?

Why would it be beneficial for Paul to remain in the flesh rather than depart to be with Christ? Is the same true for us?

What did the apostle present as a better option than living in the flesh or dying? Is this our burning desire as well?

According to Philippians 3:10, 11, did the apostle expect to be with Jesus at death or at translation?

Why did the apostle Paul conclude that it would be better to remain in the flesh for the moment? Could this be true of us as well?