

**Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia**

**Bible Study for October 15, 2020**

**Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., PhD, D.Min.**

**Title: "The Feeling of Being in a Tug of War"**

**Scripture Reference: Philippians 1:23-25**

**"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith."**

**I. Introduction**

A. Have you ever been so exhausted from feeling that you were being pulled in opposite directions at the same time?

B. Sometimes the exhaustion comes from the seeming never ending problems of life, and as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, during those times, have you also felt like Lord, just take me on to heaven?

C. Maybe you imagined what it would be like to just close your eyes, fall asleep, and wake up in the presence of the Lord. No more care, not more worries! Has that ever happened to you?

D. Judging from the above passage in Paul's letter to the Philippians, we can see that his heart was being heavily tugged toward heaven while he was a prisoner in Rome.

E. During this study session, let us examine Paul's situation from the target verses and see if we might be encouraged. I'm positive that you will be.

## II. Exposition [Part I]

A. When Paul wrote that he was in a "strait betwixt two" he uses the Greek word sunecho (i.e., **hard-pressed**) which carries the idea of **pressure being applied to a person from two different directions**. This is a force that pulls a person first one way and then another, as if the person's arms are being pulled in two different directions by opponents in a fierce tug of war contest.

B. Paul felt two different forces pulling at his heart. On the one side, he was pulled "... **to depart and to be with Christ** ..." on the other side, he was pulled "... **to abide in the flesh** ..." a little longer in order to help other people and to totally fulfill the part of his calling that he believed remained undone.

C. The strength of the pull toward Heaven is evident in Paul's words in verse 23, where he writes that he has a "**desire to depart.**"

D. The word "**desire**" is the Greek word epithumia, which is a compound of the words epi and thumos. The word epi means **for or over**, and thumos is the Greek word for a **strong passion or urge**. It usually denotes a **swelling** or **growing emotion**.

E. But when the word thumos is compounded together with the word epi, forming the word epithumia, it depicts a person who is **excited about something**.

F. This person is passionate about this idea; this person is consumed with this thought. Because Paul uses this word, it emphatically lets us know that the prospect of departing from this

world and going to Heaven to be with the Lord was a thrilling and exciting thought to Paul.

G. When Paul thought of death, he didn't think of dying as perhaps we think of it. He didn't think of it as the cessation of life, but he looked upon death as nothing more than a departure that signaled the beginning of the next part of his journey into eternity.

**Comment:** Perhaps some of you will recall that on many occasions in the past, I have referred to death for the believers in Christ as "no more than a door of transition. Where we, yes, depart from this earth, and then enter into the presence of our loving Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

H. The word "**depart**" is the Greek word *analousai*, a word that pictures *a ship that is being loosed from its moorings so that it can finally be free to sail*. No wonder Paul was excited!

I. When Paul thought of death, it meant being set free from the human limitations and physical restrictions of this early life.

**Comment:** Right here an old familiar hymn comes to mind - "**I'll Fly Away**". "Some glad morning when this life is over - I'll fly away."

J. The joy of being set free was a glorious thought to Paul. Once liberated from this realm he would really be able to set sail in the Spirit and soar to spiritual heights he had never before attained.

K. To Paul, death was not the end but an exciting beginning. It was the next part of the journey - a phase of his walk with God that he was excited and enthusiastic to experience!

### III. Exposition [Part II]

- A. But wait - there's more to this word **analousai** ("to depart") that is very important to this text.
- B. The word **analousai** was also a military word, used when a decision was made that it was time for an army **to break camp, pack up their tents, pick up their gear, gather up all their belongings,** and **move onward** to conquer new territory. This gives us another view of the way Paul viewed the prospect of death.
- C. As a soldier for the Lord, Paul had fought many battles on earth. Now he was ready to **break camp** and move **upward** into new spiritual territory.
- D. He had fought long and hard, and the expectation of moving onward to heavenly territory was a thought that captured his heart and mind. Are you getting this???
- E. Paul's "desire to depart" and to be with Christ was so strong that he felt as if he was in a "**strait betwixt two.**" He was "**hard pressed from both directions.**"

### IV. Exposition [Part III] - Paul's Dilemma

- A. As much as Paul desired to depart and be with Christ, he also felt that God had more for him to do here on earth. In other words, his ministry was unfinished.
- B. If he left at this time, the entirety of his vision would not be fulfilled. So, although he was "pulled" to set sail, to break camp, and to move onward to be with the Lord, he was convinced that there was still work for him to do for the Kingdom.
- C. That is why he wrote in Philippians 1:24 - "**Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.**"

**Comment:** Paul was a man of humility and we need not think that he was thinking that he was the only one God could use. However, he was convinced that what he was doing was because God had ordained it to be so!

D. Although Paul would have loved to enter into the heavenly realm, it wasn't yet time, because God had more for him to accomplish before he finished his race.

E. In Philippians 3:14 Paul says, "**I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**"

F. The words "**press toward**" are from the Greek word *epekieinomai*, a word that pictures a foot-racer. It is the image of a man who is pressing forward so hard and is so stretched out that his entire body is arching forward, as his arms reach ahead to grasp the goal before him.

G. The word "**mark**" is the Greek word *skopos*, which describes the finish line or the goal for a runner. Like a runner, Paul was straining toward the finish line. Also, picture a runner triumphantly pumping his or her fist in the air as they approach the finish line. This is the picture of how Paul viewed the race he was in.

H. At that time in Paul's life, he was on his last run around the track before the race concluded. Rather than slowing down, taking it easy, or resting, he chose to put forth all his efforts to push harder than ever before. He did this so that he could finish well, knowing that he had given his very best to the very end of his life.

I. Paul then wrote that he was pressing toward the mark for the "**prize.**" The word "prize" is the Greek word *brabeion*, describing the rewards given to those who won their competition in the public games.

J. Paul chose to shove all obstacles and hindrances out of the way and to strain forward as he ran for the finish line.

## V. Application

A. How does all of this apply to you today? When you are exhausted from the never-ending problems and cares of life, and the thought of dying or going to Heaven sounds like a welcome relief, stop to ask yourself:

- Have I done everything God has asked me to do?
- Can I say that I have run my race and pushed it all the way to the finish line?
- Are there others who are depending on me and who still need me?

B. As Christians, we realize and acknowledge that our lives and all we do depend on God's grace. He holds the key to our life and death. Until the Lord says, enough is done, are you doing all you can for **HIM**?

C. There is a day coming in each of our lives when we will have to break camp from this earthly realm and move onward into heavenly territory. If it is not today because the blood is still running warm in your veins, you need to grab hold of the power of God and run on to the finish line. As long as the Lord gives you breath, health and strength, there is more of the race that is still left undone before you. I feel another song of old coming on -

"Lord I'm running, trying to make a hundred. Ninety-nine and half won't do ....."

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the biblical passages below by filling in the blanks. All passages have been taken from the KJV of the Holy Bible.

"I returned, and saw under the sun, that the \_\_\_\_\_ is not to the \_\_\_\_\_, nor the \_\_\_\_\_ to the \_\_\_\_\_, neither yet bread to the \_\_\_\_\_, nor yet \_\_\_\_\_ to men of understanding, nor yet \_\_\_\_\_ to men of skill; but time and chance \_\_\_\_\_ to them all." [Ecclesiastes 9:11]

"But they that \_\_\_\_\_ upon the Lord shall \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_; they shall mount up with \_\_\_\_\_ as eagles; they shall \_\_\_\_\_ and not be \_\_\_\_\_; and they shall walk, and not \_\_\_\_\_." [Isaiah 40:31]

"Holding forth the word of \_\_\_\_\_; that I may rejoice in the day of \_\_\_\_\_, that I have not \_\_\_\_\_ in vain, neither \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_." [Philippians 2:16]

"For I am now \_\_\_\_\_ to be offered, and the time of my \_\_\_\_\_ is at hand. I have \_\_\_\_\_ a good \_\_\_\_\_, I have \_\_\_\_\_ my course, I have kept the \_\_\_\_\_." [2 Timothy 4:6,7]

## QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO CONSIDER

1. Is it true that you have had moments where you wished you could pack it up and move on to Heaven?
  - a. Did you feel that way at a time when you were exhausted and feeling worn out? Did you feel like no one cared?
2. Do you believe that there is more the Lord wants you to accomplish for Him?
3. If God says "today" you must break camp, how would you feel, if you knew that you could have run the Christian race more faithfully?
4. If God allows you to run on a little bit longer, where will your strength and encouragement come from?

I trust that this lesson has been a blessing to each of you and that you will be more determined to run on to the finish line, into the loving arms of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As always, please feel free to share this lesson with others.

Jude 3  
Pastor Austin