

Posted June 26, 2020

Read Philippians 1:18c–30 in your favorite translation. I will print the NET–2 translation.

18c Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. 20 My confident hope is that I will in no way be ashamed but that with complete boldness, even now as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die. 21 For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22 Now if I am to go on living in the body, this will mean productive work for me, yet I don't know which I prefer: 23 I feel torn between the two, because I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, 24 but it is more vital for your sake that I remain in the body. 25 And since I am sure of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that what you can be proud of may increase because of me in Christ Jesus, when I come back to you.

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that—whether I come and see you or whether I remain absent—I should hear that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, by contending side by side for the faith of the gospel, 28 and by not being intimidated in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of their destruction, but of your salvation—a sign which is from God. 29 For it has been granted to you not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for him, 30 since you are encountering the same conflict that you saw me face and now hear that I am facing.

#### COMMENTS:

Paul continues his rejoicing theme. He shows us how easy it is to rejoice when our confidence is in our God, not in our plans. There are many times when we miss out on joy because we have a plan devised in our mind and heart which doesn't match the plan God has for us.

If you have confidence in God you can accept whatever comes. I believe God is wiser than me and I hope you also believe he is wiser than you. Paul starts his explanation in v. 19. He knows everything will work out for his deliverance because his life is supported by the prayers of the people of Philippi.

This is a reminder that your prayers for others have value, great value. Your prayers can help shape their life in Christ. I have had many tell me they could feel the power of the prayers of their friends, the church and family when they were ill or needed help or direction.

It is too easy for us to promise to pray for someone and their need and then forget to do so. That is why I try to write down the names, etc. of those for whom I have promised to pray. Pray is not the LEAST you can do for someone. It is the MOST because it helps connect them to God who can do anything. He even can use the ungodly and wicked to accomplish his purposes.

The word frequently translated as “deliverance” in v. 19 is simply the word for salvation. Knowing you are saved changes everything. Jesus promised the Spirit to His apostles (Jn 14; 16), breathed the Spirit on them to give them authority (Jn 20:21–23), and sent the Spirit to confirm their faith and mission all through the Book of Acts. Note especially John 16:5–15 (esp. v. 7).

He continues confident of the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. You will find that almost all of the translators print the word “spirit” capitalized. Sometimes people feel the “spirit” of Jesus (his loving, kindly character shapes their life. I agree with the translators that this is a reference to the Holy Spirit.

Remember the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in your own life. The Spirit brings us to faith (1 Cor. 12:3–4). Read Luther’s explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed to see clearly how important the Spirit is. If you don’t have a copy of the Small Catechism, just google “Luther’s Small Catechism.”

Paul see two clear choices awaiting him. He might be released from prison. He might die a martyr’s death. But he believes he will be a winner either way. Notice the last half of v. 20: “Christ will be exalted in my body, whether I live or die.” I agree with Paul. It why I have requested that Philippians 1:21 as the text I want the pastor to use for my Memorial Service.

He sees advantages in both. If he is released from prison it means God still has productive work for him. If he dies, that means he will depart and be with Christ, which is better choice for Paul. He know that it will be better for the Philippians is he continues living now. He knows that will bear fruit for Christ.

Then in v. 27 he warns the congregation that their behavior should not depend on what happens to him. He wants them to live a life worthy of the gospel and by refusing to be intimidated by any opponents. This is another call for boldness. If they were called to be bold in the face of possible death and persecution certainly we are called to be bold today.

In v. 28 once again we encounter the word for salvation. Then Paul really gets weird. He says that it is a privilege to not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer with Christ. Remember how Jesus told the disciples that the servants is not greater than the master (cf. John 15:20). Since Jesus was persecuted, we can expect the same thing to happen to us.

REFLECTION QUESTION: Beware of those who try to sell Jesus by saying, “give yourself to Jesus and everything will be beautiful for you.” Jesus never made a promise like that. He said, “Take up your cross and follow me.” What Jesus promised was the forgiveness of sins, cleansing from all unrighteousness and a place with Jesus in the Father’s house FOREVER. I agree that is a wonderful list of promises, but it is no bed of roses here on earth.