

Philippians 1:22

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Analysis

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not (εἰ δὲ τὸ ζῆν ἐν σαρκί, τοῦτό μοι καρπὸς ἔργου· καὶ τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω, ei de to zēn en sarki, touto moi karpos ergou; kai ti hairēsomai ou gnōrizō)—En sarki ("in the flesh") means embodied earthly existence, not sinful flesh. Continued life means **fruit of my labour** (καρπὸς ἔργου, karpos ergou)—gospel harvest through ministry. Paul values life instrumentally: opportunity for fruitful service.

What I shall choose I wot not (τί αἰρήσομαι οὐ γνωρίζω, ti hairēsomai ou gnōrizō)—hairēsomai (future middle, "I shall choose for myself") imagines preference if Paul had sovereign choice. Ou gnōrizō ("I don't know") admits genuine perplexity. Not indifference—he genuinely can't decide because both options have compelling value. This isn't death-wish but death-readiness balanced with ministry passion.

Historical Context

Paul wrote facing real possibility of execution under Nero. His uncertainty about preference reveals authentic humanity—he's not detached Stoic, indifferent to life/death, but pastor torn between desire for Christ and fruitfulness among believers. Ancient readers would've found this candor remarkable—most philosophical schools prescribed indifference to death.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How do you view continued earthly life—as an opportunity for 'fruit of labor' or self-focused pursuits?
2. If you could sovereignly choose life or death (like Paul hypothetically), what would guide your decision?
3. What does Paul's perplexity teach about holding ministry calling and heaven-longing in tension?

Interlinear Text

εἰ	δὲ	τὸ	ζῆν	ἐν	σαρκί	τοῦτο	μοι	καρπὸς	ἔργου
if	But	G3588	I live	in	the flesh	this	G3427	is the fruit	of my labour
G1487	G1161		G2198	G1722	G4561	G5124		G2590	G2041
καὶ	τί	αἰρήσομαι	οὐ	γνωρίζω					
yet	what	I shall choose	not	I wot					
G2532	G5101	G138	G3756	G1107					

Additional Cross-References

1 Peter 4:2 (Parallel theme): That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Galatians 2:20 (Parallel theme): I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Philippians 1:24 (Parallel theme): Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Acts 3:17 (Parallel theme): And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

Psalms 71:18 (Parallel theme): Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.

2 Corinthians 10:3 (Parallel theme): For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh:

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org