

Philippians 1:23

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Analysis

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better (συνέχομαι δὲ ἐκ τῶν δύο, τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εῖναι, synechomai de ek tōn dyo, tēn epithymian echōn eis to analysai kai syn Christō einai)—Synechomai ("I am pressed, constrained") pictures being squeezed from both sides. Ek tōn dyo ("from the two") are the competing desires: fruitful ministry (v. 22) versus Christ-presence (v. 23).

Desire to depart (ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι, epithymian echōn eis to analysai)—analysai ("to loose, depart") is nautical (weighing anchor) or military (striking camp). Death is departure, not annihilation. **To be with Christ** (σὺν Χριστῷ εῖναι, syn Christō einai) is death's essence—conscious, personal communion. **Which is far better** (πολλῷ [γὰρ] μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον, pollō [gar] mallon kreisson)—double comparative emphasizes degree: "very much more better!"

Historical Context

Paul's confidence in conscious intermediate state between death and resurrection refutes soul-sleep or annihilationism. First-century Jews debated the soul's state between death and resurrection; Paul affirms immediate Christ-presence for believers (cf. 2 Cor 5:8, "absent from the body, present with the Lord"). This undergirded Christian martyrdom—death wasn't oblivion but promotion to Christ's presence.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. Do you genuinely desire 'to depart and be with Christ' as better than earthly life?
2. How does belief in conscious intermediate state (not soul-sleep) affect your view of death?
3. What 'presses' you from both sides—competing desires for heaven and earthly ministry?

Interlinear Text

συνέχομαι γὰρ ἐκ τῶν δύο τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς
I am in a strait For betwixt G3588 two G3588 a desire G1939 having to G2192 G1519

τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι πολλῷ μᾶλλον
G3588 depart and with Christ to be which is far G3123
G360 G2532 G4862 G5547 G1511 G4183

κρεῖσσον·
G2908

Additional Cross-References

2 Corinthians 5:8 (Parallel theme): We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.

Psalms 17:15 (Parallel theme): As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Revelation 14:13 (Parallel theme): And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Acts 7:59 (Parallel theme): And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

Luke 23:43 (Parallel theme): And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

John 17:24 (Parallel theme): Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.

2 Timothy 4:6 (Parallel theme): For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

Psalms 49:15 (Parallel theme): But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

John 12:26 (Parallel theme): If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.

John 14:3 (Parallel theme): And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.