

**10/22/18**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,**

Is your body worn out? How many of your friends have already died? Do trips to the doctor and stays in the hospital now dominate your calendar? Has your world grown small—perhaps to the size of the inside of your home or to the size of your room? Do you wonder why the Lord doesn't just call it a day and take you to heaven?

If so, meet the apostle Paul.

By the time he wrote his letter to the Christians in Philippi, Paul had lived a very full life. For decades he had been on the move, proclaiming the gospel to a cynical and hostile world. By this time he had completed several major missionary journeys. Through those years he had been stoned and left for dead. He had survived multiple shipwrecks. He had been beaten with rods at least three times. He had been whipped at least five times. He had faced angry mobs. He had faced plots against his life. He had faced the hardships of travel and the stress of constant danger. And through it all he had endured a serious physical problem—his “thorn in the flesh,” as he called it—that made his life even harder. And now he was in prison in Rome.

After so many years, so many miles, so many scars and broken bones, perhaps we should not be surprised at Paul's candor when he simply said, *I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain... Philippians 1:23-24*

But then Paul went on to say something else. The gospel message of sins forgiven through faith in Jesus is the same message that empowered Paul to remember that his time on this earth was not about Paul. Rather, his time on this earth was all about Christ. With that in mind, Paul's complete thought to his fellow Christians was this: “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain.”

Think about that for a moment. At this point in his life, Paul was more than ready to be done with his work and go home to heaven. But because he was convinced that continuing his gospel ministry would be an advantage for his hearers, he was ready to remain.

Despite the hard years, Paul knew what a priceless treasure he had in Jesus. He knew the unspeakable joy of living every moment as a forgiven child of God. He knew the thrill of basking in the light of God's undeserved love. Despite the many hard moments, Paul knew how God was using him to reach people with the message of salvation through Jesus. And so if the Lord needed Paul to remain a little while longer, that was all right with Paul.

The same holds true for you.

***Prayer:*** *Lord Jesus, I have been on this earth for many years. I look forward to heaven. But I'm glad to serve to your glory, if you want me to remain a little while longer. Amen.*

*(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)*

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

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