

Shalom AZ Ministries

In Pursuit of Israel's Redemption



"In Yeshua, Life and Death is a Win-Win, Can't Lose"

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Devotion and Discussion Questions

Key Texts (TLV): Phil. 1:19-26; Phil. 1:12-18; Phil. 3:7-8; Acts 21:13; Rom. 8:19, 22

Some situations become frightening simply because we cannot control how they will end. We can handle a lot when we know what comes next, but uncertainty has a way of exposing where our confidence really rests. Will the diagnosis change? Will the relationship survive? Will the door open? Will the finances work out? Will the circumstance get better? We want to know the outcome because we tend to believe that if the "right" outcome happens, then everything will be okay. But what happens when the outcome is completely out of our hands? Can we still have peace? Can we still have joy? Can we still say, "Whatever happens, I know where I stand"?

That is where Paul finds himself in Phil. 1:19-26. He is imprisoned and apparently facing a coming trial, and he does not know whether the outcome will be life or death. Yet he is not consumed by either possibility. He has already watched the Lord use his imprisonment to advance the Good News, and now he looks toward an uncertain future with the same settled confidence. Paul's hope is not, "Everything will turn out the way I want." His confidence is much deeper: whatever happens, Messiah will be exalted. If he lives, he belongs to Messiah. If he dies, he will be with Messiah. Either way, he is delivered. Either way, Messiah wins. In Yeshua, Paul has discovered a genuinely **can't-lose, win-win life**.

1. MY DELIVERANCE IS BIGGER THAN MY CIRCUMSTANCES

Paul says, *"For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance, through your intercession and the help of the Ruach of Messiah Yeshua"* (Phil. 1:19). The word translated "deliverance" is *sōtēria*—salvation. If we hear Paul merely saying, "I know God is going to get me out of prison," we make his confidence much smaller than it really is. Paul does hope to return to the Philippians, but his salvation is not dependent upon a judge releasing him, the emperor ruling in his favor, or the chains falling from his wrists. His deliverance will happen **one way or another**. The immediate circumstance does not determine the final outcome. Paul knows who holds the final outcome.

That does not mean Paul pretends the pressure is not real. He needs the prayers of the Philippians and the full, sufficient supply of the Ruach of Messiah Yeshua. He is human, and the pressures are real, but his focus remains on the Lord. His *"eager expectation and hope"* is that *"Messiah will even now, as always, be exalted in my body—whether through life or through death"* (Phil. 1:20). His attention is turned away from everything else and fixed upon one thing: **Messiah will be magnified in me**. Paul does not know everything the future holds, but he has already settled the most important question. Whatever the future brings, his body, his circumstances, his suffering, his freedom—everything belongs to Messiah. That is an entirely different way to face uncertainty.

2. TO LIVE IS MESSIAH, AND TO DIE IS GAIN

Paul then makes one of the most remarkable statements in Scripture: *"For to me, to live is Messiah and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). Everything the world calls gain—status, accomplishments, possessions, reputation, security—Paul has already compared with knowing Yeshua, and he has found that none of it comes close. He writes later, *"But whatever things were*

gain to me, these I have considered as loss for the sake of the Messiah" (Phil. 3:7). Messiah has become everything to him. So what can anyone ultimately take from him? If he lives, he gets Messiah. If he dies, he gains the fullness of being with Messiah. His life has become a no-lose proposition because his treasure cannot be taken away.

That is why Paul can honestly admit that he is *"torn between the two"* (Phil. 1:23). His personal desire is *"to leave and be with Messiah, which is far better"* (Phil. 1:23). The picture is almost like breaking camp. This life is temporary—camp life rather than home life. We are traveling toward something permanent. Paul is not morbid or eager to escape responsibility; he simply knows where home is. Yet he also recognizes, *"for your sake, to remain in the body is more necessary"* (Phil. 1:24). His reason for continuing to live is not merely, "I want more years for myself." If the Master wants more years from him, then those years belong to the Master. Paul does not have to survive. He has an eternal perspective. **If he remains, he will work for Messiah. If he departs, he will be with Messiah. Whatever the Master needs, Paul is available.**

3. IF I REMAIN, I REMAIN FOR YOUR PROGRESS AND JOY

As Paul considers the two possibilities, he becomes persuaded that the Master is not finished with him yet. *"Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith"* (Phil. 1:25). Notice how completely outward-focused his thinking has become. He does not say, "I think I am going to live because there are still things I want to experience.... I still have a bucket list!" He says, in effect, "If I remain, it is for you." There is still fruit to come from his work. There are believers who need strengthening. There are people who need to hear the Good News. There is ministry still to be done. As long as the Lord gives him breath, Paul understands that he still has purpose.

That gives us an important perspective on our own lives. As long as the Lord gives us breath, we are still here for a reason. Our circumstances may change. Our strength may change. The way we serve may change. There may even be seasons where we feel confined by circumstances we never would have chosen. But confinement does not cancel calling. Paul could be chained and still minister. He could be imprisoned and still pray. He could face uncertainty and still strengthen others. He says that his continuing with them would be *"for the sake of your progress and joy in the faith,"* so that their confidence in Messiah Yeshua would overflow (Phil. 1:25–26). That is the question of a surrendered life: **Lord, if You are keeping me here, who can I strengthen? Who can I pray for? Who can I point toward Yeshua? What fruit do You still want to produce through my life?**

CONCLUSION

The Master Artist sees the big picture. We do not. With our limited human perspective, we can become consumed by whatever is directly in front of us. Circumstances overwhelm us. People come against us. Fear begins shaping our decisions. We stare at the prison walls and forget that God is still working beyond them. But Paul lifts his eyes above the pressure of the immediate and sees his life from the perspective of eternity. His salvation does not depend upon the verdict of Rome. His purpose does not disappear because he is chained. His joy does not depend upon getting the outcome he prefers. *"For to me, to live is Messiah and to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:21). What can the world ultimately threaten when both possibilities belong to Yeshua?

Maybe that is where the Lord is calling some of us today—to that place of surrender. We have been asking Him to guarantee a particular outcome before we will have peace. We have been holding tightly to our plans, our security, our reputation, perhaps even our lives, because we are viewing everything through the pressure of the immediate. Bring that fear to Him. Bring Him the circumstance you cannot control. Bring Him the future you cannot see. And say, “Lord, whether through life or through death, whether through freedom or confinement, whether through what I wanted or something I never expected, let Messiah be magnified in me. If You give me another day, that day belongs to You. If You keep me here, use me for the progress and joy of others. My life is Yours.” When Yeshua truly becomes our life, even the things we fear losing their power over us. **To live is Messiah. To die is gain. In Him, we cannot lose.**

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In Phil. 1:19–20, why is Paul’s understanding of “deliverance” or salvation larger than simply being released from prison?
2. What does Paul mean when he says, *“For to me, to live is Messiah and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21)? How does Phil. 3:7–8 help us understand what Paul considers true “gain”?
3. Paul’s “eager expectation” was focused on one thing: that Messiah would be magnified in him. What tends to capture your attention when your future feels uncertain?
4. Is there a circumstance in your life right now where you have been asking God primarily to change the outcome? How might your prayer change if your first desire became, “Lord, magnify Yeshua in me through this”?
5. Paul believed that if the Lord allowed him to remain, it was for the progress and joy of others. As long as God gives you breath, who might He be calling you to pray for, encourage, disciple, serve, or point toward Yeshua?

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord, give us a perspective that sees above the pressures of the immediate. Give us ears to hear Your voice and eyes to see our circumstances from Your perspective. Strengthen us in whatever pressures we face, no matter how uncertain or overwhelming they may seem. Give us a joy that rises above the present circumstance because our hope is settled in You.

Teach us to say with Paul, *“For to me, to live is Messiah and to die is gain.”* Let Yeshua be magnified in our bodies, in our choices, in our suffering, in our freedom, in our living, and one day even in our dying. As long as You give us breath, use us for the progress and joy of others. Deliver us from a “me first” perspective and make our lives wholly available to Your purposes. Lord, we love You, and we need You. Continue changing our hearts and minds more and more into the likeness of Yeshua.

B’Shem Yeshua, In the name of Yeshua, amen.