

Small Group Study Guide

Value What He's Doing

Philippians 1:18b-26

February 14, 2010

Leader's Notes

PLEASE NOTE: These "Leader's Notes" are a resource to the Small Group Leader to help you in preparing for this study. They are meant to be supplemental. You do not need to cover all the information in these notes with your group. They are simply provided as a resource to you.

Welcome and Introduction:

- Encourage group members to bring their study guide with them that they use on Sunday to take notes on the sermon, but also have extra copies available in case they forget.
- Open with prayer.

A Closer Look:

Take some time to read through Philippians 1:18b-26. The following notes are to help you better understand the passages you will be looking at in this study.

Notes from *ESV Study Bible on Philippians 1:18b-26:*

Phil. 1:19–26 To Live Is Christ. Paul expresses the grounds of his confidence that he will be released from prison. He assures the Philippians that he believes he will remain alive to minister to them.

Phil. 1:19 Paul, who has prayed for the Philippians, now solicits their **prayers** for **deliverance** (Gk. *sōtēria*), a term that could mean deliverance from prison (as some commentators understand it) or that could mean deliverance in the ultimate sense of eternal salvation (as others understand it). It seems likely that Paul intentionally left some ambiguity here, in light of the mention of his imprisonment in the preceding verses (see vv. 12–14) and in light of the eternal focus in the verses that follow (e.g., Paul's desire "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"; v. 23). The tension between temporal deliverance and eternal salvation is, in fact, evident throughout this passage (vv. 19–26), as evidenced by Paul's words: "whether by life or by death" (in v. 20) and "I am hard pressed between the two" (in v. 23). Although Paul seems to have alluded to his temporal

deliverance, clearly his longing for eternal salvation is “far better” (v. 23). In this regard, Paul alludes to Job 13:13–18 in this passage, where Job clearly speaks of his final destiny; and Paul speaks of his hope of not being ashamed, which is elsewhere related to the final judgment (cf. Rom. 5:4–5). Either way, Paul wants the Philippians to know that even if his expected deliverance from prison fails to materialize, and he is executed, he will still be “saved” to eternal life by God.

Phil. 1:20 The crucial thing for Paul is not **life** or death. It is maintaining his faithful witness to Christ. **Or by death** indicates that Paul hopes to honor Christ even in the way he eventually dies.

Phil. 1:21 Paul's life is not a matter of seeking his own comfort or advancement. It is all about seeking the advancement of Christ's kingdom: **to live** is tantamount to serving **Christ**. In fact, **to die** should be seen as **gain**, because it would mean that Paul would be freed from his trouble-filled life on earth to rejoice in Christ's presence.

Phil. 1:22–26 In light of v. 21, Paul is **hard pressed** as to which outcome he should desire. Being with Christ now would be more attractive for him, while remaining alive (**in the flesh**) would enable him to help the Philippians further on their own spiritual journey. Since Paul knows that the way of Jesus is the way of service (cf. 2:5–11), he is **convinced** that his own preferences will be put aside so that he can **remain and continue** with the Philippians for their **progress and joy in the faith**. Paul is not merely musing on his own crisis; he is giving the Philippians a model of the service-driven life.

Phil. 1:23 **My desire is to depart and be with Christ** indicates that when Christians die they are immediately with Christ, long before their bodies are raised from the dead (see note on 1 Cor. 15:23).