

15 June 2026
THE LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS
"Everything for the Gospel!"

Phil. 1:21-30

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear omen to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict which you saw and now hear to be mine.

The apostle senses that the moment of his departure into eternity is drawing near. He is well aware of the persecutions he faces for preaching the Gospel and knows that even more await him. In fact, he had to endure them from the moment of his conversion, since for some Jews it was unbearable that he—known as a fervent defender of the Law—had become, in their view, a dangerous traitor and agitator. However, the heralds of the Gospel must be willing to bear such crosses. And this did not apply only to that era, but has been true throughout the entire history of mission up to the present day.

At the beginning of today's passage, we hear this very significant phrase: "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." Paul's conscience is clear. His life is the Lord! He seeks nothing else, and for that reason, he considers death a gain. To him, dying means returning home and being with His beloved Lord forever after completing his ministry. If he could choose, why would he remain on earth? How much better it would be to be with Christ!

Once again, we are granted a glimpse into the apostle's heart, ablaze with love. He loves his community. If his presence can still be useful and he can continue to strengthen his brothers and win more people to the Gospel through his ministry, then he is willing to wait and endure the hardships of earthly life.

Paul exhorts his own to lead a life worthy of the Gospel. The witness of their words must match the witness of their lives. This is not only consistent and lends full splendor to the proclamation of the Gospel, but it is a debt we owe to the people we wish to reach. How can they assimilate the message of faith if our lives tell a different story? Won't they be confused?

Saint Paul desires to see the community united in the Spirit. This unity is necessary for the common struggle for the Gospel!

With these words, the Apostle reminds us that, as believers, we are immersed in a battle of which we must always be aware. As long as we are on earth, this will be our reality day after day. It is not generally a desperate struggle for survival, but rather a state of utmost vigilance so as not to stray from the path of Christ and to maintain the necessary spiritual order to move forward.

St. Paul exhorts the community in Philippi to be courageous and not to be intimidated by anything. This exhortation is repeated time and again in Sacred Scripture. An attitude of fearlessness does not contradict the prudence necessary to deal with evil powers and those associated with them. However, it is contrary to discouragement. Those who have followed the series of meditations on Saint Joan of Arc will recall her courage in battle, which came from the gift of fortitude within her. Saint Paul refers to this very gift of the Holy Spirit, which can even impress adversaries. May they draw the right conclusions so as not to succumb to perdition!

On the one hand, we can ask God for this courage, but on the other, we must also train ourselves in it and not avoid uncomfortable situations or confrontations. Undoubtedly, it is sometimes prudent to withdraw, but not out of a fearful attitude of self-protection, which deprives us of the strength necessary to take our place in the fight for the Gospel. Courage and a spirit of strength must also be accompanied by the courage to suffer. We cannot enter the fray believing that we will not be wounded. Joan of Arc was wounded twice yet continued to fight. In today's passage, St. Paul speaks of the grace that enables us to suffer for Christ.

This is undoubtedly a difficult lesson in the spiritual life. It is normal and understandable that we do not want to suffer. Deep down, suffering remains foreign to us because we were not created for it. Rather, it came into the world as a consequence of sin. However, since this is our reality, we must learn to face it with the Spirit of Jesus. When we unite our suffering with His and endure it out of love for Him, it becomes a

great grace, and the Lord rewards us in this life and in eternity. The Apostle knows this. That is why he wishes to guide those entrusted to him toward this attitude and understanding.

Meditation on today's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/7817-2/>

Meditation on today's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/if-someone-harms-you-2/>