

A Conflict of Interest

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me.

Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two:

I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Philippians 1:21-24 (NIV)

In western society today there is a lot of talk about people having a conflict of interest. Politicians who own property and wish to sell it at a profit will sometimes try to have the government pass legislation that will greatly increase the value of their property.

Such a person uses their power in public office to further their private financial situation. This situation is seen as a conflict of interest. The person votes for action that enriches them possibly at the expense of the public good.

So when we speak of a conflict of interest it is usually in an evil context. But not all conflicts of interest are evil, and we recognize it in the conflict in Paul's heart as he pens the words of our text today.

Years earlier Paul had met Jesus while traveling toward Damascus, where he hoped to gain more opportunity to

persecute Christians (Acts 9:1-8). His life had been changed and he immediately went into three years of study concerning Jesus in a quiet place by himself (Galatians 1:15-18).

He emerged as a champion of the faith he had formerly opposed. Over the years he grew to love Jesus more and more so that his desire to leave this world and be with his Lord increased to a remarkably strong passion.

So strong was his desire for an exit of this life in order to be in heaven that God had to show him how important his mission in this life was for others. As Paul grew to understand just how significant his work here was, he was able to subdue his wish to die and be with Christ.

For those people who wish with all their hearts to see the Lord — and the sooner the better — they should look around at their situation and see why the Lord has

left them here. You may not see the blessing you are to others unless you look carefully. That was Paul's reason for being willing to stay here and it can be yours.

It is a fact that Jesus wants His people with Him. We have it on record that He prays for His people to soon be reunited with Him (John 17:24). In Revelation 22:20 we read that Jesus' followers call on Him to come and to come quickly.

In the midst of your sorrow, seek to be a blessing to those around you as did Paul. Then pray for the Lord to come, and to come quickly. God's people have a joyful conflict of interest. Let us go on being conflicted in this manner until we finally see the One we love.

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