

ST. PAUL'S EARNEST DESIRE.

"For me to live is [to live] for Christ, and to die, gain. But if to live in the flesh, this is to me a fruit of labor; and what I should choose I do not exactly know. I am indeed hard pressed by the two things (I have an earnest desire for the returning and being with Christ, since it is very much to be preferred); but to remain in the flesh is more requisite on your account." – Phil. 1:21-24, *Diaglott translation*.

IT will be observed that the chief difference between the above and the common English version of this passage is the substitution of the word "return" for the word "depart." In justification of the use of the word "return" the translator in a footnote says: –

"To analusai, the loosing again or the returning, being what Paul earnestly desired, could not be death or dissolution, as implied by the word depart in the common version, because it seemed a matter of indifference to him, which of the two – life or death – he should choose; but he longed for the analusai, which was a third thing, and very much to be preferred to either of the other two things alluded to. The word analusai occurs in Luke 12:36, and is there rendered return; – 'Be you like men waiting for their master, when he will return,' etc. Jesus had taught his disciples that he would come again, or return, John 14:3,18; thus, also, the angels said to them at his ascension, Acts 1:11. Paul believed this doctrine and taught it to others, and was looking for and waiting for the Savior from heaven, Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 1:10; 4:16,17, when... he would 'ever be with the Lord.'"

An examination of the Greek word *analusai* shows that it is used in Greek literature by Plato in both ways – [R1827 : page 143] as signifying sometimes *depart* and sometimes *return*; but the word occurs only twice in the New Testament, here and in Luke 12:36. In the latter instance, as stated above, it is rendered "return," and

manifestly could not be otherwise rendered and preserve the sense. In the case we are discussing (Phil. 1:23), we hold that it should be rendered *return*, for the very simple reason that, even when used to signify *depart*, it must carry with it the thought of depart *again*, to depart to a place where one had previously been. The Greek prefix *ana* in *ana-lusai* signifies *again* as our prefix *re* in *return* signifies *again*. Hence, if rendered *depart*, we would be obliged to add the thought *re-depart* or depart *again*. And this would spoil the matter as related to St. Paul; for he had never been with Christ in glory, and hence could not "depart *again*" to be with Christ there. But when we translate *analousai* "*re*-turning," and apply it to our Lord, every difficulty seems to be removed.

Let us note the circumstances which gave rise to the expression. The Apostle had been for some time a prisoner at Rome, and while at times well treated by some of the Emperors, he was constantly liable to be put to death on some caprice. He wrote this Epistle in acknowledgment of a substantial gift from the Church at Philippi, and took the opportunity to tell them fully of his own condition, the progress of the Lord's work, etc., and to encourage them to steadfastness to the end.

Since they would like to know his prospects for release, he tells them that enemies (seeing his liberty for two years, Acts 28:30) were explaining Christianity, hoping thereby to add affliction and perhaps death to his bonds. (Phil. 1:16-19.) But he realized the prayers of the Church on his behalf and expected that his trial before Nero would result in his deliverance, – his acquittal, or his sentence to death. Then he tells them that as to his *own* preferences it would be difficult for him to choose between life (with its sufferings) and death (with its rest from toil); but while he had no choice as between these two things possible, he had a longing, an intense desire for a thing he well knew was impossible, a thing which he knew, and had taught the Church, was a long way off (2 Thes. 2:1-8) – the *returning* of Christ and being with him. Then, leaving the impossible and returning to the possibilities, he

assures them that he has a conviction that God has a work for him yet to do for the Church, and that he would be released. And although the Scriptures give no account of it, tradition declares that he was acquitted by Nero and had some five years of liberty and service before being rearrested and executed.

It is worthy of note here that several other words are repeatedly used in the writings of both Paul and Luke when *depart* is manifestly meant. And it should be remembered that Luke was the Apostle's amanuensis, who traveled much with him and was accustomed to use words in the same sense.

But if any yet contend for the word "depart," rather than "return," we submit the following.

No doubt Paul would have desired, especially in view of his knowledge that the Lord's second coming could not occur soon, that he might depart to heaven or anywhere else in order to be with the Lord at once. But he knew that such a desire could not be granted in harmony with the divine plan, and hence, although it would have been his earnest desire, it did not enter into consideration as one of the possible things: he was still left in a strait of indecision as to his own preference of the two possible things – to live and serve the Church in suffering, or to die and rest from his labors – waiting "for that blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."
