

Two Valuable Servants of Christ

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Preacher: Jon Hueni

[0:00] Philippians chapter 2 and we'll begin reading in verse 14 and read through the end of the chapter. You follow along as I read. Philippians chapter 2 starting at verse 14. Do everything without complaining or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing.

But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.

For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself because as a son with his father, he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

[1:32] For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed, he was ill and almost died. But God had mercy on him and not on him only, but also on me to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him so that when you see him again, you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor men like him because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the need you could not give.

Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor men like him.

One of the outward appearances Samuel when he went to anoint a new king for Israel. He's got to be a big shot in the world's eyes. Maybe a professional athlete would turn some necks to listen to the gospel message.

Maybe a converted movie star, a successful millionaire, someone who's made it in the business world. someone that the world would be impressed with.

[3:07] Someone with educational credentials, with great giftedness of speech. Someone with a pleasing appearance or a confident personality.

And though all these things are not to be despised, they certainly are not the answer, are they? And the church's apparent lack of power in our own age reveals that we need to be taught all over again what makes a man useful, what makes a man valuable, what makes a servant of Christ a useful tool in the hands of the Master.

We'll see the answer that Paul gives in our text this morning. Paul was in prison at Rome. He's awaiting trial under the Emperor Nero.

Ten years earlier, he planted a church in Philippi. And news had made it all the way back to them, some 800 miles away, that their beloved apostle was now in prison, awaiting trial.

And they wanted to help. And so they sent a gift, and one of their members, to carry that gift, and then himself to be a help in ministering to whatever needs Paul had while in prison.

[4:25] His name was Epaphroditus. He may have been one of the pastors in the church. He was definitely one that the whole church chose to represent them in taking this gift to Paul.

And so he made his way the 800-mile journey and delivered the gift and was there to serve Paul in his need. But now Paul's sending him back to Philippi.

And he's probably sending this letter that we're reading with him, a letter that's full of exhortations to unity. And we've come in that letter to the part of the letter where Paul is explaining his threefold plan with regard to the church at Philippi.

Here he is in prison, and the great heart of the apostle is thinking about the churches. He carried that constant care of the churches, and he's thinking about the church where Epaphroditus has come from, the church at Philippi.

And he's got a threefold plan with regard to them. First of all, he says, I hope to send Timothy to you soon. And then soon after that, I hope myself to come to you, trusting that the Lord will deliver me from this prison.

[5:39] But first, I've sent Epaphroditus back to you. So there's his threefold plan. Timothy is coming soon, and I hope in the Lord that soon after that, I myself will come, but before either one of us, Epaphroditus has been sent back to you.

And now he's explaining his reasons for doing it that way, for deciding to handle this in this manner. And in the process of explaining why he has done this, we once again see the heart of this apostle, and we also get to meet two incredible fellow workers of Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus, both well known to the Philippians.

And in describing them, he gives us insight into why they were so valuable to the work of Christ. And in that description, we're going to be able to learn afresh this morning what would make us valuable servants of Christ to his church, to his cause, to his kingdom.

So then let's meet these two men. The first one's Timothy. Verse 19, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon. Well, how soon, Paul?

Verse 23, I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. You see, I'm going to wait to dispatch this messenger Timothy until I know what the verdict is for me.

[7:15] Will I be condemned to execution or will I be acquitted? I'm going to wait until that verdict is given and then I'll send Timothy with the news so that you'll understand how it's going with me and what the upshot of my trial is.

But I'm also sending him, he says in verse 19, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. You see, I'm wanting him to come and see how you're doing, not just to bring you news about me and my trial, but I am also sending him to see how you're doing and to bring back a report from you to me.

And Paul has a special interest to know how these instructions that he's sending in this letter will be received. Did they receive the instructions? Was the breach in the unity patched?

Was it fixed? Did they learn to live in humility and esteem one another better than themselves? How did they handle these exhortations? And he tells them the kind of news he's expecting to hear.

When he says that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you, he's expecting a good report, isn't he? A cheering report. A report that will make him glad.

[8:36] It's a roundabout way of the apostle saying, I'm going to send Timothy and oh, please don't disappoint me with the report he brings back from you concerning the unity of the body.

And in this regard, Paul is just like the apostle John in his third epistle, verse four, when he said, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.

Here's the holy apostle in prison and what's the heartbeat of the man? It's oh, I want to hear that you're walking in the truth. And I'll tell you a secret. There is no greater joy to your pastors than to hear and see you walking in the truth.

You know, there's a certain joy in seeing you attentive to the truth. You're here when the truth is being preached. You're not sleeping. You're attentive.

There's a certain joy, but that's not the greatest joy. The greatest joy is to see you walking in the truth, putting your feet down in the commandments of God, that the truth is guiding your life.

[9:50] It's ordering your steps. You're not just listening to sermons about, well, you really shouldn't complain and argue, but you are really walking in the truth. You are doing everything without complaining or arguing.

There is no joy like the joy of seeing you walk in the truth. And that's what Timothy, or Paul, wants to hear.

That's why he's sending Timothy. He wants to get a good report back that they have attended to his words of exhortation. So Timothy's trip and visit to them is kind of a follow-up to the letter that we're reading.

They were going to get the letter first by way of Epaphroditus, and then later Timothy would come and see how they're doing. There's a follow-up to the letter, in other words. He wants more than knowledge in their heads.

He wants to see them walking in the truth. That's one reason why on Wednesday nights we pray over the word that we heard on the Lord's Day. We're not satisfied just to have heard the word.

[10:57] We want to be doers of this word. So Lord, come and give us grace to walk in the way that we've just heard. Well, there's this holy anxiousness, then, in the part of your ministers and your teachers to see you walking in the truth.

Now, Timothy, then, is set before us. He's already been mentioned in the opening lines of this letter. Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus.

He's there in Rome with Paul at this time, and this letter comes from him in association with Paul. He was well known to the Philippian saints.

Ten years earlier, when Paul was making his second missionary journey, before coming to Philippi, he stopped in Lystra, and there he found this Christian named Timothy. His mother was a Jewish and a believer.

His father was a Greek. And it appears that his father was not a believer. But his mother and grandmother had done a good job teaching him the Holy Scriptures, and he had become wise unto salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

[12:07] And all the brethren around Lystra spoke well of Timothy. So when Paul comes to town, he hears about this Timothy. He sees him. He meets him. And he hears all that people are saying about him.

He says, he would do me good as a co-labor. And he takes him with him. And it's not long before they come to Philippi, where the gospel was brought to that people, and there by the river where Lydia and a few other women were met to pray, the gospel came and penetrated, and then the jailers hearted.

You see, Timothy was there. We don't read of him being in prison with Paul. It was Silas that was in prison, but he was there with him as the account records. So they knew this Timothy.

And he had returned at least on two other occasions to Philippi, so he was no stranger there. Now as Paul speaks of Timothy, he heaps the highest commendation on him.

I don't know that you could have a higher word for a man than what Paul puts on this man. I have no one else like him.

[13:20] Now that's Paul the apostle. I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

And at once we see how valuable Timothy is to Paul. He had none like him.

He stood apart from the rest. We speak of a breed apart. There's no equal to him. And what is it that separated him from the rest? It's not his formal education.

It's not his great giftedness as a speaker. It's not his flamboyant personality. We rather find that he's quite timid and backward. Rather, the thing that separated Timothy from the rest of the pack was his genuine interest in others.

Genuine interest in others. And here Paul is putting his finger on the character trait that made Timothy so valuable to him and to the churches of Jesus Christ.

[14:23] His genuine interest in others. Some people pretend to be interested in you. And it's pretense. It's a show. But with Timothy, there was nothing pretend about him.

He really cares for you, Philippians, Paul's writing. A genuine interest in your welfare. And you know, without that, you can have all the education, the giftedness, the personality.

And you will not be of much use at all to the church of Jesus Christ if you have no genuine interest in others.

Now that's the problem with the pack, Paul says. Everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. There's some self-denying work of the Lord waiting to be done.

It's needing to be done. But it's not being done. Why? Is it because people don't have the qualifications? They don't have the skills.

[15 : 30] They don't have the ability. No, no, it's not that at all. Well, why is the work not getting done? Why is the service not being completed? Well, everyone's consulting their own ease.

They're concerned about their own safety, their own health, their own comfort, their own reputation, and their own things. Selfish things are trumping Christ's things.

What a sad commentary on human nature. Now, some entirely live for self, don't they? But we are not immune to this.

What is it that so often gets in the way of true Christian service? What renders us useless to the kingdom of Christ and to others? Why was that person not visited? Why was she not sent a card? Why did she not receive an encouraging telephone call? Why was that good deed left undone? Why was that area of Christian service vacant? Why was there no one to do it?

[16 : 39] And we have to confess often that it's simply that we were too busy with our things to give ourselves to Jesus' things.

And what are Jesus' things? What are the interests of Jesus Christ? For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Notice the text. What does Paul put his finger on as to the specific interests of Jesus Christ in our text? If you compare verse 20 and verse 21, you find that it is the welfare of his church.

For he says of Timothy in verse 20, I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interest, not your welfare, which he now calls the interests of Christ, of Jesus Christ.

The interests of Jesus Christ are with his church and her welfare. Now that should not surprise us. She is the apple of his eye.

[17 : 49] She is his beloved bride. She is his blood-bought purchase. A few weeks ago, Abdi Ibrahim was here and we talked of what a Somali has to give to buy a bride in that culture.

And we heard all the things that had to be given. Jesus purchases his bride with his own blood. He so loves her. She is so precious to him.

And that is to motivate our genuine interest in the church of Jesus Christ. Is the church so precious to Jesus? Then it must be precious to me.

I love thy kingdom, Lord, the house of thine abode, the church, our blessed Redeemer, saved with his own precious blood.

I love thy church, O God, her walls before thee stand, dear as the apple of thine eye, engraven on thy hand. For her my tears shall fall, for her my prayers ascend.

[18 : 59] To her my cares and toils be given, till toils and cares shall end. To the church of Jesus Christ. She's precious to Christ. She must be precious to me as well.

Beyond my highest joy, I prize her heavenly ways. Her sweet communion, solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise.

Timothy Dwight. Do you know that your interest in the things of Christ is measured in no small part by your interest in his church?

Your interest in his church. So I must ask you this morning, what place does the church of Christ have in your interest? How are you serving the body of Christ? You may have all the abilities needed for some service, but the thing that shuts down your service to Christ is right here, your own interests.

What are your interests? We asked, what are Christ's interests? Well, what are your interests?

Check your checkbook and your day timer. Because how you spend your money and your time will reveal where your interests are.

[20 : 19] Oh, we can watch ball games by the hours, can't we? And we're actually excited when it goes into overtime. We get to watch longer. But, what do we have for the church of Christ?

What do we have by way of interest in the bride of Christ? Your interests are a great revealer of your heart.

And this passage and this description of Timothy is a call for us to bring our interests into line with Christ's interests. And if we do, His church will figure largely into our lives.

The advancement of His gospel. Your own holiness and purity. We're told to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Make that number one priority.

Above your own interests. And as you do, what does God promise? He promises to make your interests His concern. It's to show in our praying.

[21:23] How do we pray? Give me, give me, give me, give me. I need, I need, I need, I need. Just me? Or Thy will be done?

Thy kingdom come. Am I praying for my kingdom or His? My will or His? His church. An interest in it is to be seen in our prayer life.

And so much more could be done for the cause of Christ and His church if we were just not so preoccupied with our own interests. And of course, we expect the world to be given over just to chasing after their own interests.

But what the Apostle Paul is saying is he found too much of it even in the church of Jesus Christ. Even among those so-called servants of Christ. Remember what Paul said in chapter 1.

He's already talked about those who preach Christ from selfish motives. Wow. There are people in the pulpit who are there because of their own selfish ambitions.

[22:33] They're looking out for their own interests. out of all the pack presently in Rome as Paul's writing Timothy alone Timothy alone had such a genuine concern in Christ's church at Philippi that he forgot his own selfish concerns out of a genuine concern for them.

He's the man. A rare man indeed. I have none like him. You can see why his usefulness to the kingdom of God soars because of such a genuine self-denying interest in others.

Now think of the task that's being asked to be fulfilled here. What was the job that needed to be done? What's the work of the Lord that needs to be done, Paul? Well, I need somebody to undertake a tiring 800-mile journey back to Philippi.

There's no trains, planes, and automobiles. There's just a tiring months of walking or riding. It's not an easy trip.

And then when you finally get there, you have the unenviable task of sorting out a quarreling congregation. Any takers? Any volunteers? It held out absolutely nothing for personal gain.

[24:01] There was nothing in the job description pleasing to the flesh. And that's why Timothy is just the man. Because his genuine interest is in the welfare of the Philippian church.

And it made him forgetful of himself and of the cost to himself. That does not matter. What matters is the church of Jesus Christ. I have no man like him.

Can you hear something of an echo of what Paul wrote earlier in this letter? Chapter 2 and verses 3 and 4.

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

I have no one like him who genuinely concerned for your welfare. Everyone else is too busy looking after their own interests, not the interests of Christ.

[25:03] You see, Paul's not done with that theme, is he? He set that forth in chapter 2 verses 3 and 4. Then he sets before us Jesus Christ and shows us how he was of that sort and now he comes back to it once more.

He says, here's Timothy. He's the same kind of man. And that's what makes him so useful in the kingdom of Christ. Now Timothy then is the exception to the all too common rule.

And you Philippians, he says, know it. Verse 22, you know that Timothy's proved himself because as a son with his father he served with me in the work of the gospel.

Timothy, from other places we see, perhaps was younger than most or at least some ministers, but he was by no means a novice, Paul says. He'd been serving with Paul in the work of the gospel, serving right alongside of him as a son with the father, with the son's devotion to him and to the work.

His heart was in it. It was genuine interest. And he'd been tried and tested and passed the test. That's the word here for proven. Timothy has proved himself.

[26:18] He's like metal that's been through the furnace to try it and to see whether it's genuine. And he's come through the furnace. Timothy's been right there with me in my travels.

He's the real thing and his concern is genuine for you. So he's perfectly suited for the job. And Paul says, I hope to send him just as soon as I know the outcome of my trial.

And after that, I hope myself to come, but first, he says, I'm sending Epaphroditus back to you. You ready to meet the second valuable servant of the Lord in this passage?

It's Epaphroditus. Now the plan of the church at Philippi seems to have been for Epaphroditus not only to have delivered the money, but to have stayed with Paul as long as he was in prison, as long

as he was in need.

But now, here comes Epaphroditus back into town. And he comes to the church service and the folks are all gathering around him and asking him, well, how's Paul doing? And he says, oh, he's still in prison.

[27 : 26] He's still waiting for the outcome. What? And some of those who were given to complaining and arguing might very well have said, well, what are you doing back here then?

They might have criticized him and said, we sent you there to minister to him. And you mean you've just left him? He's in prison and you came back? What's the matter with you? Paul seems to anticipate that Epaphroditus is going to catch some heat for returning so soon.

So in this letter that he sends back with him, he explains to the Philippians why Epaphroditus is returning earlier than planned. It's sort of trying to pave the way for him to smooth out any difficulties.

And Paul's saying to the Philippians, don't think your mission to me has failed. Don't criticize Epaphroditus. He's not deserting his duty. He hasn't left me in the lurch. He's returning because I am sending him back to you.

He's returning because I thought it was necessary, even urgent, to send him back to you. Verse 25, But I think it is necessary to send back to you, Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier who is also your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs.

[28 : 48] And so his value is seen both to Paul and to the church at Philippi. His value is seen, his value to Paul is seen in all that he was to Paul.

Paul says, he's my brother, my bro. He's one with me. He shares the same family love. He's valuable to me as a brother.

But more than that, he's also my fellow worker. He shares in the same work with me. And he's also my fellow soldier. He shares in the same hardships of the battle with me.

He's in the trenches with me, this man of Epaphroditus. He's enduring hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, side by side with Paul, identifying with him in prison.

You see, Paul wasn't sending him back because he was useless to him. Far otherwise, he was very valuable to him as a brother, fellow laborer, and fellow soldier. He's all that to Paul and to the Philippians.

[29 : 55] Well, he was your messenger, your apostle, your sent one, your representative to come to me and to act on your behalf in meeting my needs. This is one useful servant of Christ.

Well, if he's so useful, Paul, why are you sending him back early? Paul anticipates their question when he says, well, it's for his sake, it's for your sake, and it's for my sake.

First, he says, it's for his sake that I'm sending him back. Verse 26, for he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

He longs. He has a strong desire, a yearning, a pining to see you. And here again, some commentators say he may have been their pastor, one of the pastors there, and his heart is with his people and he wants to be with them and he has this strong desire to be with them.

And that is multiplied by his distressful state. He is distressed. The word speaks of an inward turbulence like a storm inside of him.

[31 : 04] He's feeling troubled, he's heavy in heart. It's the same words that's used of our saviors. He came into the garden of Gethsemane and the Bible says that he began to be deeply distressed and troubled.

That's the word here. I'm sending him back for his sake because he longs after you and he was distressed. And what was it that distressed and troubled Epaphroditus?

Well, it was that the folks back home at Philippi had heard that he had been ill. They had heard that he had been ill. And Paul goes on to say in verse 27, indeed he was ill and almost died.

But God had mercy on him and not on him only but also on me to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. How many of you have ever been ill? Well, now come on.

We all have, haven't we? How many of you have got better? Well, I see you have. You've all recovered, haven't you? Do you know that every time you recovered from an illness, it was a mercy of God?

[32 : 17] Indeed, he was ill but God had mercy on him. And we sometimes think we deserve to be healthy.

The wages of sin is death and death is at work in our bodies. And if we got what we deserved, every illness would take us to our grave. So the next time you're sick and you recover, regard it as a mercy, an undeserved favor.

God has restored you to health to give you more time on his earth to glorify him. How many of you have had loved ones who have been very sick and have recovered?

When that happens, it is a great mercy. That's what Paul's saying. It was not only a mercy for him to recover, it was a mercy for me so that I be spared from sorrow upon sorrow.

Paul would have been heartbroken had Epaphroditus died in the service of him as he's serving Christ.

[33 : 36] So when our loved ones recover from an illness, it's a mercy of God to us. So here we are in health. We've all received mercies, haven't we?

Either ourselves who've recovered from illnesses or loved ones. And the mercies of God are meant to bring you to repentance, my friend. And to bring you low in recognition of this God of such mercy. So Epaphroditus didn't like to think that the folks back home were still worrying about him now that he is better. Think about that.

He had been near to death, now he's better. But there's no email, there's no phone calls, and so they're still back there biting their nails and praying and worried about their beloved Epaphroditus. And just knowing that they were distressed made him distressed. It shows the heart of genuine interest in this man too. He's just like Timothy, isn't he?

[34 : 39] Genuine interest in the folks at Philippi that their distress becomes his. He doesn't want to cause them distress. And so he's longing to see them and to put them at ease by coming home and saying, look, I'm better.

God has had mercy on me. So this man, Epaphroditus, will only feel better when they know he's better and can see that he is well. Therefore, I am all the more eager to send him, you see, for his sake.

But not only for his sake, for your sake, he says, so that when you see him again, you may be glad. He was intensely valuable to Paul at Rome. We can only imagine Paul a prisoner.

How valuable would it be to have Epaphroditus there at his beck and call? But more valuable than the services that Epaphroditus could give to him in the heart of Paul, more valuable than that was that the folks back home be relieved from their distress.

And so I'm sending him back, all the more eager to send him back, so that when you see him again, you may be glad. That's chapter 2, verse 4 in action.

[35 : 53] Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. If Paul looked to his own interests, he'd say, stay here, Epaphroditus, help me. It doesn't matter what they're suffering at home. But instead he says, I'm considering their interests above my own.

Go back. And I'll rejoice when I see that they are rejoicing. So, it's for their sake. And then lastly, it's for his sake, Epaphroditus' sake, for the Philippians' sake, your sake, and lastly, for my sake.

So that when you see him again, you may be glad, and I may have the less anxiety. I too, Paul says, will feel better knowing he's back at home safely, and that you all have had a wonderful reunion, and you're no longer distressed.

And knowing that you're no longer distressed, I too will rejoice and be glad with you. He's rejoicing with those who rejoice. And for this reason, Paul is all the more eager to send Epaphroditus back, even though he's still in prison and could profit from his services.

And so he says, as I'm sending him back, welcome him and honor him. Don't criticize him, but welcome him and honor him.

[37 : 12] Verse 29, welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor men like him. Welcome him as the Lord himself would welcome him. Or welcome him as you would welcome the Lord with great joy and honor him.

Honor him. Honor men like him. Hold them in high regard, he's saying. Count them as precious and valuable. There's our word again, valuable. What makes a man valuable? What makes a man worthy of honor?

What makes them precious to the church and to the kingdom of Christ? Why should we welcome and honor him? Because he almost died for the work of Christ. Risking his life to make up for the help you couldn't give me.

Anything that you would have liked to have done but couldn't do because of your absence, he made up by coming and doing it for you in your place. So welcome him.

Honor him. Because he almost died in the work of the Lord. He risked his life to make up for the help you couldn't give me. It's risky business to be hanging out with Paul who is possibly to be condemned and beheaded.

[38 : 29] But he risked his life to minister to him. Now the word there for risking is the same word for gambling. A gambler takes certain risk in hope of gain.

There were groups of laymen in the early church who risked their lives by caring for victims of the plague and giving them a decent burial after their death. No one wanted to come close to people who were struck with the plague.

But this society of Christians would come and minister to them in their illness. And after they had died, instead of just throwing them out into a heap, they would give them a decent burial.

And they were called the gamblers. The gamblers. It's the same word that's found here. Risking his life. Risking his life.

Gambling his life. Here's Epaphroditus. And we ask him, Epaphroditus, what are you betting? What are you betting on it? And he says, my life. I am willing to risk my life in the service of Christ.

[39 : 39] Putting his interest, the interest of Christ above his own. He's not the only one who risked his life for Christ. Romans 16.4, Greet Priscilla and Aquila, husband and wife, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

They risked their lives. They gambled their lives for me. Not only I, but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them. And Paul himself was a gambler, wasn't he?

He did not count his own life worth anything to him. If only he may finish the course, complete the task that the Lord gave to him, testifying to the gospel of the grace of God.

So they're willing to bet it all on Christ. If serving Christ is a failure, then you'll have to mark me as a loser because I'm putting all my chips on him. I'm putting myself on him.

I am willing to serve him with everything that I am, everything that I have. I am following one that I have never seen. And I'm following a way that leads to a world that I've never seen.

[40 : 55] But I'm risking my life that it's the truth. I'm believing it's true. And I'm willing to risk my life on that reality.

And if Jesus is not real, well then I lose out on having lived a life for my own interests. But if he is real, then you, my friend, without Christ have lost everything. As you wake up too late to find you've lived for the wrong world, you've lived for the wrong person, nothing here is abiding, nothing here will keep.

Isn't that what Jesus says? That some people think it's too risky to give their life for something they can't see. The way of salvation is by faith.

You've got to venture on him. You've got to step out and risk it all on him. But some people say, I don't want to lose my life. And so they hang on to it. And those who will not lose their life find out in the end that they really do lose it.

For what will it profit a man if he gained the whole world? By hanging on to his life, if he could gain the whole world, if seeking his own selfish interest, he could get a whole world, what would it profit if he loses his own soul in the process?

[42 : 14] And so our easygoing, popular Christianity that makes no demands of discipleship and our own flesh that's all too happy for such a version of Christianity, we come to a passage like this where we see these fellows who risk their lives for the work of Christ.

It's like ice water in the face. It ought to wake us up. Because the only true Christianity there is is the religion of the cross.

It's discipleship to the crucified one who says, I'm on my way to Jerusalem, men, and if you're following after me, you're going to need to deny yourself and you're going to need a cross of your own.

come and follow me. It's willing to lose my life to follow the Savior. But none, whoever risked their lives for Christ will ever be disappointed.

Whoever believes in me will never be put to shame. For we're not following our own pipe dream, we're not following the world's ideas, we're following the Son of God.

[43 : 22] So what do we find? We find Epaphroditus bears the marks of his master, doesn't he? Not only risked his life, but laid down his life for us.

His life, given for ours. Christ, not seeking his own interests, but ours. And as he hangs there on the cross, they said he saved others, but he can't save himself.

And we would have to say, I'm sorry, friend, you've got it wrong. The reason he's not saving himself is that he might save others. Because he's not seeking his own interests, but yours.

And I have no one like Timothy who has a genuine interest in others, because everyone seeks his own interests, not the things of Jesus Christ.

You see the pattern of these two men, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. It's not coincidence that they fit the mold of the whole chapter, chapter two, of men who aren't concerned about their own interests, but the interests of others.

[44 : 34] Who are not out to see and make a name for themselves and gain something for themselves, but selflessly forgetting themselves to minister. it's not a coincidence that Jesus Christ is the prime example.

And these are other examples who have the same spirit of Christ. They were drinking deeply of the same well, of the gospel, of salvation.

They were walking near to Jesus. They bore the marks of the master. Their lives and character were stamped by him. And the likenesses can't be missed.

The same attitudes of humility and selfless interest in others found in them that was found in Jesus Christ.

That's what made them so valuable. That's why they were to be honored. That's why Paul says, I have none like them. And we come back to where we started. What makes a man useful in the work of Christ?

[45 : 32] What makes you a valuable servant to the church of Jesus Christ? Well, it's likeness to Jesus. Our usefulness in the work of Christ is no greater than our likeness to Jesus Christ on this same score of having a genuine interest in others, in his church, and in being willing to risk our lives, willing to lose our own interests as we serve the interests of Christ.

May we draw near to our Savior and drink of His Spirit and so find the same usefulness marking our lives as was found in Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Let's pray together silently, each one bringing before the Lord our response to the word that we've heard. What specific course of action will you take this week to look out for the interests of Jesus Christ?

What changes need to take place to seek not your own interests but those of Jesus Christ and His church? Let's remember we have a gracious Savior who invites us to come to confess our sins and to receive from Him forgiveness and grace.

let's pray quietly. Let's pray quietly. Our blessed Lord we thank you that you are the perfect example of everything that we've read this morning and you are the one who humbled yourself and esteemed our interest above your own.

[47 : 22] We thank you though that we've also seen that same image stamped in the likeness of Timothy and Epaphroditus it tells us that there are men who were born sinners who can also bear the likeness of the Redeemer and it causes us to take hope.

Come and wash us and forgive us our sins that we too have been too busy seeking our own interests to not give ourselves to the interests of you our Lord Jesus.

draw us near to you that your interests would become our interests Lord we can pretend to have genuine interests but only you can put that earnest care in our hearts for others that is real and so we come we have no strength of our own we can't push a button and have genuine interest in your cause and in other people but we do believe that you can work it in us by your mighty spirit so we ask you to do that do it for the good of the church make us all valuable useful servants to the church of Jesus Christ make us holy useful to the master we ask in his name Amen