

Two Humble, Christ-Like Men

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[0 : 0 0] Well, please take your Bibles, it continues to speak to us, turn to the New Testament book of Philippians. We're going to read two sections of Philippians chapter 2.

Pastor John has asked me to read the first eight verses, and then we're going to skip ahead to verse 19 and read the rest of the chapter. Philippians chapter 2, verse 1.

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 interest, but also to the interest of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing.

Taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

[1 : 4 0] Verse 19. 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 interest, 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.

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.

[2 : 5 5] 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 help you could not give me.

What makes a man or a woman valuable to the church of Jesus Christ? Too often the church today is looking on the outward appearances and thinks if only we had some more of the things that are impressive to the world, we could impact the world today.

If we just had more converted celebrities, more great giftedness or witty communicators or commanding, dazzling personalities and on and on goes the list.

But such thinking reveals that we have this need as Christianity in the 21st century to be clear on what it is that makes a person really valuable and useful to the church of Jesus Christ.

And in our text today, we meet two incredible fellow workers of the Apostle Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. And in describing them, Paul gives us insight into why they were so valuable to him and so useful in the church. So let's learn from them and what it is that would make us useful to the master prepared for every good work. Well, we remember that Paul's in prison in Rome awaiting trial from the emperor Nero. Ten years earlier, he had taken the gospel to Philippi and he had planted a church there.

[4 : 55] News had now come to them that Paul was in prison and so they wanted to help him and sent a financial gift and one of their own members, Epaphroditus, to deliver that gift and then to stay there and to be of whatever service he could be to Paul while he's in prison. Epaphroditus made the 800 mile journey, not on a quick flight like we do, but 800 mile journey to Rome and delivered the gift.

But now instead of keeping him there, Paul is sending him back to Philippi, probably bearing this very letter that we've been studying. The letter to the Philippians. A letter full of exhortations to unity.

For besides bringing a gift to Paul, Epaphroditus also brought news from back home in the church and all of its strife and disunity. And it raised such great concern in the apostle that he sent this letter back to them, addressing their unity problems with the strongest of appeals. Now, so far, Paul has exposed two deadly activities, complaining and arguing, two deadly attitudes, selfish ambition and vain pride.

That's the stuff that kills unity. And there's more to come in this letter. But then he he lifted up before their eyes and our eyes, the example of the humble son of God.

And how the Lord Jesus came from heaven's glory to minister to our greatest need. Considering others better than himself when the choice was to save us or save him, he he chose to save us.

[6 : 52] And looking to the interest of others, even at the sacrifice of his own rights and interests. And it's that humility. This self-sacrificing attitude.

There's absolutely essential if there's ever to be unity in any church. The divine example of God, the son is ever to be before us as we run this race of life, fixing our eyes on Jesus, seeing him with the eye of faith as he's presented to us in the scriptures, because it is as we behold the beauty and glory of Jesus Christ, as he's revealed in the scriptures that something amazing takes place in us, something supernatural for the spirit of the Lord who dwells in our hearts as believers.

The spirit is actively then transforming us into the same image of the one that we are seeing in scriptures. Working in us a willingness both to to will and to act just like he did.

Now, that's the wonder of wonders about a real Christian. The Puritan prayers, the Valley of Vision says in page 10, one of the prayers there to see deity in a creature.

The life of God in the souls of men speaking, acting, filling, shining through it. You see, to be like the son of God is a glorious thing.

[8 : 33] This is all our beauty, all our attractiveness as the church. I wonder if that pursuit has captured your heart. And filled your prayers and fired your endeavors.

To be like Jesus. This my song. In the home, in the church, in the throng. To be like Jesus all day long. I would be like Jesus.

Not something natural. Something supernatural. That the spirit of God in us is at work to produce as we behold the glory of God in the face of Christ.

But it is appeal for unity. Paul doesn't stop with the divine example of the son of God. He also sets before us two human examples. And I think there's real wisdom in that.

Of course there is. It's inspired by the Holy Spirit. The wise spirit. Of God. But you see, some might excuse themselves and say, well, I'm not God, so I can't be like Jesus in this way.

[9 : 42] Therefore, Paul gives two human examples. As if to say, this is not something too high for you, dear Christian. Oh, to be sure, left to yourself.

It's way too high for you. But you're not left to yourself. For God by his spirit now dwells in you. And as he'll say in the last chapter of this letter, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

So he gives us human examples that we might identify with the power of God in weak humanity. In those who are of the same like passions as we are.

And to know that there's nothing in them that is not available to me. The same sap of grace that filled Epaphroditus and Timothy is the same spirit that lives in me. And he's able to produce in me the same fruit of Christ-like attitudes and actions.

So let's learn from Timothy and Epaphroditus. What makes us useful, valuable servants of Christ to his church? First, Timothy. We look at Timothy in verses 19 to 24.

[10 : 56] Now, picture Paul there in prison. He's writing this letter to the Philippians. And even as he's writing, he's already thinking, I wonder how they're going to receive this admonition.

Will he obey? Will the divisions be healed? The unity restored? Or has my labor over them been in vain? So here in verse 19, from prison, right in the middle of his exhortations about unity, Paul writes, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

He's already planning for Timothy to follow the letter to Philippi sometime later. And yes, he'll bring you Philippians news about me, but I'm also waiting to hear back from him about you.

I'm hoping it's the kind of news that will cheer me. Hint, hint. Don't disappoint me. Don't ignore this letter.

You won't let me down, will you? No. No, because love always hopes. And so Paul is hoping to receive news back from the church in Philippi through Timothy.

[12 : 18] Paul, they listen. God has united them in Christ. Good news from Timothy about the ending of strife, the restoring of unity.

Bring me some cheer here in prison, he's saying through the lines. So sometime soon after you get this letter, when I see how things will go with me here, I hope to send Timothy to you.

And he's just the man to go. Well, why, Paul? Why is that? Why does Timothy have church at Philippi written on his forehead?

What is there about Timothy that makes him just the man to go to the church at Philippi on this mission? Well, first of all, he wasn't unknown to the church at Philippi. On Paul's second missionary journey, when Paul says, I want to go back and revisit all the churches where I preach.

And all those believers out there and strengthen the churches. He took with him Silas and they headed out and. They came to Lystra.

[13 : 29] He'd been to Lystra before and preach the gospel there. And we're told in Acts chapter 16, here a disciple named Timothy lived. His mother was a Jewess and a believer, but his father was a Greek.

And it appears to be an unbeliever. And all the brothers in the region spoke well of Timothy. So Paul took him along with him on the missionary journey.

And then the spirit of God broke into their itinerary of just revisiting places where he had already been and preached the gospel. And took Paul and his missionary team.

And guided them some 700 miles away to new territory in Europe. To the city of Philippi.

Named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. So Timothy was there in Philippi.

[14 : 30] When down by the riverside, the Lord opened up the heart of Lydia so that she responded to the gospel. And Timothy was there when that demon possessed slave woman was set free in the name of Jesus Christ.

And Timothy was there when his associates, Paul and Silas, were arrested and beaten. Thrown into the stocks in the inner prison.

Timothy was there in Philippi when the jailer was converted. And all his household. And all Lydia's household. And others were converted. He wasn't unknown, you see. Nor unloved by this church.

From the very beginning of hearing the gospel, Timothy was there. Evangelizing. Encouraging these new believers. But notice what else Paul can say about Timothy in verse 20.

I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. I want to say that again. Paul says, I have no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.

[15 : 42] Those are high marks from the apostle, aren't they? He had a lot of workers, fellow workers. But none who shared the level of Timothy's genuine interest in the welfare of the church at Philippi.

In that department, Timothy is in a class all by himself. That's what makes him the very best person to send to Philippi. A genuine interest in your welfare.

That means he excelled in love for that congregation of Christ's people. Because that's what love does. It takes a genuine interest in the welfare.

The well-being. The good. The joy. Of the loved one. Not merely a professed interest in their welfare. No. No, this was a genuine interest.

Many claimed to have love that is only love in word. But here's the rare jewel of genuine interest in them.

[16 : 49] Like a mother's interest in her own children. It's real. It's strong. It's genuine. And so Timothy was naturally, genuinely interested in the spiritual welfare of this church.

Now how could Paul say that? Well, he couldn't say it without convincing reasons to say that. He saw it from the very beginning when they first came to Philippi.

That Timothy was there evangelizing, encouraging these early believers in Philippi. He could tell that Timothy was all in. He's a man in his element.

Look at him as he moves around the lost in Philippi and then the saved in Philippi. The sincerity and degree of his loving interest in them stood out to Paul as something unique.

And then when Epaphroditus came to prison where Paul was. And he came with the report about the state of the church in Philippi and their problems there.

[17 : 49] Timothy was there with Paul to hear the report. You say, how do you know? Well, the first verse of this letter says Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ. They're sending this letter back to Philippi.

He was with Paul in Rome. When Epaphroditus came with the bad news about the troubles in the church. And Paul must have seen the intense interest with which Timothy listened as Epaphroditus told about the situation back home in Philippi.

We say that a man listens with three ears. That means he's all ears. And then after Epaphroditus finishes, he must have peppered him with questions.

I think back to a month ago when we were right here on Wednesday evening. Our brother Michael Yaney stood here and shared with us his ministry to the Japanese people.

And afterwards you all bombarded him with questions. One after another. Do you know what that spells? Interest. I-N-T-E-R-E-S-T.

[19 : 05] Interest. You were interested in what he was saying. You wanted to know more. You wanted explanation. You'd had a full day.

You had a job to do and tasks to get to the next day. But you showed your interest by asking questions. Timothy was there when Epaphroditus brought the news.

He's all ears. And then wants to know more. And then Paul must have heard Timothy pour out his very soul as they prayed together in prison for this church.

That's how the gospel or this letter begins, doesn't it, with Paul talking about his prayers for this church. And there's Timothy with him. Timothy's praying. Pleading with the Lord Jesus to not let them bite and devour one another.

But to dry up their bitterness at the root and to replace it with oneness of mind, oneness of love, oneness of spirit, and oneness of purpose. And not once, but again and again, Timothy pours out his heart for this congregation.

[20 : 17] Wrestling in prayers, the language Paul can use of Epaphras. It's a fellow worker from Colossae. And Paul wants to tell the Colossians about him.

He's always wrestling in prayer for you that you might stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. And I vouch for him that he's working hard for you.

Colossians 4.12. Well, that's another man. But that shows that prayer, intercessory prayer, expends no small part of our energy and time.

It's wrestling. And you who wrestle know that there's not much left after you've wrestled. Paul sees that in his friend Epaphras. And he must have seen something of it in Timothy as well. Praying for the church at Philippi.

Proving his genuine interest in their welfare. J.C. Ryle says, he loves me most who loves me in his prayers. And as Paul listened to Timothy pray, he said, that man has a genuine interest in your welfare, Philippians.

[21 : 28] And though Timothy was there in Rome with Paul, Paul could tell that no small part of his heart was back in Philippi. He loves me most who loves me in his prayers.

So in one way or another, and in many ways, no doubt, Paul knew that the interest that Timothy had in Philippi was not just professed, but was genuine.

He can say of him, I have no one like him. With genuine interest in your welfare.

And then Paul states that Timothy is the rare exception to the norm. Verse 21. Everyone is very busy about their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

What a sad commentary on fallen human nature. Living for self. And believers, we're not immune to this. What is it that so often gets in the way of true Christian service and interest in others?

[22 : 39] Well, we're busy. We're all busy people and we've got our interests. And those interests dominate us. We're simply too busy with our things to give ourselves to Jesus things.

Selfishness makes us very ambitious of our interests, but also forgetful of the interests of others. And Jesus Christ himself. Calvin says this makes them utterly useless.

For it is impossible that he who is devoted to self should spend himself for the church. I'm quite willing to spend and be spent for you, Paul can say, in one of his letters.

But not when we're all wrapped up in our own interests. Earlier in the letter, Paul showed us how the Son of God served their interests above his own.

And he says that's the very same kind of interest that I see in Timothy. He's willing to sacrifice his own things for your welfare. He's willing to undergo this long, wearisome journey of about a thousand miles to make his way from Rome back to you in Philippi.

[23 : 58] And not for an enjoyable visit, but on the distasteful business of sorting out a quarreling congregation. Not the kind of work a man would delight to go on this mission.

And especially a Timothy who's timid and fearful with nervous stomach problems. But what are these selfish concerns? Compared to the greater concern of your welfare.

That's Timothy. He's the man for the job. Genuine interest in your welfare. He was looking out for the interests of Jesus Christ.

That's interesting, isn't it? The interests of Jesus Christ. What are the interests of Jesus Christ? Notice the parallel statement in verse 20 and 21.

I'm no one else like him who takes a genuine interest in your welfare, church, at Philippi. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

[25 : 12] You see what stands side by side in the parallel statement? It's your welfare, church. And it's the interests of Jesus Christ. That is the interest of Jesus Christ.

It is his bride. His body. It is his church. His interests are with his church. She's his bride.

The apple of his eye. The center of his interest. That's what brought him out of heaven. And sent him to the cross.

The hellish cross. It was his interest. In his people. His church. From heaven he came and sought her. To be his holy bride.

With his own blood he bought her. And for her life he died. It was for them that he came. For them that he died. For them that he rose again. It was for the church that he now reigns.

[26 : 10] Upon the throne. And lives for them. And he prays and intercedes for them. And he's preparing a place for them. And he's coming again for them. Can you see that Christ's interest.

Focuses upon his church. Because it is in his church. That the glory of Christ is most seen. Ephesians 3. 21. The church.

The interest. Of Jesus Christ. Christ. And so your interest in the things of Christ. Is measured in no small part. By your interest in his church. That's what I take away from this.

What place does the church of Christ. Have in your interests. In your life. How are you serving. In the body of Christ. I read somewhere. Where. In any organization.

That there's usually about. 10% of the people. Who are doing 80% of the work. Well. Whatever those percentages are. Too often. That's the way it is in the church.

[27 : 11] Could I ask you. If no one was doing any more. In the church than you are. How much would be getting done. The interest of Jesus.

Is with his church. And Timothy had that. Beating in his heart. Not. And when you serve your brothers and sisters. You're serving Christ.

Last week. I heard a. Sister in Christ. Talking about an upcoming event. She was planning. And another sister was listening. So well. If you need any help. I'm here. I'd love to help you. That's it.

She had things to do. We all do. Don't we? We all have our interests. But. But she said. I'm going to put my interest. Here. And. And. Your interests. Are here. And.

And when we do that. Is unto the Lord. Do you know how Jesus takes it? He takes it as done to himself. You know. If he was here. And he said to us. Come and wash my feet.

[28 : 11] We'd be lining up. Every one of us. To wash his feet. After what he's done for us. But he's not physically here. He's ascended back into heaven.

And so he says. Now wash one another's feet. And as you do. Know this. That. Whatever you have done. To the least of these brothers of mine. You've done to me. You've done to me.

And. And that's how I think of it. And that's how I'll reward it in. The final day. For God is not unjust. He will not forget your work. And the love you have shown him.

As you have helped his people. And continue to help them. You show your love to him. By helping his people. You see. That was Timothy.

And Paul can say in verse 22. You know. You know all about this. You know that Timothy. Has proved himself. Because as a son with his father.

[29 : 11] He has served with me. In the work of the gospel. He's. He's a proven man. He's been around the block. With me. And.

And as a father. With a son at his side. I've mentored him. And you saw him there. In Philippi. When we came. The first time. And.

And I can vouch for him. He's the real thing. A proven. Reliable. Tried and tested man. He knows how to work.

He knows how to serve. He knows how to love. He knows how to sacrifice. I've got no one else like him. Who takes a genuine interest. In your welfare.

And I hope to send him soon. Just as soon as I see how things will go with me here. With my trial. And all. And I'm confident in the Lord. That I myself will come soon. Paul's wanting to beat.

[30 : 06] A trail. A trail. To Philippi. He can't. Because he's in prison. So what's he do? He sends a letter. By Epaphroditus. To take it back. And he says. I'm going to send Timothy soon.

As soon as I see how things are going here. And he's going to go. And see. What has happened. With the letter. And your response. And then. I'm confident. That I myself. Will be coming soon. This was no small thing.

To Paul. Paul. And so what we're seeing in Timothy. Is the same divine spiritual energy.

That is found in Christ the vine. Flowing to one of his branches. Timothy. If the need is unity. I've got just the man for you. Who models the very graces of Christ.

That you need to learn. For the things that make for peace. That's Timothy. Very quickly. Epaphroditus. From verse 25. To the end. He's one of the members. Of the Philippian church.

[31 : 01] We've seen. He was their chosen messenger. To take the gift to Paul. The plan was for him. To stay with Paul. As long as in prison there. And is in need. To help him. But if Epaphroditus.

Showed up. Back in Philippi. And the church asked him. How Paul's doing. And he said. Well he's still in prison. Waiting for trial.

Under the emperor Nero. Well. He might catch some flack. Some in Philippi. Who were given to complaining. And arguing. Might criticize him.

For his early return. Why'd you come back? We sent you to help Paul. While he was in prison. And you're telling us. He's still there. What are you doing here? It seems that Paul wanted to.

Anticipate. Seems to anticipate. Something of. Possible friction. If Epaphroditus. Comes back. So soon. And he might catch heat. For. Doing so.

- [31 : 56] At least he wants to. Rule out. Such a problem. So in the letter. That Paul sends back. With him. He explains. To the Philippians. Why Epaphroditus. Is returning early. Earlier. Than planned. Don't think. Your mission. Has to me. Has failed. Paul is saying. Epaphroditus. Is not deserting. His duty. He's not going AWOL. He's not leaving. Me in the lurch.
- Rather. He's returning. Because I. Am sending him. Back. To you. Verse 25. I think it. Necessary.
- Needful. That I send him. Back to you. Now notice. How highly. Paul values him. He's my brother. In the same family. The affection.
- Of brothers. It's unique. We speak of brotherly love. It's a notch above. That's. That's Paul's view. Of this man. My brother. My fellow worker.
- [32 : 49] He's sharing. In the work. With me. Ministering. Both to me. And with me. And he's my fellow soldier. Enduring. The same hardships. With me. As a good soldier.
- Of Jesus Christ. He's the kind of man. You want in the trenches. With you. Covering your back. Unashamed. To identify. With me. Here in prison. And Paul's not sending him. Back then.
- Because he was. Of no use. To him. Far from it. He's a valuable. Precious brother. Fellow worker. And fellow soldier. Well then. Paul. Why are you sending him. Back so soon.
- He explains. For his sake. For your sake. And for my sake. I'm sending him.
- Back early. For his sake. Verse 26. For he longs. For all of you. And is distressed. Because you heard. He was ill. He's. Homesick. I don't know.
- [33 : 42] How long. He had been gone. But. But. But he longs. He has this strong desire. To go back. And to see them again. And that is multiplied. By his distress.
- It's a strong word. It's the very word. That was used. Of our Lord. As he came into. Gethsemane. An inward disturbance. Feeling trouble. Heavy in heart.
- What troubled. Epaphroditus. Was that folks. Back home. At Philippi. Had heard. That he was ill. Indeed he was ill. Verse 27. Paul says. He almost died. But God had mercy on him.
- And not only on him. But also on me. To spare me. Sorrow upon sorrow. A lot of illness. Epaphroditus.
- Was very ill. But he recovered. And did you notice. What that's called. It's called a mercy.
- [34 : 41] A mercy. I think in our. Modern medicine. The way illnesses go. And we. We're sick. And we get better. We're sick. And we get better.
- We just kind of expect. To get better. Don't we? Oh but the wages of sin. Is death. Do we recover. From our sicknesses.
- God had mercy. On him. We don't deserve. To recover. To acknowledge the mercy. When we recover.
- Good health. Is a gracious. Merciful gift. Not a right. So now that. Epaphroditus. Is better. It troubled him. To know that.
- Back home. The church is thinking. I'm still ill. And they're all troubled. And worried about me. And it distressed him. To think that they were distressed.
- [35 : 39] About him. How's that? For sympathy of heart. Between. Epaphroditus. And his home. Sending church. And he will only feel better.
- When he knows that. When they know. That he's better. And can see that he's well. And so Paul says. In verse 28. Therefore. I'm all the more eager. To send him. For his sake.

You see. That he might. Lose this distress. Of thinking. Oh no. I'm putting my poor. Home church. Through all kinds of misery. As they think. I'm sick. I'm not. The Lord was merciful.

And healed me. But it's also for your sake. Philippi. Church at Philippi. It's so when. So that when you see him again. You may be glad. Glad to know he's well.

Glad to know God had mercy. And spared him. He's not the kind of soldier. You want to lose. In the battle. He's. He's valuable. To the church. He's useful. And.

[36 : 35] That will make you glad. Church. When he gets back. And you see. He's well. He was valuable. To Paul at Rome. But their joy. Meant more to Paul.

Than keeping him around. And the benefit. He would receive. From Epaphroditus. Continuing with him. Paul's not looking. To his own interest. Is he? He's looking to the interest.

Of others. So I'm sending him back. To you. So that. When you see him. You can be glad. Sending him back. For his sake. For your sake.

Church. And lastly. For my sake. So that. When you see him again. You may be glad. And I may have less anxiety. I too. Will feel better.

Knowing he's safely home. And that you are rejoicing. To have him back. Back. That's Paul. Rejoicing with those who rejoice. Rejoicing with the church in Philippi. I know.

[37 : 28] You're going to be happy. When you see him. He's healthy. He's back home. And just. Seeing that in my. Oh that. That'll make me glad. I won't. Have to carry this anxiety.

That you guys are so concerned about him. Genuine concern. For their benefit. To such a degree. That their joy. Gives him joy. So though he's coming back early. Don't think less of him.

Because of it. Rather. Paul says in verse 29. Welcome him in the Lord. With great joy. And honor men. Like him. Welcome him.

As the Lord. Would welcome him. Welcome him. As you would welcome the Lord. Welcome him. In the Lord. And honor.

Men like him. What did the Father do. When Jesus. The servant. Humbled himself. And became a man. Obedient to the death of the cross.

[38 : 22] What did the Father do. He. He highly exalted him. He honored him. And Paul's saying the same thing. You need to honor men. Who are like Christ.

Who humble themselves. And serve. At great sacrifice. Honor them. Welcome them. Welcome him back. And honor him. It's the high honor.

Of God's kingdom. That's due to the lowest servant. Of all. Give him that honor. Why welcome. And honor him. Well verse 30. Because he almost died.

For the work of Christ. He was risking his life. To make up for the help. You couldn't give me. You church at Philippi. You couldn't.

Yourselves help me. But. He became your representative. And. And. In your absence. He came and helped me. Acting on your behalf. To make up. The help that you yourselves.

[39 : 18] Couldn't be to me. And. He nearly. Died. Because of it. Risking his life. To serve Christ.

By serving. Me. Paul. And by serving you. Church. Going on your mission. Well. Do you see the shape.

Of these two men. Then. Timothy. And Epaphroditus. They bore the marks. Of their master. Didn't they? They lived in the yoke. With Jesus. They were learning. From him.

Who is gentle. And humble. In heart. And so their lives. Took on. His likeness. In a way. That you could not miss. They had the same. Attitudes.

Of humility. And genuine interest. In others. And in. Christ's. Concerns. Proving their willingness. By their sacrifice.

[40 : 13] Proving their. Genuine interest. By their willingness. To sacrifice. And that's what made them. So valuable. To Paul. And so useful.

To the church. No wonder Paul. Honors these men. No wonder. He wants them. Back. In Philippi. Because they embody. The very spirit.

Of Christ. Which is so essential. To harmonious relations. In the church. And so they will. Promote. Peace. And unity.

And joy. And the mission. Of the church. Even so. Our usefulness. In this church. Is no greater. Than our likeness. To Jesus. In his humility.

And his willingness. To sacrifice. For the good. The benefit. Of the church. You remember. Jesus points out. How we can tell.

[41 : 08] Genuine interest. It's something. A bit tricky. How do we know. Who has a genuine interest. In the welfare of others. In John chapter 10. He says. Well. He's contrasting himself.

As the good shepherd. And with the hireling. And he says. You might not know. The difference. Between the two. The real shepherd. And the hired hand. That is.

Until the wolf comes. And then it will become apparent. Real quick. Because when the wolf comes. The hireling's. Professed interest. In the sheep.

Is seen for what it really is. A farce. Empty. Lies. Nothing genuine about it. Jesus says. The hired hand.

Is not the shepherd. Who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming. He abandons the sheep. And runs away. And then the wolf. Attacks the flock. And scatters it. The man runs away.

[42 : 04] Because he's a hired hand. And cares nothing for the sheep. Oh he looked like he cared for the sheep. He professed interest in the sheep. But no. It was only self-interest.

Not genuine interest. What made the difference? What is the mark of genuine interest? The Lord Jesus says.

I am the good shepherd. Who laid down his life. Who lays down his life. For the sheep. There it is. Epaphroditus risked his life.

The Lord Jesus laid down his life. Sacrifice. Mother's Day is next week. But I can't close without a challenge.

And an encouragement to you mothers. Because we might think. That a young man like Timothy. Had three strikes against him. By having an unconverted father. To grow up without the influence.

[43 : 05] Of a godly father. But God gave him a godly mother. And a godly grandmother. From whom he learned the holy scriptures. From infancy.

The holy scriptures. That were able to make him wise for salvation. Through faith in Jesus Christ. And Timothy went on to become such a valuable servant. And doing a useful service to Christ.

His church. To the apostle. Behind the scenes. As a praying mother. A mother. A mother who had the same spirit.

Of the savior. What sacrifices she must have made. To see to it that Timothy knew the holy scriptures. She had a lot to do too. You know.

She didn't have all the conveniences we have. But she saw to it. That her son knew the scriptures. And the God of the scriptures. And oh what a gracious reward.

- [44 : 05] Awaits. Mother Eunice. In that day. She will share. In the reward of her son. I say that to you mothers. You may wonder. What's happening.
- Day by day I labor and pray. And scatter the seed on their hearts. And I don't see fruit. Labor on sister. The last chapter hasn't been written. God delights.
- To use the prayers. The labors. Of a mother. To make. A man. A woman. Who is. Like the master. Valuable.
- Useful. To the church of Jesus Christ. Let's pray. We thank you father. For the. The gift of your son.
- And seeing. The humble son of God. Come and serve. And lay down his life for us. Oh we would. We would. Be like. A path for.
- [45 : 01] A. A. Willing to risk our lives. For him. Come and help us. Come and pour into us. Lord Jesus. The very. Sap of grace.
- That. Runs in your veins. That we too. Might be like you. And make us useful. In this church. And whatever church you take us to.
- And where you have us. That there we might bear. The same fruits. The same attitudes of Jesus. The same actions. As Jesus. And. Thereby be.
- A tremendous benefit. To the world. To your church. Come and make us what we are not. Lord Jesus. Our holiness.
- Is conformity to you. And our happiness. Is communion with you. We ask it in Jesus name. Amen. Let's sing number 285.
- [45 : 59] Bless be the tie that binds our hearts. In Christian love. Stand with me and sing it. We'll sing it to the second tune. Number 285. And the■.