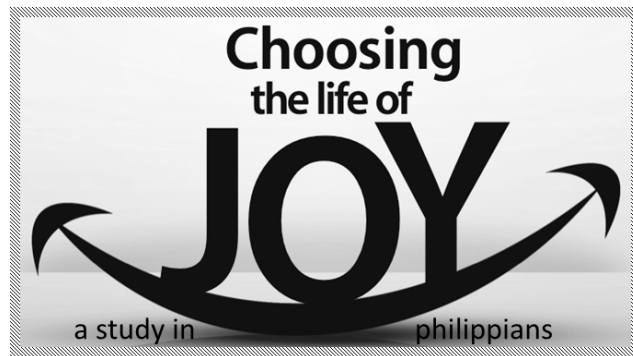


# Wednesday Night BIBLE STUDY

Wednesday, December 19, 2018 – First Baptist Church Buda  
Midweek Prayer Meeting & Bible Study



## CHOOSING THE LIFE OF JOY A Study in Philippians “The Joyful Heart of a Servant Worth Imitating” *Philippians 2:19-30*

Philippians, “a personal manifesto on how to live a life full of joy.” Dr. Warren Wiersbe We began our verse by verse study of the book of Philippians a couple of weeks ago entitled, “Choosing the Life of Joy; A Study in Philippians.” The book is a book of joy, and that is surprising given the circumstances surround the book.

Just for review let’s be reminded of some of the more interesting facts about Philippians that we have been looking at as a background to the book.

**5 Important Background Facts on the Book of Philippians:** *\*these may be some things that set the book of Philippians apart from Paul’s other letters and writings*

- 1. The book of Philippians is written by the Apostle Paul** – The apostle Paul wrote the book as clearly stated in Philippians 1:1-2, “<sup>1</sup>Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 2. The book of Philippians is written to believers/Christians at the church at Philippi** – As already stated Philippians is a letter written by the Apostle Paul during his Roman imprisonment to a group of people that were very special to him. These at Philippi had come to know the Lord Jesus through Paul’s witness to them during his “Second Missionary Journey,” and in response to the “Macedonian Call” of Acts 16. Notice who Paul identifies as the recipients of this letter in verses 1-2, “<sup>1</sup>Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
- 3. The book of Philippians is actually a letter written by Paul to the church at Philippi** – The apostle Paul wrote this as a letter to the Christians in Philippi, from Rome. Paul ministered at

Philippi during his second missionary journey, spending about three months in the city. The ministry at Philippi marked Paul's entrance into Macedonia (Greece, Europe), which came about as a result of a vision he had in the city of Troas, just across the northeastern corner of the Aegean Sea from the port city of Neapolis and its close neighbor Philippi (Acts 16:8–12). During this first stay in Philippi—he later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey (20:6)—Paul brought to faith in Christ people who would form the core of the burgeoning congregation in the city. Among them were Lydia, a businesswoman who opened her home to Paul and his coworkers (16:13–15), and the Philippian jailer, who was converted under Paul's ministry after an earthquake miraculously broke open the prison (16:22–34).

4. **The book of Philippians was written around A.D. 61/62** – Of the four Prison Epistles, Paul likely wrote Philippians last, near the end of his Roman imprisonment in AD 61 or 62. Paul sent the other three Prison Epistles—Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—by the hand of Tychicus, as their destinations were near one another. However, the letter to the Philippians was to be delivered by Epaphroditus, who had come to Paul in Rome with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). But during his time in Rome, Epaphroditus took ill, which delayed his return home and, therefore, the delivery of the letter (2:26–27).

#### *Philippians Timeline*

| A.D.<br>33/34                 | A.D. 47-48<br><i>1<sup>st</sup> Missionary Journey</i> | A.D. 48/49-51<br><i>2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey</i> | A.D. 52-57<br><i>3<sup>rd</sup> Missionary Journey</i> | A.D.<br>61/62                                |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| ★-----★-----★-----★-----★     |  |   |  |  |
| <i>Conversion<br/>of Paul</i> |  | <i>Paul plants<br/>Philippian Church</i>                  |  | <i>Paul arrested,<br/>writes Philippians</i> |

5. **The book of Philippians is called a prison epistle, because Paul write the letter while he was imprisoned for his faith in Rome** - The book of Philippians is actually one of four “prison epistles” (or letters) and most likely the last of the four written by Paul. As stated, Paul wrote Philippians while he was in prison in Rome. The four “prison epistles” are Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Given the theme of the book it is significant that Philippians was written by Paul at a particularly difficult time in his life... while he was in prison.

Along with these essential background facts surround this letter written by Paul, we have also sated these interesting fact about the book/letter of Philippians:

#### **5 Interesting Facts about Philippians:**

- The book of Philippians has no Old Testament quotes** – This is distinction that not only sets it apart from Paul's other writing in the New Testament where Paul is said to have quoted the Old Testament as many as 500 times, just not in Philippians. The Old Testament is quoted more than 1,000 time in the New Testament with half of those being found in Paul's writings. The lack of Old Testament quotes in Philippians could be as simple as Paul's purpose in writing. It is a more practical letter.
- The book of Philippians contains little historical or theological material, and is primarily a practical (*relevant, everyday, pragmatic, useful*) letter** - The only exceptions to this are the historical biographical material contained concerning Paul's life in prison during his Roman imprisonment. And Philippians, chapter 2 that describes the humiliation and exaltation of Christ in theological terms. Philippians is the only of Paul's letter that was not written primarily to address doctrinal, theological issues. The apostle Paul did not write Philippians in response to a crisis (caused by false teachers and false teaching), as he did with Galatians and Colossians. And, in fact, it may be the most practical of Paul's 13 New Testament books/letters. What do we mean by practical? We mean that of all of Paul's letters, Philippians in it purpose and content is the most

pragmatic and common every-day letter he wrote. We will get more into this as we progress through our study, but suffice it to say that the very reason Paul wrote the letter is simple, every-day in its application.

3. **The book of Philippians is essentially a thank you letter** – This itself sets Philippians apart as the most unusual of Paul’s letters. Instead of writing to correct doctrinal matters, he writes a “thank you” letter to the church at Philippi that had been so generous in supporting him over the years. He primarily wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philippian believers. More than any other church, the believers in Philippi offered Paul material support for his ministry. Paul’s affection for these people is clear through the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in joy and unity.
4. **The book of Philippians contain the word “joy” in some form at least 16 times** – With the common occurrence of this word in some form repeated throughout the letter, it makes it clear that this is the theme of Paul’s letter to the Philippians and to us. And as stated above this theme of “joy” is particularly astounding given the fact that it is a prison epistle, written while Paul was incarcerated and being persecuted for his faith.
5. **The book of Philippians was written to a church and Christians that represent the one of the most important advancements of the Gospel to the west, particularly Europe** - Paul’s “Macedonian Call” in Troas during Paul’s 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey led him to his work in Philippi and the planting of the church there. Philippi was located in Macedonia, in northern Greece, on the continent of Europe. So the “Macedonian Call” and the planting of this church in Philippi through Paul’s second missionary journey, and Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi are very significant because they represent the advancement of the gospel further west, into Europe and ultimately to the entire world through Europe. It is not to be missed that the first converts on the continent of Europe were Lydia and her household, a demon possessed girl, and a Philippian jailer.

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At St. Bede’s Episcopal Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico, there is only one door into the sanctuary. Over that door is a hand-lettered sign that reads, “**Servant’s Entrance.**” There isn’t any other way in or out of that church except through the servant’s entrance! That’s not a bad reminder of the fact that every believer is called to serve our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Unlike most sports teams, the Lord’s team does not have any bench warmers. Every Christian is given a first-string spot on the team, with a vital role to fulfill. A non-serving Christian is a contradiction in terms.

After the doctrinal high water mark of this letter, where Paul speaks of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ who left the glory of heaven to take on the form of a servant and to become obedient to death on the cross for our sakes in Philippians 2:1-11, and then our call as believers to imitate that in Christ in verses 12-18, Paul turns to some seemingly mundane matters about sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippian church, and about his hope of coming personally if he is released from prison. This is one of those sections of Scripture that, at first glance, you may wonder why God took up the pages of the Bible with the travel schedules of these three men. But as we examine it, I hope you will see that the Holy Spirit uses it in a marvelous way to illustrate for us the truths that Paul has been presenting in this entire chapter. These choice men whom Paul commends to the Philippian church, Timothy and Epaphroditus, are two men worth imitating as we seek to serve our Lord with this joyful spirit He calls us to. Along with Paul himself, they have much to teach us about Christian servanthood. They show us that ...

*If we cultivate a servant’s heart and endure a servant’s hardships, we will receive a servant’s honor.*

## CULTIVATING A SERVANTS HEART

Let's go back to something we said last week... Paul has already called us to have "the mind of Christ" in the first part of this second chapter of Philippians. We said last time that our purpose as believers is to "be like Christ," to reflect Him, to be becoming more and more like Him all the time, or as Paul said in Romans 8:28-29 to be conformed to the image of Jesus... here is Paul, *"28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. 29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."* If we were to ask, what is our purpose then as believers? Our answer might be... to be conformed to the image of His son, to reflect Jesus, to looking more and more like Jesus. So what does that mean exactly? Well, Paul has told in in Philippians 2:5-10 what that means and looks like, *"5 Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, 7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. 9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."* Did you see it? Jesus was a "servant" a "bondservant," therefore, we are to be servants.

Jesus even said it of Himself in in *Mark 10:45, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."* Every Christian is a blood-bought servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being a servant of Christ is not an option if you want to be more dedicated; it is the calling of every believer. If you are not a servant of Christ, you cannot rightly call yourself a Christian. But, because we all tend toward a kind of selfishness and self-centeredness selfish by nature, we must cultivate the heart of a servant as we grow in Christ. Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus illustrate men who had servant's hearts, as seen in two dimensions:

### 2 Dimensions of a Servant's Heart:

1. **A servant's heart is centered on the things of Jesus Christ** – Paul's heart... what's in his heart... whose in his heart shows in these verses. The Apostle Paul was a man whose focus was on the Lord Jesus Christ. You know how I know? His words! What he said! Notice his simple words in verse 19, *"19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state."* Did you notice what he said in that verse? Paul says, *"But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly."* Skip on down to verse 24 and notice what he says, *"4 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly."* He tells us where his "trust" lays! He says, *"I trust in the Lord..."* It's all Paul's way of saying, "If it be the Lord's will."

It shows that he did not make decisions based simply on common sense or on what he thought was best, but he submitted everything to the Lord and His will. When he mentions how Epaphroditus got well from his illness, he doesn't say, "Thank goodness he got better!" but rather, *"God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but also on me"(v.27).* When he instructs the church to welcome Epaphroditus, he tells them to *"...receive him in the Lord with all joy/." (v.29)* Clearly, the Lord was the focal point of Paul's life and ministry.

Timothy's focus was also on the Lord. Paul states that, unlike many others, Timothy was not seeking after his own interests instead of those of Jesus Christ (2:21). Timothy served with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel (2:22). Christ and the gospel were at the center of Timothy's life.

Epaphroditus also was a faithful servant whose focus was on the things of Christ. He had pushed himself almost to the point of death to bring the gift to Paul from the Philippian church. Maybe he grew ill on the six-week journey and pushed himself almost beyond his limits in an effort to get to the apostle's side. Or, perhaps after arriving he contracted some illness, but he kept pushing himself in his service to Paul in the cause of the gospel. His longing and concern for the church back in Philippi also reveal his servant's heart for the things of Christ. Paul calls Epaphroditus a **"minister to my need"**(v.25) and states that he had completed by his presence what the Philippians could not do in their absence in service to Paul (2:25, 30).

The word translated "minister" and "service" comes from a Greek word from which we get our word "liturgy." In secular Greek, the word was used of a man who, out of love for his city and the gods, would finance a great drama or outfit a battleship. It has the flavor of sacred service, or worship. Every servant of Jesus Christ does what he does, whether giving or helping or speaking, as an offering to the Lord Jesus. A servant's heart is centered on the Lord Jesus Christ and His work. This focus on Christ and His work should not just be true of those who earn their living from the gospel. Every Christian, however you earn your living, should live every day in fellowship with the Lord, in submission to His will, in obedience to His Word, available to do His work. Christian servants will be eager to talk about the great truths of the Bible with fellow Christians. They will be ready to tell lost people about the Savior and His work on the cross. They watch for opportunities to please Him by helpful deeds toward others. Three attitudes mark servants who are focused on the Lord Jesus Christ:

### **3 Attitudes That Mark Servants Who Are Focused on the Lord Jesus Christ:**

- (1) **They are willing to be sent anywhere** - It wouldn't have been easy for Timothy to leave the side of his beloved father in the faith in order to go to Philippi, but he was willing to go if that was God's will. It hadn't been easy for Epaphroditus to leave the comforts of home and journey to Rome, but he had done it. Now, it also would be difficult for him to leave Paul and return home, but he was willing to go where the Lord wanted him. Have you told the Lord, "I'm willing to go anywhere You want me to go"? I remember as a teenager being hesitant to do that, because I was afraid He might say, "Go to Africa as a missionary," and I didn't want to do that! But then I reasoned, "God is a loving Father who knows what is best for me. If it's best for me to serve Him in Africa, I'd be stupid to stay in the United States." So I surrendered to Him on that matter. Then, after seminary, an opportunity came up to pastor a church in of all places... Oklahoma!. I can think of few places in this country I'd rather not be more than Oklahoma! But Nancy and I prayed about it, and reaffirmed our submission to His will. We spend the next 21 years in Oklahoma, raised our family there, Trey was born there, pastored some wonderful, faithful, God honoring and worshipping church and people, met man deep lasting friends in the faith, saw many people come to know the Lord... love our time in Oklahoma and love many people in Oklahoma. Listen, don't ever close doors of where God might want to send you... His greatest blessings could be waiting for you in the most unexpected places.
- (2) **They are willing to serve anyone** - Timothy served Paul, but he was willing to go and serve the Philippian church. Epaphroditus served the Philippian church, but he was willing to go and serve Paul. He reminds me of Philip, who was being used by God to reach great multitudes in Samaria, but who was willing to go to a deserted road where the Lord used him to reach the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:5-8, 26-40). A servant of Christ isn't out to make a name for himself by speaking to large crowds only. He's available to his Lord to serve anyone the Lord directs him to serve. My first church was in Gould, Oklahoma, a small farming community of 100 people in the poorest county in the state of Oklahoma... Harmon County. The year we moved

there the school in this little town closed and all the young families left the community. The town of Gould pretty much dried up, only 100 folks left... mostly older folks, retired with no family remained in the town. There was a cotton gin, a bank (no gas station, we drove 30 miles to a gas station) and three churches... a Church of Christ, a Methodist Church and a Baptist Church (the one I pastored). Ours was the only church with a pastor... the others were pastorless, so I did everybody's funerals. This was my first church, so I had never done a funeral... I did not first funeral there, as a matter of fact I did 18 funerals there my first year, and I went to hospitals and nursing homes, and made home visits to everybody from all those churches... they called our house (still had a land line, no cell phones) all hours of the day and night and we ministered to/served everyone. I learned so much there in that sweet, loving little church. We were blessed if we had 30 people there on Sundays, but they loved the Lord. Listen, as believers we must be willing to serve anyone... anyone. Christians don't ever get to turn someone away! Do you know why? Jesus never turned anyone away! Some walked away from Him, but He didn't turn anyone away! He drove out some money changers... out of the Temple, but He would never have turned them away had they come to Him. And neither can we! Think about that, the poor, the dirty, the smelly, the homeless, the destitute, the derelict, the prostituted, the alcoholic, the drug addict, those who are different than we are, the hurting and struggling, those with baggage... aren't to turn them away! True servant-hearted people will serve anyone.

- (3) **They are willing to sacrifice anything** - Timothy had given up his own interests to become a servant of Christ. Epaphroditus almost lost his life in his service for the Lord. To the Ephesian elders, Paul said of his own ministry, *"I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God"* (Acts 20:24). Have you told the Lord, "I'll give up everything--my desires, my ambitions, my comforts, my time, my money--to serve You"?

I have emphasized this point at length, that a servant's heart is centered on the things of Jesus Christ, because if you have any other motive or reason for Christian service, you will eventually burn out or bomb out. You'll get angry and be hurt because of the way people treat you; you'll be frustrated and grow weary of the hardships you have to endure; you'll quit in disgust or disappointment... if you're serving for any reason other than love for the Lord Jesus who gave Himself for your sins. A servant's heart must be constantly captivated with Christ.

2. **A servant's heart puts others ahead of himself for the sake of Christ** - The Apostle Paul was in prison facing possible execution. Timothy was his right hand man, a faithful man who had served with Paul as a child serving his father (2:22). It would have been understandable if Paul, thinking of his circumstances, had said, "I can't spare Timothy at this time. He must stay here with me." But, instead, he was willing to send Timothy for the sake of the Philippian church. The Philippians had been willing to serve Paul by giving monetarily and by sending Epaphroditus, who himself had been willing to serve to the brink of death on Paul's behalf.

Notice what Paul says of Timothy in verses 20 and 21, *"<sup>20</sup> For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. <sup>21</sup> For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus."* These are hard words to understand, because you would think that out of all the faithful Christians in Rome (Paul wrote Romans 16 about five years prior to this, where he greets many faithful believers in Rome), he could have found some who were not living for themselves! And, what about Luke, Titus, Aristarchus, Trophimus, and Epaphroditus? Paul must have meant that of those available to him at that time as messengers, Timothy was the only one he knew of who would

genuinely seek after the interests of others instead of their own. There are at least three ways you can tell if you're putting others ahead of yourself:

### **3 Ways You Can Tell if You're Putting Others Ahead of Yourself:**

- (1) **You will have heartfelt love** - These verses are oozing with Paul's heartfelt love for Timothy, Epaphroditus, and for the Philippians. Also notice how Epaphroditus longed for the Philippians and was distressed (the word is used of Jesus' distress in the garden) because they had heard that he was sick (2:26). There are some super-spiritual Christians who try to remove all emotion from the Christian life. They think that spiritual maturity means being stoical, not showing any grief or anxiety or tenderness or tears. But Paul here says how if Epaphroditus would have died, he would have been overwhelmed with grief at the loss of this dear servant of God. Paul knew Romans 8:28... he wrote the verse! He also knew Philippians 4:6-7, about not being anxious. Yet he didn't chide Epaphroditus because he was distressed over how the Philippian church felt about his sickness (2:26). **Paul wasn't afraid to be human and to express his deep feelings for others.**
- (2) **You will show genuine concern** - This spills over with heartfelt love, but here I am especially focusing on Timothy's genuine concern for these people, that he was not seeking his own interests, but the welfare of the church (2:20-21). Sad to say, many who serve the Lord, including some in full-time ministry, do it with mixed motives. They're out for the strokes others can give them.. pat on the back, atta-boys. They like being in the limelight. They're manipulative in using people for their own advancement or gain.
- (3) **You can work cooperatively with others** - Timothy served with Paul like a child his father (2:22). Paul and Epaphroditus worked together harmoniously in the gospel cause. To do that, you've got to die to self and put others ahead of yourself for the sake of the work. Some people are not team players, unless they are the boss. Even though Paul was clearly the leader among these men, and was about 25 years older than Timothy (we don't know how old Epaphroditus was), he didn't lord it over them. He humbly calls Epaphroditus his brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier. He deflects any glory from himself and lifts up these two faithful servants.

Let me give you another Biblical example of this that we see in Scripture. If you have your Bible there, hold you place in Philippians, and turn with me to the second chapter of Mark. Mark, chapter 2 and look with me at verses 1-12 **(READ: Mark 2:1-12)** \*How can you tell that these four men had true servant's hearts?

### **5 Apparent Reminders of a True Servant Heart:**

1. **They were centered on Christ** – On getting there friend to Jesus
2. **They were willing to go anywhere and do anything necessary to get their friend to Jesus** –
3. **They put their friends needs ahead of their own and their own interest** – How do this show? They jeopardized their own reputation and perhaps faced ridicule possible trouble with the law for destroy private property.
4. **They exhibited heartfelt love and genuine concern** – How?
5. **They work cooperatively** – Do you see it?

So we must cultivate a servant's heart, centered on the things of Jesus Christ, putting others ahead of ourselves for the sake of the gospel.

### **ENDURING A SERVANT'S HARDSHIPS**

Serving Christ is not easy! It is often messy, costly, risky! It is many times "thank-less," and that has to be okay! Paul calls Epaphroditus a "fellow soldier." The term fellow soldier implies warfare. It

brings us under the withering attacks of the enemy, who wants to hinder the cause of Christ. Just as soldiers must go through boot camp so that they can learn to endure the hardships they will encounter on the battlefield, so the Lord's servants must be tested.

Paul mentions Timothy's "proven worth" (2:22). The word means "approved by testing." It is the same word used in Romans 5:3&4, where Paul says that tribulation brings about perseverance and perseverance brings proven character. A product that has been approved by testing is a reliable product. Either the manufacturer or a consumer advocate has submitted the product to severe conditions to see if it holds up. You can know that the product won't give out just when you need it most. Timothy had endured enough testing that Paul knew he was faithful. Testing or hardship in Christian service can come from many sources:

## **2 Sources of Testing in Christian Service:**

1. **The hardship of persecution both from without and within** - Paul was in prison due to persecution from without. But also he was under attack from those who preached the gospel from envy and selfish ambition (mentioned in Philippians 1:15, 17). Perhaps they are the ones he refers to in Philippians 2:21. They claimed to be serving Christ, but in reality they were serving themselves. Alexander Maclaren wrote, "Many a professing Christian life has a veneer of godliness nailed thinly over a solid bulk of selfishness" (*Expositions of Holy Scripture* [Baker], "Philippians," p. 284). **What is harder to deal with attacks from without or attacks from within? Why?** Paul knew the keen disappointment of professing Christians who were not faithful because they were living for themselves. It's often more difficult to bear the attacks from those within the flock than from those outside, because you expect the world to be against you, but not fellow Christians.
2. **The hardship of the work itself** - In **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**, Paul catalogues the hardships he experienced as a servant of Christ... just listen to this list, "<sup>23</sup> *Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. <sup>24</sup> From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. <sup>25</sup> Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; <sup>26</sup> in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; <sup>27</sup> in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness— <sup>28</sup> besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. <sup>29</sup> Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?*" Persecutions, physical hardships, dangers that brought him to the brink of death, and, on top of everything else, intense concern for all the churches. In our text, he mentions his concern for the Philippian church in Philippians 2:28-30, "<sup>28</sup> *Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. <sup>29</sup> Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; <sup>30</sup> because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.*" He mentions Epaphroditus' risking his life (it's a gambling term, "to throw the dice"), as well as his concern about the church. So the work of the gospel involves both physical and emotional hardships that can wear us down. We must be prepared for hardships in serving the Lord and rely on His sustaining grace, not on our own strength or resources.

I would encourage you to read the biographies of the great saints who have gone before us. One of the best is **Ruth Tucker's *From Jerusalem to Irian Jaya*** [Zondervan], which is a biographical history of the missions movement. It will move you to tears as you read of the incredible hardships that God's



people have gone through to take the gospel to the unreached parts of the earth. In the early years of missionary work in Africa, only one out of four missionaries survived the first term of service (p. 155)! They were plagued by disease, by hostile people, by tribal warfare, by government hindrances. Yet they kept going. Our hardships are nothing in comparison with theirs!

Why go through such hardship? If we cultivate a servant's heart and endure a servant's hardship, ...

### RECEIVING A SERVANT'S HONOR

We don't seek the honor for ourselves, but for our Lord who alone is worthy. But He promises, *"Those who honor Me I will honor"* (1 Samuel 2:30). He will reward every faithful servant with the crown of righteousness as 2 Timothy 4:8 tells us, *"<sup>8</sup> Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."* Any hardship we suffer now in serving Christ will be well worth it when we see His face and hear from Him, *"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord."* (Matthew 25:21).

Paul here honors Timothy by sending him as his own representative. He honors Epaphroditus by his commendation and tells the church to *"hold such men in esteem... in high regard"* (Phil. 2:29). As Calvin points out, the devil is intent on undermining the authority of godly pastors, and so the church must hold such men in high regard (*Calvin's Commentaries* [Baker], "Philippians," p. 84).

Conclusion

Did you notice how these seemingly mundane words about the travel schedules of these men illustrate what Paul has been saying throughout chapter 2?

- He has told us that we should do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind to regard others more highly than we do ourselves; not looking out for our own interests, but for the interests of others (Phil.2:3-4).
- Then he gave us the great example of our Lord, who laid aside His rights, took on the form of a servant, and became obedient to death on the cross. Therefore, God highly exalted Him (Phil. 2:5-11).
- Jesus had a servant's heart; He endured a servant's hardships; He received a servant's honor. That's the pattern for all who serve Him.
- Let's all strive to become imitators of Timothy and Epaphroditus; but not only of them, but of the Apostle Paul; and, beyond him, of our Lord Jesus Himself.

There should be only one entrance to the church: the servant's entrance!

### SOME SOUL-SEARCHING QUESTIONS FOR BELIEVERS

1. **Interact with the comment, "A non-serving Christian is a contradiction in terms." How are you serving Christ?**
2. **Must every Christian be willing to be sent anywhere? Is the missionary calling something every Christian must consider?**
3. **What's the difference between genuine concern for others, which is good, and worry, which is wrong?**
4. **How do we draw the line between accepting the criticism of other Christians versus ignoring it as being wrongly motivated?**