

"Burdens, Joys, and Leadership"

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[0 : 00] Good morning. It's a pleasure to see you all today. Before we get into the passage proper, I want to tell you that I'm a fan of fantasy novels.

I love to read stories that are set in the medieval times with swords and castles, dragons, knights, all those things. I've always enjoyed that sort of thing, Lord of the Rings and all of that.

And so in preparation for the sermon, I want to read a piece of a novel that I was reminded of as I was studying and preparing this week.

In this little piece of the novel, a king is giving instruction on how kings are supposed to act, and he does this by telling a story.

He says,

[1 : 52] Perhaps we should often switch places with others.

If a king is seen to assume the burden of the poorest of men, perhaps there will be those who help him with his own load, invisible, yet so daunting.

What the passage we're going to study today should teach you is that there are burdens in life, that joy takes work, that we must help each other, and that leaders must serve.

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. You'll find it on page 1775 of the Pew Bible. That's 2 Corinthians chapter 1 on page 1775.

This will be the seventh sermon that I've done in 2 Corinthians chapter 1. This is the last sermon for chapter 1, and it's taken us seven sermons to work through all of the truth here.

[3 : 06] I want you to understand that there's a lot more in this chapter than we have covered in the weeks we've spent on this.

Just the few hours we've spent here does very little to reach the depths of the truth that you might find in this chapter.

Every week I give on average 10 hours to studying and preparation to preach to you. And if I give 10 hours in this, I pull away 30 minutes or so of truth to bring to you.

And yet even my 10 hours of study is far less than all of the study that you could get out of a single chapter of the book. So I want you to realize that this is a treasure trove.

That you are never going to run out of all of the value that scripture has to offer. In regular life, we have mines of gold where people go in and they secure precious riches from it.

[4 : 16] But eventually those mines run out. But the scripture, the word of God, is an unending mine of treasure. That you can constantly go to and draw out precious truths.

We have spent all this time in one chapter. Yet in this book there are 13 chapters. And in the Bible there are 66 books. You could spend a lifetime on this.

And not run out of things to learn and read about our God and his incredible love. So I want to encourage you to do whatever you can to get this book planted deep into your head and into your heart.

That it would change your life. That you would have the riches of it to shape your walk. So to that effect, I've put a book in the back that everyone is welcome to take a copy of.

There's a stack of them in the foyer. They're on how to memorize the Bible. I read it and was blessed by it. And it's something we should all participate in. So I encourage you to take a copy and to read it yourself and apply some of the truths there.

[5 : 35] So read with me 2 Corinthians chapter 1 verses 23 and 24. Follow along. Moreover, I call God as witness against my soul.

That to spare you, I came no more to Corinth. Not that we have dominion over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy.

For by faith you stand. What Paul is saying here, especially highlighting the second verse where he says, Not that we have dominion over your faith, but we are fellow workers for your joy.

Paul is saying that he has not been a cruel, selfish leader. But that he works so that they might have great joy. We're going to look at this idea, the idea of leaders who are not domineering, not harsh. And leaders who work for our joy. We're going to look at this through three relationships. One is the relationship between Paul and the Corinthians.

[6 : 45] Then we'll do the relationship between Jesus and us. And then finally, the relationship between you and your pastor. I ask that the Holy Spirit will help us understand these truths as we study.

And that it would apply to our hearts. The way in which we need to carry each other's burdens. Fight for joy. And how leaders must serve like Christ.

So the first relationship. Paul and the Corinthian church. As we talked about in the past and previous sermons. Paul had planned to visit the Corinthians before.

But he canceled his trip. And they were upset by this. Think of how you might be upset when someone cancels their plans with you. Like you, they wondered if Paul cared about him. Cared about them. If he's willing to cancel his plans. They thought or they were tempted to think that Paul simply canceled his plans.

[7 : 53] Because it no longer was convenient or easy to visit them. So he said, oh, this isn't going to be easy. I'm going to go somewhere else. But Paul wants to make clear that he is not a selfish leader.

But he cares for them. So when he canceled his plans. It wasn't out of selfishness about convenience. Or a desire for things to go easily.

But he canceled the plans for their good. He writes, moreover, I call God as witness against my soul.

That to spare you, I came no more to Corinth. Think about leaders you've known who are bad leaders.

Selfish leaders who take advantage of their power and position. To make others do what they want. I'm sure you can think of them whether it's a bad parent or a bad boss or many other examples.

[8 : 55] Think of the boss who is always the last one to show up to something. And always the first one to leave. Because his time is more important than others.

Think of the boss who gives commands and demands obedience. But never spends time teaching, listening, and supporting their children.

These are examples of domineering or overbearing leadership. Which Paul is saying that that is not how we conduct ourselves.

So consider this. Do you ever think that your time is more important than others? Do you spend more time telling people how things should be?

Than you do listening to them and caring for them? In James we're instructed, So then my brethren, Let every man be slow to speak, Swift to hear, And quick to listen.

[10 : 01] For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. The Corinthians might have thought that Paul was this type of leader because he cancelled his plans.

But Paul wants them to know That he only cancelled his plans for their sake. He is not an overbearing, selfish leader. He cancelled his plans to spare them pain.

He wanted to make joyful memories with them. And he knew that there were troublesome things going on in the church. So he decided that instead of coming and having to chastise them for the things they were doing wrong in person, That he would hold back, Send a letter to them, Hopefully resolve the issues, And then be able to come to them in joy.

But Paul is able to call God as a witness, Saying that God will approve of the decision he made, Because the decision he made was made out of love.

We should want to be like Paul, And we should want to live in a way, Where we could call God as a witness on our behalf.

[11 : 21] That we could say that God would approve of the way in which we loved and cared about those around us. Think about whether or not you live in a way that God would approve of.

Would God look at your conduct and defend you, Saying that you care well about the other people in your life. Remember, God sees everything.

Even your heart. He is either a witness for you, Or a witness against you. So consider carefully how you're going to live your life.

Finally, Paul writes that he is a fellow worker for their joy. Paul sees his job description as being someone who is supposed to labor to bring them happiness.

How could he be a selfish, self-centered leader, Canceling plans as is convenient for him, If he loves them so much.

[12 : 33] Have you ever known someone who works for your joy? It's a sweet thing to have someone who puts their time and their effort and their labor Into making your life better.

It's a sweet thing. I've had the privilege of knowing some people to stay up late at night when I'm having difficulties And comfort me and encourage me.

I've had some friends who faithfully pray for me day after day, Working and laboring for my joy. Christians are a people who do these things for each other.

We don't walk around trying to see what advantage we can get out of every situation. But instead, we focus on trying to love others well and work for their joy, Like Paul here.

We certainly do not use our power and abilities to take advantage of others. But rather, we are to use every gift that God gives us for the blessing of other people.

[13 : 45] You may not be in charge like Paul is. You may not be a leader. But God has given you abilities and gifts.

And you are called to use them to work for the joy of others. When we walk into church, we should think to ourselves, How can I be a blessing to someone else?

Who can I talk to and be an encouragement to them? I don't just want to get something today, but I want to give something because I've been given so much. How can I bring joy to someone?

Early in the morning and late at night, you should be praying for other people. Jesus prayed for you. Paul prayed for the churches he was with. We should do the same.

Paul says that he is a fellow worker for their joy. Who's the fellow worker then? He's a fellow worker. That means he's working with someone else.

[14 : 57] Who is that person? That brings us to our second relationship. Jesus and us. Jesus is the other person who's working for our joy.

Everything we just talked about Paul doing for the Corinthians is just a shadow of what Jesus does for us. In working for our joy.

So it's a good thing that Paul isn't a selfish leader. And that's a good example for us to follow.

But it is infinitely better and even more amazing that Jesus is not a selfish leader. And that he works for our joy.

He is not a selfish leader. He is not a selfish leader. He is not a selfish or brutal master. He is not just about what you can do for him.

[15 : 59] He is the God of the universe. He has created everything just by speaking. Jesus is all powerful. He gives you every breath you breathe.

You rebel against him. And you deserve punishment for that rebellion. But he works for your joy.

If things were going normally when the God of the universe came down to the earth, it would be to punish the people who have sinned against him over and over again.

But instead of the God of the universe coming to punish people, he comes to serve them and to love them. The God of glory, who is infinite in beauty, who is perfect, who is holy.

He comes down to earth to die for sinners. He comes humbly. He is more glorious than anything you've ever seen.

[17 : 13] Yet he chooses to be a child who has to be taken care of by someone else, humble and lowly. Read about how kind our king is in this Bible.

Jesus is a friend of sinners. Read about how he speaks to the woman at the well. He doesn't come up to her and condemn her for her sins.

But rather, he calls her to come to him to receive everlasting life, to receive eternal water that will refresh the soul.

I love the words he speaks in Matthew 11, 28. Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me.

For I am gentle and lowly in heart. And you will find rest for your souls. Are you here today struggling under the burdens of life?

[18 : 23] Come to the Christ who is humble and kind and will share your burdens with you. Our God did not demand that he gets what he deserves.

But he walked around giving other people more than they ever deserved. He is gracious, not domineering. Turn with me to Philipians chapter 2.

And we'll read a bit more about how gracious and humble Christ is. You'll find Philipians 2 on page 1803 in the Pew Bibles.

Starting in verse 3, Paul instructs, Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. And then we get the example of Jesus and his love for us.

[19 : 33] Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ, who being in the form of God, did not count himself equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of man.

And being found in the appearance of a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Get that.

Jesus is equal with God. That means everything belongs to him. Every privilege and every power is his. There is no one more highly exalted in all of the world.

And when he comes down, does he demand that other people come and serve him? No. But he gives up every privilege, every luxury, for your sake.

And he humbles himself. And he serves you, even to death. We must be grateful and appreciate what an amazing savior this is.

[20 : 51] What an amazing God this is, that he would come and serve us. How unbelievable it is, that someone so highly exalted, would come for our sake.

Imagine if the president of the United States, you know, flew all the way up to Massachusetts, came to your house, to cook you dinner. It would be surprising.

You'd be very confused by what's going on. But hopefully you'd be grateful, that someone was taking the time to care for you. And our God is so much greater, than the president of the United States.

And he comes to die for us. Not just cook a meal. And when we consider, how he works for our joy, we must consider the greatest work of Christ, what he did on the cross.

There he secured our joy. Think about the things that threaten your joy. The deep things.

[22 : 02] Sin, the power of sin, and the punishment of sin, death. Our greatest enemies. And Christ takes them to himself on the cross.

He went to the cross for you. Every whip, every slash into his skin, the thorns that dug into his head, every beat of the nails into his hand, the hours of torment, and the wrath of God, he bore on the cross for you.

That was the work he did to bring you joy. So that when the work is finished, when he cries out, it is finished, the greatest enemies, your own sin, is taken away.

You will never have to bear punishment for the ways in which you fall short of the glory of God.

Because Christ died in your place.

That's the work he did for your joy. Do you remind yourself of this daily? That the Lord of the universe died for you?

[23 : 26] Do you remember that God loved you that much? Because if you do, you should sing for joy at having your sins forgiven.

You should overflow with it such that it fills up your heart and you can't help but speak of the amazing God who would die for you.

This is a precious privilege that the God of the universe would die in your place. That he would make himself a worker for your joy.

And you must trust in this Savior. If you do not trust in him, if you do not take advantage of this work he has done for you, one day he will come and he will bring his authority and he will call every need to bow and everyone to account for the things they have done.

So either you accept him and receive him when he comes to you gently calling you out of your sin and trusting in him or you will one day have to pay for your sins in hell.

[24 : 56] He will not be patient forever but one day will be the last day you have to repent and turn to him.

I'm reminded of stories where you might have a father whose whole family is killed in a drunk driving accident.

And every now and again you have a father, maybe a believer, who is capable of offering forgiveness to the man who is driving.

And he comes up to this man and he says, you've done wrong. You've harmed me greatly. You've taken the things I love away from me yet I'm willing to forgive you.

And if that man says no and spits in his face and walks away, then the father will rightly take him to court and see him sentenced to jail for the rest of his life.

[26 : 05] It is the same way with our God. He comes to you despite the greatness of your sins and says, I will pay for every one of them. But if you spurn him, if you ignore this forgiveness and this gospel, one day there will be no forgiveness left for you.

So we need the Savior. He works for our joy. He prepares us a place in heaven. He is always praying for us.

He sends the Holy Spirit to comfort us. Jesus is a wonderful Savior and an amazing King who is not domineering but works for our joy.

Finally, I would be wrong if I did not take the opportunity to teach you about what to look for in a pastor. Relationship number three, you and your pastor.

pastors have a position of authority in the church that they're to teach and to guide and to instruct.

[27 : 21] But this passage gives us helpful instruction for the things we should look for in a pastor and the things that should never be in a pastor.

Paul says that we are not domineering but we work together for your joy. So a pastor first and foremost must not be domineering.

Never accept a pastor who is looking for his own gain. If you see a man who likes to tell others what to do, he is not fit to be a pastor.

If you see a man who is quick to sit down while others serve him and cater to him because he's the pastor, he is not like Christ and you should never accept him as a pastor.

But when you consider who would be your pastor, you should look for someone who serves, who makes himself humble, who is a worker for your joy.

[28 : 31] You should see a pastor busy about the business of caring about people. That he thinks his job description is to find people to carry their burdens and to work for their joy.

You should see them under that weight of cares, not their own cares, but the worries and troubles of others.

I love what Matthew 25 says. It's the instructions of Jesus to his disciples. He says, you know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones take pleasure in exercising authority over them.

But it shall not be so among you. Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave.

Even as the son of man came not to be served, but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many. This is the example, and this is what you should look for in a pastor.

[29 : 48] Someone who in your midst is ready to make himself your slave for your good, a worker for your joy, not lording it over you, not domineering, not selfish, but gentle and eager to see you standing firm in the faith all the way to the end.

In closing, know that life is full of burdens and difficulties, but we must be those people who use our power and our opportunities not to make others carry our own burdens, but to carry the burdens of others.

We should use every bit of our strength to work for the joys of those around us, and we should rejoice and be like our Savior, who though he had every power and every right, used all of it for the good of others, even for the good of rebels like us.