

# Honor Such Men

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Well, let's take our Bibles and we'll open them up this morning again to the book of Philippians. Book of Philippians. Our sermon text this morning is chapter 2 and we'll go from verse 19 all the way through to verse 30.

Philippians 2, 19 through 30. And when you found it, if you would, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

I hope, therefore, to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me. And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need.

For he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Indeed, he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

[ 1 : 29 ] I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy and honor such men.

For he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Father, we thank you for your word. We thank you for this moment where we can sit under the preaching of your word and hear from you and learn and grow in our desire for you and our love for you.

And so we pray that that's what would happen now as we walk through this passage together. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. Well, several months ago, I had the opportunity to attend a service at another church.

Those are rare opportunities. Normally, I'm here with you all where I want to be, where I should be. But I had the opportunity to go, and so I went, thinking that I was just there to attend as a fly on the wall and to observe and really not be too engaged with what's going on.

I just wanted to go and to be a part of the service. But very quickly, I realized, for one thing, I was very underdressed. Very underdressed.

[ 2 : 44 ] But as I came to my seat, I was greeted by a woman who saw me and made a beeline right for me. And she hugged my neck, and she welcomed me there.

And she asked me, she said, are you the pastor of Seaweed Bay? And I said, yes, ma'am, I am. She said, oh, I'm so glad that you're here. Come here, I want to introduce you to my pastor.

And she took me, and she introduced me to her pastor, who also shook my hand and greeted me with a big hug and said how glad and happy he was to have me there. And then he took me to a back room, back off the side, behind the sanctuary, behind the stage.

And in that back room was a group of other pastors that they had collected during their time there. And I sat there and mingled with the other pastors, talked with them, got to know them until maybe it was about five minutes before the service was set to begin.

And so I excused myself, and I went and got a sip of water and found my seat. And I took my Bible and my things down, and I sat down. But I didn't get to sit down from the hall.

[ 3 : 48 ] The pastor came up, and he lifted me up out of my seat. And I've never seen this happen before, and I haven't seen it happen since. But the church was going to proceed around the sanctuary and march themselves down through the center aisle and then find their spaces and go where they were going to go as the service began.

And he wanted me to lead the procession. I said, okay. I didn't know exactly what to expect, but I got up, and he had me second in line right there behind the speaker for the evening.

And I marched us right down the middle aisle. And then again, I sat down in my seat, but not for long. Because by the time the pastor came by, he again lifted me up and pointed me up onto the stage.

And the whole time I'm saying, I'm underdressed. I'm unprepared. I'm not sure exactly what's going on here. But he wanted me up on the stage. So up on the stage I went, and I sat right there on the stage in a special seat for the duration of the service.

And I'll tell you, as I processed on the way home after this is all said and done, as I processed exactly what I had just been through, I'll tell you what stood out to me. Despite the differences and maybe how we might do church, what stood out to me was that they had in place a culture of honor in their church.

[ 5 : 13 ] They didn't know me. All they knew was that I was a brother and a fellow minister of the gospel in another area and another community. And they wanted to show me honor, not for anything in me necessarily, but because we are fellow laborers linking arms together to advance the gospel of Christ.

And as I look at our passage this morning, as I studied Philippians this week, what I see is Paul is trying to implement this same sort of culture of honor here in the church at Philippi.

Paul is here in house arrest, you remember, and he's sending down the road two servants. He's making some travel plans to send Timothy and Epaphroditus, and he wants to make sure that when they arrive that they're welcomed with a big hug around their neck.

That they are received with joy when they arrive there. That they're honored when they come. And why? Well, it's because these two men, Timothy and Epaphroditus, are prime examples of everything that Paul has been talking about up to this point.

Just to refresh your mind of the context here, where we've been, Paul has been urging the church in Philippi and us to live lives worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

[ 6 : 30 ] He's been encouraging them to serve others like Christ Jesus has served you. He's been encouraging them and us to live out the salvation that God's given us in Christ.

And so now it's as if Paul looks around and he says, well, who can I point to as good examples of who's living this out? He doesn't have to look too far because right in front of him are Timothy and Epaphroditus.

What we're going to see this morning are two examples of faithful service to Christ. These are two examples of faithfulness in gospel ministry.

And these are two examples of men who are worthy of honor. We have Timothy first and then second Epaphroditus. So let's look first at what Paul says about Timothy here.

Look with me to verse 19. What's honorable about Timothy? Paul says in verse 19, he says, Now you have to kind of read in between the lines here to try and understand what's going on.

[ 7 : 35 ] But it seems to me like the best way to understand this is that the Philippian church wanted to see Timothy. Paul is in prison. He's there.

He's locked up. And so Timothy, in other words, was their next best option. And so possibly they asked, maybe through Epaphroditus as he came and visited Paul, they asked that they might see Timothy.

And so Paul here, he says, yes, you can, but not yet. And the reason isn't because Timothy's not helpful or maybe that he's in some sort of trouble or anything like that.

The reason that he's going to send him not yet is because, Paul says, I need him here. He says in verse 23, I hope to send him to you soon, but after I see how things are going to go with me.

In other words, I need to let things resolve here for a little bit and I need him here. The fact was, Paul had formed such a special relationship with Timothy that in his moment of deepest need under house arrest, not sure whether he's going to live or whether he's going to die, he wanted Timothy there by his side.

[ 8 : 45 ] Timothy here, he's a model, I think, of Christian friendship. Christian friendship. He's like a son with a father, Paul says. It's not just that Timothy is useful to Paul, although he was.

Paul is relationally close to Timothy and he wants him there with him in his hour of need. And let me just say, church, we need friends like this, don't we? We need friends like this who aren't just useful to us, what we can get from them, but friends that we know are for us, are there with us in our times

of need, and that we want to be walking alongside us in our deepest and our darkest moments. That's what Timothy is here for Paul. Not only this, Paul says Timothy is a model of selfless love. It's a model of selfless love.

Paul says in verse 20, I have nobody here like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. And then he throws somebody else under the bus here. I'm not sure exactly who he's talking about, but he says, well, they all seek their own interests, not the interest of Christ. And it could be that he's referencing, again, these teachers from chapter 1, you remember, who were preaching Christ out of selfish ambition to harm Paul, to harm his ministry. Regardless, he says, Timothy's not like that.

[10:07] Timothy is not just seeking to gain his own influence and his own popularity. Timothy, I have nobody here like him who's going to be genuinely concerned for your interest.

He's a model of selfless love. And you remember, this sort of selfless love is at the very heart of what it means to live out your identity as a Christian. You remember the call from the past few weeks.

He called us, let your life be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Complete my joy, he says in chapter 2, by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. He says, I don't know of anybody around here who's living that out more than Timothy. Timothy, he's doing it. He is working out his salvation.

[11:09] And in doing this, Timothy ultimately, he's a model of Christ-likeness. The reason why Timothy is so selfless and so others-focused and so concerned with their welfare above his own is because Timothy has seen and experienced the selfless love of Christ Jesus for him.

Timothy knows Jesus who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant.

Timothy knows Jesus who came in human flesh. Timothy knows Jesus who humbled himself, and he knows Jesus who went to the cross for our sake.

Timothy gets it here. He gets it that if Jesus had loved him like that, if Jesus gave himself away, his life away for him, well, then he can turn around and give his life away for others.

If Jesus has loved him like that, well, he can love others. He can give his life away for their good. He can count others more significant than himself. Those who know Christ want to be like Christ.

[12:21] Those who've received Christ want to give Christ to others. Those who love Christ want to imitate Christ. Those who have been served by Christ want to turn around and serve others with the love of Christ.

That's what it means to be a Christian. You first allowed the king to serve you and wash your feet, and then Jesus says, you go and do likewise. That's my disciples.

That's what it means. That's what it looks like to live out your salvation. Timothy here, he's a model of Christ likeness. But not only that, last one here.

Paul says, Timothy's worth has been proven, been tested over time. Timothy is a model of proven faithfulness.

In other words, he's not a rookie here. Verse 22, he says, You know Timothy's proven worth. How as a son with a father, he has served with me in the gospel.

[13:24] Let's zoom out for a minute and think about how Timothy has served with Paul in the gospel. Timothy and Paul have known each other at this point in the story. Timothy and Paul have known each other for about 10 years now at this point.

And I think it's helpful to remember some of his story. The first time that we see Timothy is all the way back in Acts chapter 16. And you might remember the story. You can flip there if you'd like to. Paul is making his way through.

He's advancing the gospel. He's about to embark on his second missionary journey. And he comes to a place called Derbe and Lystra. And it says that there's a disciple there named Timothy.

And at this point, even already, his reputation has preceded him. It says that other disciples in the area are speaking well of Timothy. He's already got a track record of faithfulness there.

But let me tell you, that's about to be battle-tested real quick because, listen to this, Paul takes Timothy with him, and the very first thing he does, it's in the same verse right there, it says this.

[ 14 : 24 ] It says, Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and he took him, and he circumcised him. Y'all think about that for a minute. Men, okay?

Men, think about that. If that's not a test of your willingness to be serious about the mission of the gospel, I don't know what is. And Paul says Timothy has proven his faithfulness.

I believe him. So Paul scoops up Timothy. He takes him with him. They go together to a place called Philippi, and together they plant the church in Philippi.

And they move on to Thessalonica, and together they plant the church in Thessalonica. Timothy gets to sit in and have a front-row seat, as Paul explains, and reasons with the Thessalonians about the death and resurrection of Christ.

He has a front-row seat to these lessons. And then together they go to Berea, and they get to see the Jews there receive the word with gladness, and examine the scriptures to see if what they're saying is true.

[ 15 : 30 ] And it says that Timothy, he wanted to stay back in Berea, and so he does. And Paul goes on to Athens, but Paul's not there five minutes before he says, I need Timothy with me. And he sends word.

Acts 17, verse 15. He sends word and says, get Timothy to come back with me as soon as possible. See, this guy, he's not just an extra mouth to feed.

He's not just extra baggage for Paul. He is a vital part of the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. They were together in Corinth. They were together in Ephesus.

Timothy was right there alongside the Apostle Paul, so that now at this point, ten years later, Paul can look back and he says, you know Timothy's proven worth.

He's got a track record of faithfulness we've served together. And so Paul says, you will get to see him eventually, but not yet.

[ 16 : 28 ] I need him here. I need him here. Instead, here in verse 25, instead, I'm going to send you Epaphroditus.

Look there with me to verses 25 through 30. We see Epaphroditus. And I think it's kind of hard to miss the tone here. Again, we're reading in between the lines here, but again, I think it seems like the best way to understand this is that the Philippians really wanted to see Timothy.

They preferred to see Timothy. They'd love to see Paul, but if they can't get Paul, then send us Timothy. And so they sent Epaphroditus down the road to go minister to Paul's needs so that hopefully they could free up Timothy to come and see them.

But here Paul says, well, I can't send Timothy to you. Not yet. Not yet. I need him. So verse 25, I've thought it necessary to send you. Drum roll. You get Epaphroditus back.

So maybe to prepare the Philippians in case they were going to be disappointed or even just to help pour Epaphroditus' pride, Paul makes it clear here that this guy, Epaphroditus, he's nothing to turn your nose up at.

[ 17 : 45 ] And he is just as much a minister of the gospel as I am. He's just as much worthy of honor. And so receive him in the Lord, verse 30. Don't grumble about it.

Receive him with all joy and, in fact, honor such men. Honor such men. So let's see why.

Now, admittedly, we don't know as much about Epaphroditus as we do about Timothy. We see Timothy all through the New Testament. We just have a very small window into the person of Epaphroditus.

But we do, I think, have a few clues here into his character. For one, I think it's clear that he's trustworthy. He's trustworthy. Well, why do I say that? Well, apparently the Philippian church thought so.

They sent somebody down the road all the way from Philippi to Rome with a big bag full of money to give to Paul. And who did they trust to do it? They trusted Epaphroditus.

[ 18 : 43 ] They entrusted him with the funds and the resources of the church. Not only that, he's a messenger of the Philippian church. They trusted Epaphroditus to represent them and their words and their heart and their sentiment all the way down the road to Paul.

Who did they send as their representative? They sent Epaphroditus. He's a trusted servant. Not only that, I think we can tell here that Epaphroditus must have been bold.

Must have been bold. I mean, who is willing to travel that long road with all that money? That's dangerous. That's not a safe journey to make. There's danger at every corner, but they sent Epaphroditus.

Epaphroditus was willing to walk into Rome as a Christian and to be publicly identified with a prisoner who might well be executed. They say, that's my friend. I'm here to support him. I'm here to be with him. Epaphroditus, he's a bold servant of the gospel. We can tell that just from the circumstances here. But Paul, he describes him here in verse 25 with three images that I want us to focus in on because these three descriptions, I think, are three ways that we ought to understand ourselves, view ourselves in Christ as Christians, but also three images that we ought to think of each other in the church this way.

[ 20 : 05 ] This is how we ought to view one another in the church. Look there to verse 25. You'll see it. He calls him a brother, a fellow worker, and a fellow soldier.

You see that? He is a brother, he is a worker, and he is a soldier. He is family, he's a co-laborer, and he's in the same war here.

He and I are of the same family, with the same objective, and we fight the same fight. So let's look at each one, and as we do, I just want you to ask yourself, do I see myself like this?

And secondly, in the church, do we see one another like this? Okay, so the first one here is family. Family. Do you realize, Christian, that if you are in Christ, the moment you put your faith in Christ, when you hear the gospel, that God's own son has lived and died, and risen in your place, when you put your faith in the son of God, John 1, it tells us that, all who receive him, who believe in his name, are given the right to become children of God.

That is unfathomable good news. Sinners, like me, are rescued out of our sin and shame, out of the darkness, out of belonging to this present evil age, and we are now adopted into the family of God.

[ 21 : 32 ] If you're in Christ, you're a child of God, which means, when you look horizontally at your brother and sister, in the same row as you, if you are in Christ, you got a big old family of brothers and sisters, who are also in Christ.

That's the church. Do you see yourself as family? Not only that, church. He says, we need to see ourselves as co-laborers in the gospel.

Co-workers in the gospel. Trying to accomplish a goal together. Not just coming together for family meals, that's what we're doing right now. Okay?

Not just coming together for family meals, but gathering together, and then scattering, wherever the Lord would send us, to accomplish the task. Ask. Paul knows, he understands, there's a mission to be accomplished.

He's given his life to spread the gospel, to plant churches, to equip the saints, to see non-believers come to faith, and to see believers come to maturity. And he says, Epaphroditus is right there with me in this.

[ 22 : 36 ] He is linking arms with me. He is laboring alongside me. Receive him like you would receive me, because he is a fellow worker with me in the gospel.

He is family, and he is a fellow worker. And so church, ask yourself, if you are family, are you working? If you're family, are you laboring for the advance of the gospel?

And are you doing it together? And we're about to celebrate Thanksgiving, this upcoming week. Many of you will gather and eat with family.

You know what you call people, that just come to the family meal, but don't actually do any of the work around the house. Y'all might have a few words for them that I won't say here.

But it's probably one of two things. They're either children. Children don't do much work around the house. They receive the food, but they don't normally do the dishes.

[ 23 : 35 ] They might be children, or they might be a guest. You don't make your guests do the dishes, do you? Sometimes, maybe. They're not expected to normally.

They're either children, or they're a guest. Well, church, the same thing is true in the family of God. If you are a part of the family, and yet you're not putting your hand to the plow, eager to advance the gospel, wanting to be a part of the mission, of the Great Commission, linking arms together, it may be that you are spiritually young, spiritually children.

You're new. You're young in the faith. Spiritual children come in all shapes, sizes, and ages in the church. Or it may be that you're a guest. You're not yet part of the family.

If it's the first, if you're a child in the faith, well, the call for you is to mature in the faith, to continue to grow in Christlikeness, and maturity, to put your hand to the plow together as a church.

And if it's the second, the call for you is to repent and believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, that you too might be saved. That you too might be adopted into the family of God.

[ 24 : 48 ] Paul says we're family. He says we're co-workers. And then he gives one more image here. He says we are our fellow soldiers in a spiritual war.

Is that how you see yourself? Is that how you see one another? It's so easy to forget that what exists out there is not all that, that is not only just what we can see with our eyes and touch with our hands.

There's a very real spiritual battle going on at all times under the surface. And so we need to ask ourselves, are you fighting the battle? And are you fighting it together?

Do you see yourselves as soldiers in a spiritual battle? That's how Paul sees Epaphroditus. He's a man worthy of honor as a brother, as a co-worker, and as a soldier.

Not only this, one more. One more reason here. Paul says Epaphroditus is worthy of honor. He says Epaphroditus is a picture of godly love.

[ 25 : 55 ] The picture of godly love. Look there with me to verse 26. Paul says, He, Epaphroditus, has been longing for you all and has been distressed because he heard that he was ill.

Indeed he was near to death, but God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.

I think it's clear that Epaphroditus loves Paul. He came all this way to minister to the needs of Paul. He braved the dangers of the road, braved the dangers of the city, to come and to minister to the needs of the apostle Paul.

He loved Paul. I think it's clear that Epaphroditus loves the Philippian church. You hear that, don't you? And the way he speaks about them. He's longing for you all. He's distressed.

Do you hear why he's distressed? It's because they heard that he was sick. Here's Epaphroditus on his deathbed, and he's worried about the Philippians hearing that he's sick.

[ 27 : 06 ] I think of Miss Linda. We went to go visit her in the hospital several months ago, and she was sick. Very, very, very sick.

And as I went to go speak with her, you know what she wanted to talk about? You. She was concerned for you. She even apologized, if you can believe it, that she had been caught up on her birthday notes and her birthday cards and her love letters to you all.

She was concerned for you. That's gospel love. Epaphroditus loves Paul. He loves the Philippians, and I think it's clear where all of that type of love comes from.

Because Epaphroditus loves Christ. He loves the glory of King Jesus to the point where he is willing to risk everything and die.

And he nearly did die, Paul says in verse 30, for the work of Christ. He's risking his life to complete what's lacking in your service to me. Epaphroditus is who he is because of the love of Christ for him.

[ 28 : 16 ] Both of these men, Timothy and Epaphroditus, they are who they are because they have been radically transformed by the grace of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

They love the Lord, and so they are who they are. So, Paul says, for these reasons, receive him, joyfully welcome him, and honor such men.

So here's what I want us to do, church. I want to close by applying this to us, and I have six applications here for us as we close.

The first is straight from the text, which is this. Church, honor such men. Honor such men. You think about the type of people that our culture honors, that the world celebrates.

It's the strong, and the popular, and the successful, and the beautiful, and the rich. In the church, we are called to give honor where honor is due.

[ 29 : 17 ] And Paul says, you honor men like this. Honor men who are in love with the Lord, who model selfless, sacrificial love. Honor men who are eager to serve.

Who give away their lives for the sake of Christ. Outdo one another in showing honor, Paul says in the words. Church, let's build, and let's foster, let's encourage a culture of honor right here.

See you back. Honor such men. Second, imitate such men. Imitate such men. The danger, I think, and building a culture of honor is if you lift guys like this up on a pedestal and think that, well, these people are superhuman in some way.

I can never be and do what they are and what they do. Well, listen, they are incredible examples, but Timothy and Paul and Epaphroditus, these are just people.

These are people who have been shaped by the grace of God. And so as we honor them, we're meant to also aspire to be like them. To look around you and see models of men and women who are running hard after Christ and say, God, would you make me like that?

[ 30 : 35 ] Would you make me like Paul? Would you make me like Timothy? Would you make me like Epaphroditus? Run hard and imitate those who are following Christ.

Third, invest in such men. Invest in such men. Raise up such men. Disciple such men.

Church, we need more disciple makers who will do what Paul did for Timothy and say, come on, come with me. Come sit with me while I go labor, while I go teach, while I go argue, while I go present the gospel.

Come with me. Plant this church with me. We need more disciple makers. We need men and women who will invest themselves in raising up leaders in the church who not only focus on their own growth, but they begin to instead focus on the growth of others.

And if you want to grow in your walk with Christ, if you're wanting to aspire to grow up in maturity, look around you at somebody who is where you want to be and you go tell them, I want you to take me with you.

[ 31 : 49 ] Imitate and invest in such men. Number four, women, find and date and marry such men. And men, find and date and marry such women.

Don't date somebody mainly just because of how cute they are or how funny they are or how much you get along. Go marry an Epaphroditus.

Find you a Paul. Find you a Timothy or the female equivalent. Find a mate, a partner who is on fire for the glory of God and the gospel of Christ.

So you might run out from that same target together. Number five, parents and grandparents, raise such men, such women.

Raise your children to be Epaphroditus. Raise your children to be Timothy. Raise your children to be Paul. And we don't speak about this, but you remember Timothy's background.

[ 32 : 57 ] We hear it in 2 Timothy. He says, I'm reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt in your grandmother, Lois first, and also dwelt in your mother, Eunice, and now I'm sure dwells in you.

Timothy was the product of two faithful, praying, godly women who raised their grandchild and their child up to know the scriptures and to love the Lord with all his heart and all his mind and all his soul and all his strength.

And then they were able to deploy him out into the world to shoot him out like an arrow into the world. Parents and grandparents, our aim is not just to raise healthy, happy children.

Our aim is to raise and to shape men and women who love the Lord and who understand the mission and who would give their lives for the sake of Christ, men and women who are worthy of honor.

So lastly, number six, application number six. Church, would you pray for such men? Pray for such women.

[ 34 : 06 ] This is spiritual work and it can only happen by the grace of God at work in us, but church, I want our fellowship, our pride, our congregation to be full of Paul's and Timothy's and Epaphroditus's.

Amen? Amen. Would you begin praying for one another that God would do this in us? That God would bring to us men and women like this and that God would look around you wherever the Lord might lay on your heart that God would shape your brother and sister in Christ to be your friends. Would you pray, God, make us like Timothy, make us like Epaphroditus and ultimately, Lord, make us like Christ that he belongs all glory and all honor and all praise.

Let's do that now. If you would, let's bow. Pray, Father. Father, we see examples like this in Scripture and we think that can never be me, a father.

How wrong that is. It's impossible in the flesh, but by your grace at work in us, Lord, you might shape us to be like Christ and so we pray that's what you would do for this church.

[ 35 : 25 ] God, would you raise up disciples, men and women who would run hard after you, men and women who desire to know you and make you know. Father, would you make this church full of Timothy's and Paul's and Epaphroditus's for the sake of your glory here in all and all I do.

I pray in Christ's name. Amen.