

A Vision We Can't Live Without

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[0 : 0 0] The following message is given by Walt Alexander, lead pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Athens, Tennessee.! For more information about Trinity Grace, please visit us at TrinityGraceAthens.com.

Philippians 2 verse 19. There the Apostle Paul writes, I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you again.

For I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare, for they all seek their own interest, not those of Jesus Christ.

But you know Timothy, or Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served 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. Verse 25. 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.

[1 : 2 0] 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 add sorrow upon sorrow. Verse 28. 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.

It's the word of God, a big chunk for us this morning. I think it's the biggest chunk we've handled, but it's a wonderful word.

I'm excited about diving into it. You know, it's been said numerous times that a picture is worth a thousand words. Yeah, I found this to be freshly true when I read an article recently about the country of Rwanda.

[2 : 3 5] In the early 1990s, Rwanda, a small country in Africa, broke out into a civil war between the Hutu and the Tutsi people. You don't know much about this. The hatred and racism between these two peoples within this country was great and was obviously revealed in this war.

But in 1994, still in the midst of that war, during a hundred-day period, the war reached genocide proportions when well over 500,000 Tutsis were killed.

Not to mention all the other crimes that tend to accompany war. And over 20 years, Rwanda is still trying to heal. I had a friend with me in seminary that was from Rwanda, and all of his family was killed.

One particular organization, though, is working to bring reconciliation one relationship at a time. I loved reading about this. They would counsel and help perpetrators, and when appropriate, would bring them to interact with and ask forgiveness from survivors.

One sought forgiveness because a man's brother was killed in his presence. Another because he killed a young lady's father. Another because he killed a lady's father and three brothers.

[3 : 51] Another because he burned down a woman's house and tried to kill her and her children. Obviously, these stories are horrific, but the article didn't just tell stories.

It included pictures of perpetrators with survivors. Some of the pictures were warm, where no doubt the conversations had led them to be, and perpetrators and survivors were holding hands and almost arm in arm.

Others were not warm. Both seemed broken, still, and angry, still. But all of the pictures told a story that the words could not.

It was one thing to read the article, but it was a whole other thing to see the faces of survivors 20 years later, still seeking to make sense of what happened to their family and their country, or to see the faces of perpetrators desperately seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.

Indeed, I would agree, a picture's worth a thousand words. Well, beginning in chapter 1, verse 27, the apostle Paul has been calling us to live a life of unity, humility, servanthood, and contentment.

[5 : 09] But in these texts, rather than continuing to exhort us, in our text this morning, it's as if Paul lays out a picture. He takes 12 verses in this letter, nearly a tenth of the book, to show us, to give us a picture of what true servanthood looks like.

He takes us into the details of these two men's lives, Timothy and Epaphroditus, because he doesn't just want to exhort us, which he has done since chapter 1, verse 27, but he wants to compile a picture.

He wants to give us an image. He wants to give us a vision for how to live. Elton Trueblood said, every man needs a perpetual vision of greatness, and this passage, I think, can afford for us a vision of greatness, a vision of servanthood that will shape us in ways that are profound.

And that's what makes these verses stand out. And that's why I'm really excited about them. It's what makes them precious. Because sometimes we're shaped more by what we see in someone than by what we hear about them.

So in a word, where we're going is, never lose a vision for true servanthood. We need a vision. Never lose a vision for true servanthood. It's worth your whole life. Never lose a vision of true servanthood.

[6 : 29] It's worth your whole life. Now, believe it or not, I'm breaking the preacher's rule this morning. I got eight points for you. Or did I say nine? Is it nine?

It's nine. Yeah, yeah, I was debating, you know. Could have done 10, 12. But nine, actually. And so we're going to move fast in order to get them all in. So nine points.

First point, true servants are rare. You know, as you probably notice upon reading this, this text returns to this conversation Paul's been having with the Philippians.

If you remember, he was in jail and the Philippians sent a gift to him so he writes back to them to thank him. And he says he wants to send Epaphroditus, which we saw in the first section, or he wants to send Timothy, but right now he's going to send Epaphroditus to check up on them, to care for them.

He wants to come to them too, but first he plans to send these two men. But the first thing he notes about these men is that true servants are rare. Look at verse 20. He says, I hope to send Timothy, verse 24, I have no one like him.

[7 : 38] For I have no one like him. Now if you know anything about the Apostle Paul, he traveled with an entourage. You know, he traveled with men, with co-workers that he trained and trusted.

They were partners in his ministry. And at the close of the book, don't turn there right now, but he says, the brothers who are with me, as I'm writing this letter, the brothers who are with me greet you. And so these brothers were rich.

So what he's saying when he says, I have no one like Timothy, he's not saying, none of my guys are like Timothy. Does that make sense? He's not saying, I don't have any with me who are like Timothy.

They all were. What he's saying is that when I consider all people, there's basically no one like this man.

Verse 21, look down there. This is where he says, why? Verse 21, he says, for they all seek their own interest.

[8 : 35] You know, seeking our own interest is not a problem. What he's saying is seeking our own interest is not a problem for some people, some of the time. Seeking our own interest is a problem for all people all of the time.

So he's saying, I have no one like him because virtually all people just seek their own interest. You know, our culture encourages us to seek our own interest at all costs.

Tempted to go down a few rabbit trails there, but I won't do it. Sometimes churches can join right in. I don't do this very often, but one development I've been concerned about is numerous churches streaming services through smartphone apps or virtual reality.

Yeah, I'm concerned for how they reduce what a church is. It's not a content for me to consume. It's a people for me to live out the faith in, but I'm also concerned for how they put self-interest in the driver's seat.

One comedian humorously describes virtual reality church like this. And this is actually a video that I'm not going to show right now, but he says, are you tired of waking up early to get ready to go to church?

[9 : 45] Strap on a headset and go to virtual reality church with a few clicks. You can customize your dress. This makes me wonder what kind of dress we are. Protestant, Catholic, or non-Denom dress, which I think is great.

You can customize the skinniness of your worship leader's jeans right there. You know, you're sick of this baggy boot cut? You know you can change that right there.

You want to go introvert? Well, you can cut out the welcome team, the meet and greet, which we just awkwardly did, or the connect cards. You don't like a song? Just skip it. You know, Ben starts one you don't like?

You just skip it. You don't want to miss the game? Virtual reality church allows you to set notifications to tell you when to exit church so that you don't miss the game's kickoff.

Now, obviously that's meant to be humorous, even though y'all didn't laugh very much. But I dare say it is hard not to be just as focused on our own interests on Sunday morning.

[10 : 49] Self-interest is not something we have to work to seek. It's like falling off a log. You know, it comes so effortlessly, continually, and passionately, and only biblical Christianity confronts it.

The gospel alone rescues us from self-interest and the dead end to which it leads. You remember this, 2 Corinthians 5, I've concluded this, the love of Christ compels us because I've concluded that one has died for all, therefore all have died, that those who live might no longer live for themselves, but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Self-interest dies only through the gospel. And that's why servants, true servants, are so rare because it's rare to find one who's not focused on himself.

And that's why we need a vision laid out before us. So we're going to keep moving. Point two, true servants genuinely care. Genuinely care. What makes Timothy different is his genuine concern for the Philippians.

Look at verse 20 again. He says, For I have no one like him, like Timothy, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. So if self-interest is seeking our own interest, genuine concern seeks the interest of others.

[12 : 05] You know, Paul's just saying here what he already said in chapter 2 and 3 where he says, Complete my joy by being of the same mind, being of the same love, being in full accord.

Do nothing from selfish ambition but in humility. Count others more significant than yourselves. Look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. So genuine concern equals focusing on the interests of others.

But he ups the ante here. He takes it a step further. Look in verse 21. You know, he says, They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

So he's saying, Genuine concern seeks the interest of others, but genuine concern in seeking the interest of others is not merely seeking the interest of others but seeking the interest of Jesus Christ.

Do you see that? One writer says it simply like this. Those who wish to serve Christ, the Lord, must do so by serving others. You want to know what Christ is all about?

[13 : 10] You want to know what he wants? You know what he's thinking about? What's on his mind? Serve others. Seek their interest. What are these interests, you know?

Anything that troubles. Anything that excites. Anything that perplexes. Anything that they're anxious about. Anything that someone has need of. That's what their interests are. That's what's on their mind.

And Paul says, and Christ says, Seek them. So what does it mean to seek them? It means not merely to take note of them, but to be absorbed in them.

Not merely to jot it down, but to throw your life into it so that you forget yourself in helping others. If I could use an analogy, no man hunts ducks from the bank.

He pulls up waiters and walks out in the pond. And in the Christian, in the world, true servants wade into the cares and concerns of others and become absorbed in them.

[14 : 21] They get muddy. If we're doing this right, the Christian life is, it's a dirty business. Because they make interest their own.

You know, you've heard the saying, no problem is, no problem is a problem until it's your problem. Well, in Christianity, that's not true. Because what's somebody's problem, we make it our problem because of our unity in Jesus Christ.

So this is the way it's said in 1 Corinthians, they weep with those who weep. They enter into their pain such that they weep the same tears. They rejoice with those who rejoice.

They take up their rejoicing and rejoice with them. Seeking the interest of others doesn't just mean we enter into their pain. It also means we enter into their joy. We don't envy them.

We don't compete with them. We celebrate with them. Such a wonderful thing. Those who are like Christ enter into the things of others and forget themselves just as he did.

[15 : 23] He didn't stay far off. He came near to take up our cares. Point three, true servants care deeply. In this vision, the apostle Paul holds out before us, true servants don't merely genuinely care.

They care deeply. There's all sorts of words for affection here. Look at verse 19. He says, Paul wants to send Timothy so that I may be cheered by news of you.

He wants to hear. He wants an update. You know, verse 28, Paul says he's eager to send Timothy. Remember, he's eager, you know, he's eager to resolve this problem.

He says in 28 as well that I'm eager to send him so that I might be less anxious. I carry you on my heart in such a way that if I send him and I hear an update, I'll be less anxious.

And then Epaphroditus, he's just a ball of emotions. It says, Epaphroditus, he says in verse 26, he's been longing for you all. Longing. Is there anybody you've been longing for?

[16 : 28] Not romantically, but in a community. He's been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Now this is just wild. He's distressed.

He's in mental and spiritual anguish. This is the same word used for Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane when those tears were dropping and they seemed like blood. But he's distressed because he's afraid that you might, or he's afraid they might feel bad knowing he was ill in bringing their gift to Paul.

Does that make sense? He's distressed because of the illness he encountered when he came to bring their gift. He's distressed because he doesn't want them to feel bad. That's incredible.

So why is this highlighted? Why does it matter? I mean, if we care, or if we genuinely care, if we seek the interests of others, why does it matter that we care about it deeply? I mean, we're splitting hairs.

If I'm focused on the interests of others, why does it matter that I care about it, you know? Let me use an analogy. Valentine's Day is this week. And husband, you should bring your wife Wednesday night.

[17 : 40] We're going to have some fun. But you should also get something for her on Valentine's Day. Some of these American holidays are totally hilarious, but I won't go into all that. You know, how much I want to be a part of them.

But you should get them for her, you know? Get her some chocolates or something. Get her a rose, you know? And when you come home, maybe you knock on the door.

You got some roses in your hand or maybe some chocolate. and she says, honey, honey, why did you do this for me? Don't say, I just knew it was the right thing.

Jesus said, I love your wife and I'm just trying to do the right thing. I'm trying to check the boxes, walk the line, tow the line, whatever you want to say. Say, honey, why did I do this? Because I love you. And there's nothing I'd rather do than shower you with love.

Well, that analogy gets it. The Christian life is not about doing the right thing. The Christian life is about loving the right thing.

[18 : 43] That's all parenting is. We don't want to just shower them with rules. We want them to love the rules. We want them to love the walls. And I got an amen from one of the kids back there. We want them to love these things.

We want them to be emotionally invested in what Christ cares about, to serve with affection and joy. But you get it? True servants care deeply. That's why we need a vision. Something to sustain us.

Something to shoot after. Point four. True servants follow. True servants are not afraid to follow. In fact, they embrace it. They love it. He continues telling us about Timothy in verse 22.

He says, You know Timothy's proven worth. How as a son with a father he has served me, served with me in the gospel. So all men seek their own interests, but this is a proven worth Timothy.

And as I said, Timothy is one of Paul's entourage. He's lived with Paul. Paul picked him up on one of his journeys. And four times in the New Testament he calls Timothy my true son.

[19 : 44] It's just this wonderful relationship. Two letters are written to Timothy in our New Testament. He travels with him. He's trained by him. He cares for him. He's sent by him. And here Timothy's called a son. Not merely because they're close.

But because Timothy's followed him. Timothy imitates him. That's his proven worth. What he's saying is you know Timothy and his proven worth is that when he comes to you, when he comes to Philippi, it's going to be as if I was there.

He's followed me. He imitates me. He carries my ministry. Does that make sense? But this underlines a very important reality for us about servanthood, about life.

You know we hear it said like father, like son. Oftentimes mothers use this humorously when their son does something annoying just like their father often does.

But it's meant to underline something powerful. We become like those we're around and we follow. You know my mom quoted to me bad company corrupts good character.

[20 : 59] Probably knew that one. Judge not lest you be judged. A few others like that that kept in there. But we become like those we're around. Sons are often like their father. Whether they want to be or not.

I've been in the church long enough to see kids that just all they want to do is rebel. Yet when I interact with them I see more of their parents. than they could ever realize. They become like them because they're around them.

And they naturally begin to imitate and act like them. You know beyond even parents we naturally follow those around us and imitate what they do.

Psychologists call this a herd mentality. You know we naturally choose what fits in with the herd. I guess we're likened to pigs in this scenario. But we like or we naturally choose what fits in with the group.

And that's why peer pressure is so hard to resist. But it's also why social media is so powerful. One of the early investors in Facebook to the tune of \$500,000 said he did it because he knew it was so well built to serve people's need to copy.

[22 : 12] We used to say copycat in grade school but you know it served their need to copy. Now think about that with me. We don't know what we want or who we are so we have an instinct to copy and to compare ourselves with others.

So the danger of social media is not just the time wasted on it but the danger of following and imitating of comparing and copying the wrong people.

Does that make sense? we naturally copy and that's why it's dangerous. So true servants follow and imitate Christ and godly people. I love the way Tim said it just a moment ago.

Find someone you want to be like and be with them. I have a friend or I mean not a friend an author who says do analog social media. What he means by that is go interact with people face to face.

You know if you're trying to figure out motherhood well find a woman and invite yourself over. Trust me it works. You know if you're a man and you're trying to learn to pray invite a man that you've heard pray one of these men and say can I sit down can we pray together twice a month?

[23 : 27] Can we do this? Do analog social media connect face to face because that's where that's how they begin to shape our lives. You know social media gives us a cheap picture but we're in the trenches with somebody we see how they act when things aren't going well that's the real them and that's what shapes us most deeply so do it true servants follow in this way we need a vision because it helps us know where we're going we don't just need the right things we need somebody to live it out you know fifthly true servants are known that's the first time I've said fifthly in a sermon but true servants are known I'm not going to make it a habit either but Paul continues and begins talking in verse 25 about Epaphroditus you know while he plans to send Timothy he says in verse 19 he sends Epaphroditus now Epaphroditus is in fact the one who brought the letter to Paul from the Philippians and brought the gift and now he wants to send him back now we don't know much about Epaphroditus this is the only book he's mentioned in the New Testament but we know all that we need to know about him from these verses the first thing he says is that Epaphroditus is known well look at verse 25 so that I've thought it necessary to send to you

Epaphroditus my brother now we fly past this word but great meaning under lies lies underneath it we use brother and sister all the time perhaps because of a hippie background like me or a thug background like some of you or perhaps because you forgot somebody's name so we say brother or sister but brother and sister in the New Testament are some of the most wonderfully basic ways to describe our new found identity in Christ brother it's rich with meaning you know we don't just call anyone brother or sister we call someone brother or sister when we walk together with them and we know what they believe and we know truly how they live and then with knowledge we say he's my brother not of human blood but of the blood of Jesus Christ so Paul tells the Philippians Epaphroditus he says my brother he's not a lone ranger he's not a tenorant preacher he's not going from town to town doing revivals he's not someone who sounds good but no one knows and I know we all know people like that he's a brother he's known he's thrown his life into something so true servants are known they find folks who share their failures burdens sins and there they find friendship counsel and wisdom sixly true servants fight true servants fight verse 25

I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier you know the word is described this word is used to describe soldiers side by side in combat Paul called the Philippians in verse chapter 1 verse 27 to strive side by side for the faith of the gospel not to be frightened by any opponents but to fight you know the work of the gospel is not combat but the work of the gospel nevertheless contains many fights and sufferings and what he's saying is true servants are those who have taken up their cross and all the sacrifice shame and suffering that comes with being a fool for Christ they've taken up they've locked arms with people that are known to suffer for Christ the idea is that true servants are not just nice people who couldn't do anything else with their lives they're people who press into trouble they carry the gospel into trouble they step forward into trouble they lean in to the bullets so to speak one of the passages in the bible that haunt me more than any other is Isaiah 39 you probably know the story

I mean Isaiah 1 through 39 is all about the downfall of Israel and Hezekiah is king the Lord delivered him a couple times but he still didn't get the lesson and he's told that one day judgment is coming to his house one day heads are going to roll and all the gold in Jerusalem is going to pad the gold in Babylon and Hezekiah he's at the end of his life is relieved Isaiah 39 ends sadly where he says there will be peace and security in my days deeply sad I don't want to think like that that's not the way true servants think true servants aren't like that true servants don't rejoice that trouble might miss them and be laid on the people after them true servants are trying to take it up they're trying to fight for the cause of the gospel so that it would be easier for the next generation to carry it forward that's all

I want to do with my life is to carry on the gospel so it's easier for my my son and my daughter and my other son true servants fight for seven I mean seventhly true servants meet practical needs true servants meet practical needs he continued in this description of Epaphroditus and he adds your minister to my need Epaphroditus as I mentioned came with a gift to Paul and this gift undoubtedly was monetary Paul was in prison the Romans did not pay for him to eat like we do the people that are incarcerated in our country he was without supporting he was dependent on their gifts their money supplied his needs I love the way they said that the minister your minister according to my need minister this word in the New Testament is used for someone who preaches or pastors but not here

[30 : 03] Epaphroditus' ministry is wonderfully practical true servants are not dreamers or idealists they're not all talk their lives are made up of tangible selfless actions to serve others and meet practical needs they're active true servants they work they strategize they exhaust themselves in meeting practical needs so servanthood is not lowly though in this way it's Christ like Jesus came did not save us from afar he did not wave a wand he stooped low and came into the world he became a man he took up tangible!

concrete! actual! selfless! acts! in order to rescue us from our sin true servants are just like him that's why we need a vision we need a vision of Christ we need a vision of these men to meet practical needs eighthly true servants make costly sacrifices this sketch of Epaphroditus just keeps getting better and better look at verse 27 it says indeed he was ill near to death verse 29 it resumes this verse 30 it says he nearly died for the work of Christ risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me now we don't know what happened to Epaphroditus we don't know what this illness was but we know he's very ill and near death and this service though is curiously worded in verse 30 it says he risked his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me what Paul means by this is that the Philippians obviously cared for him they loved him they rejoiced to hear the gospel progress and they prayed for him they labored with him in the service but in the spirit but they could not serve him they could serve him in those ways by praying by carrying his burdens spiritually but they could not serve him practically does that make sense so what he's saying is they were in

Philippi he was in Rome and so how they served him practically they sent a paproditus and so he completed what was lacking in their service of him does that make sense and Paul's writing to tell us that he paid the costly sacrifice you know this is not something he paproditus would go back into Philippi and say hey did you hear the story about me you know that's not the type of man this is but did you hear what I did on the way to Rome I almost died you know whatever maybe he'd share it like a prayer request could you pray for me I'm just trying to get over all my costly sacrifices lately or something like that you know but he paid the price that's why Paul's writing him true servants are just like him they make costly sacrifices and meeting practical needs they give up freedoms and preferences they do there are a few things they won't give up and few things they won't do so they press into it you know in our little church plant I want serving to be a joy I think it should be I think it's right we're saved to serve as one of my friends often says but I know serving will not always be a joy for us there can be plenty of days when the work of Christ feels just like that work and when it does there's nothing wrong you're just following in the line of Timothy

Epaphroditus and our sacrificial savior Jesus Christ and visions like this they orient us when we feel like we're going astray they're powerful ninthly true servants are truly great and will find great reward true servants are truly great and will find great reward after this wonderful sketch of true servanthood in the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus Paul concludes appropriately look at verse 29 he says so or therefore receive him in the Lord and honor such men you know no doubt in Paul's day as in our own true servants are far often overlooked the work goes on quietly and often unnoticed attention is naturally drawn to the one up front to the one with power to the one with prestige to the one with influence but Paul is writing these words to draw their attention to the presence of true servanthood in the lives of these men and thus true greatness as Jesus taught true greatness is found in those who serve others for the glory of God true greatness is found not in those who serve themselves but those who serve others for the glory of God one commentator wrote this about Mark 10 he said in a word the reversal of all human ideas of greatness and rank was achieved when Jesus came not to be served but to serve the reversal of all human ideas of greatness and rank was to you when Jesus came not to be served but to serve the idea is that if the greatest of all came to serve if the greatest of all the king of all the richest man of all came to serve then true greatness is found in serving others greatness does not belong to those who have wealth to those who have power or influence or authority or the most toys greatness belongs to those who serve often without notice and so

Jesus said whoever would be great must be your servant whoever would be first must be last so Paul is saying in this passage when he says receive him in the Lord and honor such men he's saying don't buy the lie don't miss it don't look up to the powerful or the successful or the influential or the whatever look up to those who serve aspire after them be like them chase after them those are the great the reason I'm shouting is we hear a different message all week long true greatness is not found in the one who has the most toys true greatness is found in the one who stoops the lowest the one who would bow down to serve again and again Jesus says he doesn't merely tell us it's true greatness he says those who are truly great will receive great rewards this is a promise mark 10 29 he says truly I say to you there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive hundredfold in this time houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and land with persecutions in the age and in the age to come eternal life true servants and Jesus just constantly waves it around in front of us in a way that's almost hard to bear hard to understand that rewards await it is impossible to believe God unless you believe that there's great rewards for those who have faith is what Hebrews 11 6 says there's great rewards

[37 : 31] I recently read a story about one of President Bush's visits to Walter Reed Hospital to give a soldier from Iraq the Purple Heart one aide wrote about this story it deeply affected me he said the hardest days of the presidency were when the president went to visit the wounded and families of the fallen he regularly visited patients at Walter Reed Hospital near Washington D.C.

and one morning in 2005 I accompanied him the president was scheduled to see 25 patients that day we started in the intensive care unit the president was briefed on the first patient we'd see he was a young marine who had been injured when his Humvee was hit by a roadside bomb at his bedside were his parents his wife and his five-year-old son the president said what's his prognosis he said well we don't know sir because he has not opened his eyes since he arrived but no matter what Mr.

President he has a long road ahead of him we had to wear masks because the risk of infection was too great for the patient yeah when we went into the room I was worried he writes that they might be mad at him and blame him for their loved one's situation but I was wrong the family was so excited to see the president they gave him big hugs thanked him over and over the marine however was on the ventilator after the family after the president visited with the family for a bit the president turned to the military aide and said okay let's do the presentation the wounded warrior was being awarded the purple heart given to service members who suffer wounds in combat everyone stood silently while the military aide in a low and steady voice presented the award at the end of it the marines little boy tugged on the president's jacket and asked what's the purple heart she writes the president got down on one knee and pulled the boy closer he said it's an award for your dad because he was brave and courageous because he loves his country so much and I hope you know how much he loves you and your mom too and he hugged the boy but then there was commotion from the medical staff as they moved toward the bed the marine had just opened his eyes medical team said hold on guys

I think he wants the president the president jumped up president bush jumped up rushed over the side of the bed he cupped the marines face in his hands and he looked eyes and after a couple minutes the president without breaking eye contact said to the aide again read it again and so we stood silently as the military aide presented the marine with the medal for the second time the president had tears dripping from his eyes onto the marines face and as the presentation ended the president rested his forehead on the marines for a moment now everybody was crying for so many reasons the sacrifice the pain and suffering the love of country the belief in a mission and the witnessing of a relationship between a soldier and his commander in chief that the rest of us could never fully grasp I love that we were all sobbing because we witnessed the relationship between a soldier and his commander in chief that the rest of us could never fully grasp but that's a wonderful story that's an incredible story but it pales in comparison to our commander in chief and what we await and what he awaits to do on that day when we return home he will not miss anything you've left to serve him maybe you've left a close family living close to them maybe you've lost friends maybe you've given up promotions to be devoted to the cause of

Christ well he will not miss any of it he will not miss a single sacrifice not a single act not a single cup he will look you full in the eye with those eyes that are flames of fire is what revelation one tells he'll look you full in the eye and say well done my good and my faithful servant it's unthinkable how could we who deserve his wrath have a relationship with this commander in chief in this way but nevertheless he says expect it anticipate it he'll say enter into my joy come on then enter into my joy you know that's why we honor people it's right but it's also a foretaste of heaven where the rank in honor of this world's stupid standards finally fall completely away and the rank and honor lies with those who truly serve never lose a vision gosh we need a vision for true servants worth our entire lives there are few things we need more than this it's so life giving and worth giving our entire life let me give an assurance and a caution as we close the assurance is this message was not from me to correct you you guys are the best if there's a corrective word in there from the spirit receive it from him not from me we try to work together no

[44 : 00] I'm just kidding the caution I would give you don't eat an apple in one bite you know Rome didn't fall in one day I want you to be compelled by this vision but careful with the details we will not all be like Timothy and Epaphroditus tomorrow but we can take small steps we can hold on to this vision we can take small steps to be like him to live in completely to serve Jesus Christ that's God has for us and it's a wonderful thing let us pray father in heaven thank you for this morning thank you for these minutes thank you God that you who are great and abound in love and mercy that you who have set your throne in the heavens and you whose kingdom rules over all you who possess immortality and are excellent in every way we thank you that you are the one who stooped to serve we thank you that you stooped to serve to save us but we also thank you that you stooped to serve to show us what following you looks like what taking up our cross looks like what living a life sold out for

Jesus Christ looks like we give you thanks come Lord supply strength to our weary legs help us to run all the way so that we might hear those words one day soon we do pray that you would come soon Lord because we long to be with you Jesus name Amen