

Philippians 2:19-30

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- [0 : 0 0] This is the fun thing about the mobile pulpit, I can come as far up as you guys want to retreat, so we'll make this nice and interpersonal tonight.
- You know, the Christian life is called a walk. And I remember when my son and my daughter were learning how to walk. They would sort of watch people do it for a while, and then they'd pull themselves up on a piece of furniture.
- But eventually, if they were going to venture out, they needed a couple of things, right? One thing is they needed help. You've seen, you know, the mom and dad early toddler walk, which breaks your back.
- So you walk around with their kids holding on to your fingers. So they needed help. They also need some instructions sometimes. Put one foot in front of the other. If you don't move your feet, you can't walk.
- But you know the third thing that helps your kids start to walk? They watch. And they see other kids running around. And they see.
- [1 : 1 5] That's why second kids always start walking earlier than the first kid. Because they're watching their older brother. And they want to be like him.
- And they want to go do what he's doing. And so they get up and they walk earlier. And they imitate what they see in the older sibling.
- In this letter of the Philippians, if you've been here already and if you haven't, that's okay. We're going to just fill you in. And the Apostle Paul has been writing to this church and encouraging them in their pursuing a life of following Jesus.
- Pursuing their walk with God. Chapter 1, he talked about how do you suffer well? How do you suffer for the gospel? What does it look like to face even death with confident hope in Jesus and in the resurrection?
- And then in chapter 2, he talked about how do we treat one another? How do we interact with one another in a way that reflects Jesus who left the glory of heaven and humbled himself even to the cross for us?
- [2 : 2 7] And so Paul has been laying before us not easy steps of life, right? These are some of the hardest things. How to face death. How to be humble before one another.
- Those are some of the hardest human things for us to do. And yet, he says this is what it means to follow Christ. This is what it means to be a follower of him.
- And he would acknowledge. That it's hard. He would acknowledge that like a small child, we can't do it on our own.
- Before we explore our passage, I want to just ask the question, why is that? Why do we have such a hard time being humble or facing death? Well, it's because there's this thing in us called our sin nature.
- That all of us are born with this desire not to follow God, not to love other people, not to do good and right. But sin, one of the things it does is sin curves us back into ourselves.

[3 : 34] The very, the sin nature that we have makes us incredibly self-oriented people. What does this look like?

And how does it prevent us from living this kind of life? Well, in one way, one of the ways it does it is sin can make us arrogant. We think really highly of ourselves.

I'm better than you. And, you know, sometimes arrogance is simply like, I'm better than you. I'm smarter. I'm stronger. I'm faster. I can do anything better than you can. Right? Sometimes it's like that.

But sometimes it's also just, hey, I'm unique. I'm different than you. And in my arrogance, I'm just going to say, I'm not like you at all.

I'm going to separate myself out because I like this unique category where I am the center of my world. And I am the paradigm of what I ought to be. The rules don't apply to me when I'm this unique person over here.

[4 : 34] It's one of the ways that I think arrogance plays itself out in our lives. But it ultimately makes us very curved in. And very self-oriented. Another way that sin curves us in is that we think, having rebelled against God and rejected God as the one who can provide, we think we have to provide for ourselves.

And so one of the patterns of sin in our lives is that we think it's up to us. And so we go running after relationships and money and security and identity.

And we hop on hamster wheels of life just trying desperately to build a life. And we think it's all up to us to go and get it and to do this on our own.

And we become driven. We end up using people instead of loving them because we're seeking this goal of what can we get from people to provide for ourselves.

It creates an incredibly self-oriented life. And sometimes, too, it just looks like I just want to do what I want to do to make me happy.

[5 : 44] Just plain old narcissism or pleasing ourselves. Right? It's the kind of thing that maybe you have experienced this. I experience this sometimes on a Sunday afternoon.

I've had a long morning at church. And I come home. And honestly, there are days I just want to lie down on the couch and watch a little football. And maybe fall asleep and take a nap. You know?

And I am thinking only of me. I have a wife. I have kids. I have... There's lots of other things that I could be thinking about. And in those moments, I just think it's all about me.

And it's so easy to do that. And, you know, sometimes we do this really blatantly. I don't care what you think. I'm going to go do what I want. Right? But sometimes there can be ways in which we can build this sort of self-orientation about our needs or just wanting to be pleased in things that look like they're really constructive.

So, I'm really committed to my career. Because it's my investment in the kingdom of God. And so, I'm really committed to doing that well.

[6 : 53] And, you know, there can be a good sense in which that's true. But there can be... We need to be careful. Because we can be so committed to pursuing our career that it's really all about us.

It's all about this makes me feel important. This makes me feel good. And so, I'm going to continue to invest more and more and more in that. Or my family.

I want to invest in my family. Or my studies. And these are good things. And they're stewardships that God has given us. And we're supposed to be responsible with them. But there can be a way in which sin creeps in.

And it makes us all about us. And when we are this self-oriented, we don't know how to be humble before one another.

And we certainly don't know what happens when we die. Because everything we've been doing in our lives has been building up about us. And what happens when I come to the end?

[7 : 51] I don't know about you. But in our sin, we don't know how to live differently.

How to escape from these things. I grew up in a family. A great family. A loving family. But not a Christ-centered family. I love my dad dearly.

But he didn't know the Lord. And so when I became a Christian and I started to engage in this. How do I live this life that God has called me to? I didn't know how to do it.

And I didn't have examples. He could teach me how to walk. But he couldn't teach me how to follow Christ. Maybe you're like that too.

And that's what brings us to our passage tonight. Philippians chapter 2. I don't know. What page are we in in the Pew Bible? I forgot to bring it up. One. One.

[8 : 52] What? 9.81. There we go. 9.81 in the Pew Bible. If you want to look with me. Philippians chapter 2 verses 19 through 30. And as you're flipping there.

Let me just make a comment. It's really interesting. This is one of those passages. The passage right before is a clear sort of exhortation. This is how you should live as Christians in the world. This is what I exhort you as a church to be and how you should live.

And now we get to this section that sort of raises a question. How do we understand this? Because it's kind of like listening in on a conversation between Paul and this church that isn't, that feels much harder to apply to us.

So I'll just acknowledge that and then I'll solve that after we read it and pray. So Philippians chapter 2 verse 19. 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.

[10 : 09] I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me. And I trust that the Lord, I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

I have thought it necessary to send you, send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my need.

For he has been longing for you all, 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 also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

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

For he nearly died for this work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Let's pray.

[11 : 13] God, help us as we read your word tonight to understand it and to apply it to our lives. Lord, thank you that you give us your Holy Spirit to help us understand it. And Lord, thank you that, Lord, our understanding is not simply meant to be in our head but also in our heart.

Lord, that we would be transformed not only in what we think but what we love and how we live. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

Amen. So, what we see here is overhearing Paul writing to this church about his interaction with these two men.

But as you look at it in the greater flow of the book, what I want you to see is that the Lord has included this interaction because he has given us pictures of lives that are worth imitating as we pursue Christ.

Lives that imitate Christ that are then worthy of our imitation. And so, that's what we're going to look at is how is it that these two men, Timothy and Epaphroditus, how do they show us a little bit about who Jesus is?

[12 : 22] And then, what does it mean that they are worthy of our imitation as well? How do we think about that and apply that in our lives? So, we're going to walk through it.

So, first of all, verses 19 through 24 talks, Paul writes about Timothy. I hope to send Timothy to you soon. Now, if you don't know who Timothy is, Timothy's been one of Paul's ministry companions.

Paul's been traveling all over Asia Minor and Southern Europe proclaiming the good news about Jesus. And Timothy has been a partner with him. He's traveled with him. It's clear that Timothy is with him in prison, it seems, during Paul's captivity.

And did you notice there was a descriptor in there that was really powerful? He said, he has been like a son with a father to me. And so, they have had this intensely intimate and close relationship.

And in the first century, too, that had more meaning than it might to us today. Anyway, excuse me. If you were a father in the first century and you had a son, whatever you did, not just in your life, but for your employment and for your work, you would raise up your son to follow in your footsteps.

[13 : 38] So, if you were a baker, then your son would also be a baker and his son would also be a baker. And so, you would pass it along. And so, a father-son relationship wasn't simply one of intimacy, but it was also one of training, one of raising someone up to walk in the footsteps that you've walked in in your life as a father.

And so, Paul says, like a son with a father, so Timothy has been with me in this engagement. And what I want you to see, particularly about Timothy's life, there's lots of things that we could say here.

There's a lot to say about Paul's love for the Philippian church that sort of bleeds out of this passage. But I'm going to let whoever's preaching in a couple of weeks talk about that when we get to chapter 3.

But I want to focus a little bit. Verse 20, look with me there. This is the thing that Paul is so thankful for, Timothy, and why he wants Timothy to go and see the Philippian church.

Because he knows that Timothy isn't going to go with an inwardly turned, self-seeking attitude and perspective. But Timothy is going to go with his concern being for them and for their welfare and for their good.

[15 : 10] And not just that, but notice verse 21 follows on top of that. For they all seek their own interests. That is, they all who are not like Timothy, right?

They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. So his interest in them isn't simply that they're happy and healthy and well fed and have clothing and shelter.

And that their life is generally free from suffering or hardship or trial. His concern for them is the concern that Jesus Christ has for them.

His concern is particularly for their spiritual life. This is what you see then as he unfolds it in verse 22. How as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.

And here it means in the ministry of the gospel. And so for Paul, as he's commending Timothy, as he's sending him off to this church, he's saying, Listen, I am sending you this guy.

[16 : 18] Do you know why? Because he is going to care about what Jesus wants in your life. And that is that you would understand the power of the gospel more and more deeply in your life.

That you would be transformed by God's grace. Out of the selfish, self-centered person that you are. That you would be more and more someone who honors Jesus and lives a life of love for others.

This is the agenda that Paul has for the Philippians. And he says, I want to send Timothy to you because he is going to come and bring that to you.

And he's going to be an example to you of what it looks like. As a matter of fact, he's going to be an example to you of what I just wrote to you at the beginning of the chapter. Look back with me in chapter 2, verses 1.

So if there's any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy. That is, if there's any gospel, spiritual life spark in you at all.

[17 : 29] Complete my joy by being of the same mind. Having the same love. Being in full accord in one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit.

But in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look out not only to his own interest. But also to the interest of others.

Have this mind among you which was also in Christ Jesus. So Paul's saying, I've just told you that this is how I want you to live.

And now I'm going to send Timothy because he will come and show you what it looks like. Because that's the kind of man he is. Because he has understood the power of Jesus in his own life.

He has experienced it and he's seen it. What does this look like practically? To be concerned about the interests of others? Spiritually not our own?

[18 : 30] It means a couple of things. First of all it means that we have to acknowledge other people exist. Now I say that because I don't know about you. But if I'm walking down the street of New Haven.

And I'm going to a meeting. Or I'm on my way home. Or it is very easy for me to walk past the sea of humanity that I see. And not see them as human beings made in the image of God.

For whom Christ died. And to whom maybe God would want me to minister. I see them as impediments to me getting to my goal. And I just ignore them.

And hope that they get out of my way. I don't. So I don't know. Maybe I'm the only one who does that. But it's so easy for me to be so self-absorbed. That I don't see the people around me.

The way Jesus sees them. I don't think about what is it. What is Jesus' interest in these people's lives. And you know it's easy to laugh about it. When you're talking about the strangers we walk by in the church.

[19 : 32] Or on the street. But what about the people who you live with. Your roommates. Or your family. What about the co-workers that you see every day.

What about the really hard people to love. The co-worker who's really annoying. And kind of snarky. And doesn't get their work done on time. That you really wish you didn't have to work with.

What does it mean to. What I want you to see is that acknowledging them. Is the first step to be able to see God's interest for them.

And being an instrument in their lives. First we acknowledge them. Then we need to initiate with them. Because God is a God of relationship. And he sent Jesus to die for us.

So that we might have a relationship with him. And we need to be following in those footsteps. By initiating relationships with people. And so we have to actually talk to them.

[20 : 28] To open our mouth and say. Hi my name's Matt. How about you? How long you been working here? Whatever. Whatever it is. We need to initiate. Then we need to pursue relationships.

Not just do it once. But do it over and over again. And because we live in a fallen world. Full of inwardly turned people. We'll be the only ones doing it. And so you'll have to initiate 85% of the time.

Get used to it. It's normal. And it is the pattern of Christ. And it is the pattern what Timothy. Would have lived out as he went to Philippi.

And then we need to invest. I remember when I was a freshman. I was. I think I've told this story in here recently. But I was an arrogant cocky freshman. Who thought that I had all the answers.

And didn't need a whole lot. And there was a. An upperclassman named Clay Ramsey. And you know. Clay saw that I had great zeal. And not as nearly as much wisdom.

[21 : 27] And humility as I needed. And so he pursued me. He just said hey. Come hang out with me. Let's go have lunch. I'm going for a walk. I'm going to go study in the library.

Do you want to come study with me? And over time. As he initiated. And pursued me. And interacted with me. I didn't even know he was doing it.

It took me until I was like a junior. To realize that. That he was pursuing me. Out of an interest for Jesus life in me. And he was sharing his life with me.

And sharing the things that God was doing in his life. And sharing the Bible with me. And pointing me to passages of scripture. That he'd been reading. And in the midst of that. God used him in my life.

To humble me. And soften me. And mature me. It was a long process. And it was only the very beginning. But I'm thankful for someone like that. And that's the thing that God could use us to do.

[22 : 24] So Paul holds up Timothy. As an example. Of having the interest of others. Jesus interest for other people. As an example. We need to ask ourselves a question.

When we walk into our workplace. Or our home. What are we thinking about? Are we thinking about the interest of Christ? Or are we thinking about our interests. And our agenda for the day? When you think about how you invest.

Your discretionary parts of your life. Your money. Your time. How do you invest those things? Are you thinking. How do I take that time. And make it about me. And my own pleasure.

Or do I think. How do I take these things. And invest them. For the sake of others. For Jesus interest in them. So that's Timothy. Worth imitating.

Because he imitated Christ. The second guy we see is in verses 25 through 30. Epaphroditus. That's a great name. We probably will never name our kids. Epaphroditus. And what I want you to see.

[23 : 23] There's lots here in this about. Paul obviously has a. Just to clarify. His relationship. Epaphroditus was from Philippi.

So he was from this church. And he had come. And brought. A gift. That probably was. Monetary. Or physical help. For Paul. Because he was in prison.

And in prison in the first century. They didn't give you three meals a day. And a TV. You had to be taken care of. By your friends. They didn't do anything. But throw you in a pit. And so.

So this was. This. Epaphroditus came. From Philippi. To where Paul was in prison. And in the meantime. He had gotten sick. Even to the point. Where he was going to die.

Right. And so Paul's saying. This guy. Who's come from you. To me. Has. Has. Lived such a life. And I want to send him. Back to you.

[24 : 18] So that you will be encouraged. Because I know you've heard. That he was sick. And as a matter of fact. He was distressed. Distressed. The way Jesus was. In the garden of Gethsemane. Distressed.

That you are worried about him. So I need to send him back to you. So that you will be at peace. So that I will be less anxious. So that you will be blessed. By this man.

Because. This is the key thing about him. It's in verse 30. He nearly died for the work of Christ. Risking his life. To complete what was lacking in his service.

For Epaphroditus. The work of the gospel.

What Paul was doing. In telling other people about Jesus. Was so significant. Was so important. Was. He was willing. To die for it.

[25 : 16] He was willing to lose his very life for it. Friends. This is convicting. Isn't it? Stop and think. What are you willing to die for? Not very much.

Maybe your loved ones. In an extreme circumstance. Of great heroism. Where your common sense is overcome. By adrenaline. You might.

Dare to die for someone. But certainly not for strangers. Let alone your enemies. Epaphroditus.

Said. The cause of the gospel. Is so great. That I'm. That. That I would even be willing. To die.

For you. How could he do this? What is it about the gospel. That would make someone willing to die? Well it's fascinating. Because part of the reason we've seen. Is in chapter one. Paul said.

[26 : 17] My greatest desire. Whether in life or death. Is that God would be glorified. Why? Because to live is Christ. If I stay on earth. I continue to live in a fallen world. And I suffer. But if I die.

I'm free from suffering. And I go to be with Jesus. The gospel. That Jesus has died. On the cross for our sins. And raised. Is raised.

From the dead. For our. New standing with God. And new life. In God. Frees us. From the fear of death.

Because if we have been. Brought in. To that great transaction. That God has done in Christ. By faith. If we have entered in. By trusting in that.

Then even death. Is not a great loss. Death. Is a translation. Into the very presence of God. Himself. And it will be a glorious entry.

[27 : 15] Into an eternity with him. And so for Epaphroditus. It's so worth doing it here. Because even if I die. What what's the worst that happens to me?

I go and I be with Jesus. What a great thing. That is. The gospel defeats.

The power of death. And the fear of death. In our lives. And the gospel. Gives us. A life now. That we're. Meant to live. Paul said. To live is Christ.

To stay here. Is to be here. For the sake of others. To show them. What God has done. In Christ. For others. If you're here tonight.

And you're exploring Christianity. Maybe you're thinking. Is this really. Is this really worth it? Part of what I want you to see. Is for Epaphroditus. What God has done for us. In Christ.

[28 : 11] Was so worth it. That he was willing to die. It is an all encompassing. And glorious thing. And I encourage you. To continue. To explore it.

Continue to come. And talk to us. About what does this mean. And who is this Jesus. And why does it make a difference. Why would it make someone. Want to die. Not like a suicide bummer. Bringing.

Destruction. But laying down your life. For the benefit of other people. Because that's what. Epaphroditus did. He did it.

Because that's what Jesus did. He who is. The glory of heaven. Came down. And humbled himself. Made himself. Made himself a servant. Even unto death.

On a cross. For you. And for me. So his life is exemplary. Because. He would do anything.

[29 : 07] Even die. For the sake of other people. Knowing more. About Jesus. So the question for you. And for me. If you're here. And you're professing faith.

Tonight is. How costly. Has your faith been to you. I remember. One of my seminary professors. Told a story. About a missionary. Been off on the field.

For 40 years. He came back. From the field. Six months. To the day. From when he came back. He had. Divorced his wife. Run off with the secretary.

And denied Christ. How could he do that? My professor. Asked a friend. And the friend. Wisely said.

Well. I'm not sure. That following Christ. Ever. Was. Particularly costly. Until this point. And at this point. It wasn't valuable.

[30 : 03] Enough to him. To continue. He loved other things. More than he loved Christ. So his pursuit of Christ. Was only. When it was easy. An example of Epaphroditus.

Challenges us to think. Has our faith. Cost us something. Now we don't have to run out. And create some crisis. It'll happen. But what we need to do.

Is to be ready for it. And to see that. If it comes. When it comes. Will you hold on to Christ. When it means. Maybe losing your job.

Will you hold on to Christ. When it means. Letting go of a relationship. With someone. Who's turning away from Christ. And not towards Christ. Will you hold on to Christ. Christ.

When God sovereignly. Intervenes in your life. And takes something. That you love away. A hope. A loved one. A dream. A dream. Will you hold on to Christ.

[31 : 02] When it costs you something. Deeply. To do it. So Timothy. Is a model.

Of having the interests. Of others. Epaphroditus. Is a model. Of loving others. So much. That he'd be willing. To die. Because the gospel. Is that worth it. So these are men.

Who. Have walked. In the footsteps. Of Jesus. They've shown us. What Jesus is like. The third part. Of this passage.

Is then. The call for us. To honor. And imitate. Look at me. In verse 29. So receive him. In the Lord. With all joy. And honor. Such men. Honor. These men.

Timothy. And Epaphroditus. Don't only welcome them. And give them a fruit basket. And say. In a bottle of water. And say. Can I get anything for you? Don't just honor them. With hospitality. But honor them.

[31 : 57] By imitating their lives. In chapter 3. Verse 17. Paul will say. Brothers. Join. In imitating me. And keep your eyes. On those who walk. According to the example.

You have in us. Like a small child. We need. Other examples. To see. What it's like. To actually live.

The life that God. Has called us to. In Christ. And there's a word for this. It's called discipleship. It's called. Looking for other people.

Who have walked with Christ. A little bit more than you. And seeking them out. And being with them. And spending time with them. Because you know. You need it. And if you are here.

And you've been walking. With Christ for a while. You should not only. Continue to be seeking. Those people. But also thinking. Are there people. Who are newer in the faith. That I can come alongside of.

[32 : 53] The way Clay Ramsey. Came alongside me. As a freshman in college. How can I be the one. Who in the footsteps. Of Timothy. Is taking the initiative. And reaching out.

And welcoming someone. Into my life. Not because I'm. Some great theologian teacher. But simply because. I'm walking with Christ. And as we spend time together. And if we have interests.

About Jesus Christ together. We will grow. In that. One of the greatest desires. I have for our church. Is that this would be normal. That when people walk in here.

They're looking to be reaching out. To one another. Because I need you. Because. Because I have a stewardship. Of my life. To share with others. Wherever you're at.

In this system. That God would have. This kind of thing. I had. The benefit. When I was in college. Of three couples.

[33 : 47] Who discipled me. They met with me. Every week. Wayne. Bill. And Tim. Three completely different men. Different generations. Different. Backgrounds. But I got to see.

The life of Christ. In every one of them. And I look at them. As my spiritual fathers. In ways that. My dad. For all the ways. That he loved me.

Never could. And I'm so thankful. For them. And my prayer. Is that you. Would come. And find others. Like that here. Spiritual. Mothers and fathers.

Big brothers. Big sisters. To pursue this with. To imitate.

To imitate. These men. To imitate. Others. As they imitate. Christ. Is the calling. Of this passage. This is why. We get to overhear. Paul.

[34 : 40] Writing to the Philippians. About these men. Because we are. Being wrapped up. Into this. Imitate these. As they imitate. Christ. Christ. And to see that. As a pattern. Of how God.

Enables us. To grow. In the church. Because friends. This is imitating. Christ. He who came.

Not to be served. But to serve. And give his life. A ransom. For many. That the freedom. From our self. Orientation.

Of sin. Was bought. By his. Laying down his life. And his interest. For us. When we didn't deserve it. And didn't care. That the godliness.

Of our lives. That the ability. To reflect God. In our lives. Was purchased. By he. Who laid down his life. For us.

[35 : 34] And so we are called. To imitate. Those. Who imitate Christ. Let's pray. God. Thank you. For this word.

Thank you. For these men. I pray. Lord. That you would. Help us. Lord. To see Christ. Lord.

To see Christ. In the men. And women. Around us. Who are. Not perfect. Yet. Who are. Walking with you. And following you. Lord. Help us. To continue.

To pursue. Growth. As a community. By encouraging. One another. Seeking out. Lord. These discipleship. Relationships. Where we can. Spur one another on.

To know you. God. Thank you. That you have. Lord. In your church. From generation. To generation. Built your church. Through raising up.

[36 : 30] Those. Whose lives. Are worthy. Of imitating. And by bringing. Behind them. The next generation. Who can see. And follow in their footsteps. As they follow Christ.

God. We pray you would do these things. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.