

Subject: *Faithful Christian Servants*

Scripture: *Philippians 2:19-30*

Last Wednesday night we sang a song titled “The Greatest Thing.” It is a very simple and song built around three wonderful statements: the greatest thing in all my life is KNOWING you; the greatest thing in all my life is LOVING you; the greatest thing in all my life is SERVING you. The songwriter put those three statements in the right order. When we know God we will love God, and when we know and love God, we will serve Him.

Philippians 2 is all about serving God. Paul began this letter (1:1) by identifying himself and Timothy as “servants of Jesus Christ.” In chapter 2, Paul calls for unity and humility among church members, then he mentions Christ as the perfect example of humility (2:5-11). As Paul closes chapter 2, he is still writing about Christian service and refers to Timothy and Epaphroditus as good role models of faithful servants. We all find it helpful to learn by example. Many people now turn to the internet to learn how to do something by watching a video of someone doing it. We say “a picture is worth a thousand words.” In the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus we see the qualities of a faithful servant.

1. THE EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY (vs. 19-24)

A. He was available

Paul mentioned Timothy 24 times in his NT letters. Paul was ready to send Timothy to Philippi, and has no doubts that he is willing and ready to go. Timothy was available to serve wherever the Lord needed him. Three words describe a faithful servant...*anytime, anywhere, and anything*. The greatest ability is availability. A person may be extremely talented and gifted, but what good is it unless he is available? A young man went to apply for a job and he wasn't really qualified for the job, but he got it anyway. In his interview the boss asked him, “Tell me, what can you do?” He said, “I can do what I'm told.”

B. He was dependable

Paul intended to send Timothy for a visit and then have him report back about their needs and current situation. He could trust Timothy to give a reliable report, not to forget important details or embellish things. He knew that Timothy would tell it like it is.

C. He was concerned about others

Timothy was a kindred spirit with Paul. “Like-minded” means “of equal soul” or “one soul.” He and Paul were the same kind of soul—the same passions, the same goals, the same zeal for ministry, the same commitment to truth, and the same concern for others. It was his nature to care for others. That wasn't his old nature, but it was his new nature as a result of his new birth.

D. He was committed to the things of Christ

We understand what Paul means as he writes, “for all seek their own.” That would include their own possessions, their own pleasures, their own plans, their own priorities, and their own places.

What does Paul mean by “the things which are Jesus Christ’s”? That would include His Word, His worship, His work, and His will. You will see on Facebook where people post a lovely picture of a beach or mountain scene with the caption: “This is my happy place.” I wonder how many could honestly post a picture of reading the Bible or singing in worship with the same caption: “This is my happy place.”

E. He was consistent

By the time Paul wrote Philippians, Timothy had been his constant companion for about 10 years. Timothy’s life was well known (NASB, “You know of his proven worth”). This word has the idea of being proven after testing. He was with Paul when the church was founded (Acts 16). He had proven his loyalty over time in his ministry with Paul (“served with me in the gospel”). Some of us have reached out to people who have fallen away from church. They are no longer in worship and no longer serving the Lord, and in those conversations they will say, “I know I’ve been lazy, but God knows my heart.” Yes, He sure does, and so does everybody else. The evidence of real faith is faithfulness. Where our heart is, our feet will follow.

2. THE EXAMPLE OF EPAPHRODITUS (vs. 25-30)

This man is not well known like Timothy. Very little is known about him, but what we do know is all good. His name means “charming, lovely.” He was a faithful man.

A. He was faithful in many ways

Look at the ways Paul describes him. He was Paul’s brother in Christ. As a brother, they had the same Father and were in the same family. That is one of the most common designations we use for another believer, a brother. If you’re at church and you can’t remember a name, it’s safe to say, “Hello, brother.” But Paul refers to him in several other ways. He was a companion in labor (fellow worker). He had obviously served with Paul. You can’t say that about everybody.

He also described him as a fellow soldier. He had fought the good fight of faith with Paul. You definitely can’t say that about everybody. He referred to him as a messenger from the church at Philippi. A messenger must be someone that can be trusted. And he also referred to him as a minister on behalf of the church. What a man!

B. He was concerned about others

He longed for the church and was heavy-hearted not because he was sick, but because he knew the church had heard he was sick. The words “full of heaviness” (vs. 26) are used to describe Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

C. He was willing to risk his life for Christ

Twice in the text we read that he was sick and almost died (vs. 27, 30), but in verse 30 we are told why he was sick...for the work of Christ. Some people get sick of working for Christ, but he got sick while working for Christ. He didn’t regard his own life. He was willing to pay the price to serve others. What a man!

Timothy and Epaphroditus had a lot in common, and one thing was that both men were givers and not takers. Someone said: “The world is made up of givers and takers. The takers may eat better, but the givers sleep better.”

We don't know exactly all that Timothy and Epaphroditus did, but we know they were faithful, and that's what matters.

1 Corinthians 4:2 *Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

God does not call us to be successful, popular, or impressive. He only calls us to be faithful. That's what He expects and that is what He deserves. May God help us to follow the worthy examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus, who were faithful Christian servants.

A good example may inspire us, but it cannot enable us. We need power on the inside. We need Christ and a new heart if we are going to be faithful servants.

The key to faithful Christian service goes back to the cross and realizing what Christ did for us. We give our lives for Him because He gave His life for us. It's exactly what Paul wrote in ***Romans 12:1*** *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*