

Phil Ch 2 Vs 19-30

(Like-minded laborers)

D.L. Moody once said, “People ask me, “How would you get a church to work?” Well, 1st I would go to work myself. Some are always telling others to go to work, and they don’t go themselves. Get a few people blest, and others will come and want to go to work. I never saw a working Christian yet but what he was a rejoicing one. When you are working you are not troubled with doubts. Christians wonder why they have so many doubts. It’s because they are all the time occupied with themselves. We must work for others, and if we work for others we shall ourselves be blest. “He that watereth shall himself be watered.””

Ch 2 of the book of Phil has so far demonstrated to us 2 people who were not mindful of themselves and having themselves served but rather concerned for the needs of others and esteeming others as better than themselves. The 1st of which was Jesus Christ Himself, the ultimate missionary, who took the ultimate mission’s trip in not thinking of Himself, or what would be in it for Him as He stepped out of the eternal into the temporal. Not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many, to lay down His glory and pick up the shame of the cross that you and I might be reconciled to Himself. Had He thought of Himself none of us would be sitting here today but rather we would all be perishing in our sin.

So in light of the example of Christ the Holy Spirit through Paul the apostle says in Ch 2:3-5 “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*” and Then it goes on to illustrate how those qualities surfaced in the life of Christ. Next we see the example of the apostle himself and how even as Christ didn’t count His life dear to Himself, but rather was willing to die for the benefit of others. Paul exemplifies that same mind set, the mind of Christ, when he says in vs 17 (read), and he’s speaking here of the impending death sentence that’s sort of looming over him for the work of the gospel. and He says hey, if I’m being brought to my end for the sake of the gospel, for being faithful to my Lord, then I rejoice. and He speaks here of the drink offering, and compares his life to being poured out as a drink offering.

We find the 1st mention of the drink offering in Gen ch 35 when Jacob had his name changed to Israel, and he took a pillar and placed it in the place where the Lord had spoken to him and he poured out a drink offering on it. We see the drink offering again in Leviticus and Numbers and we find that it “signified the dedication of the offerer himself to God.” (From J, F, B Commentary) and Paul sees his end as the final commendation, or the ultimate in demonstration in dedicating himself to God, their faith being the sacrifice and service, his life just being poured out around it as unto the Lord.

He says in vs 16 you just make sure that it's not in vain, that I haven't run in vain, Paul would often refer to this life as a race which ended with the ending of our lives on this earth. and He was consistently exhorting us as believers to run well, to finish the race in 2 Tim 4 we find that once again Paul is in a situation where he knows this time it's the end for him, he wasn't sure here, but there he's sure and in vs 6-7 we read in a similar tone, *"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."*

You see he led by example and encouraged us in like manner, again in writing to the Corinthians he said, *"Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified."*

I have to admit that when it comes to discipline that's something that I see as lacking in the church today. We seem to shun the discipline of buffeting our flesh for the sake of the gospel and we wonder why God's not moving in a more profound and powerful way. But God won't move through the flesh, and when that's all we're moving in so much of the time then it stands to reason that God stands hindered in what He desires to do because He's chosen to move through people. Yet we look around and see people in the world discipline themselves for various things that they consider worth their while. Be it training for a swim meet or the Olympics or whatever, you see these gymnasts and these runners who train their whole lives for a couple of minutes on the floor, or a 400-meter sprint or something.

I mean countless hrs of training, grueling physical discipline, all their buddies eating burgers and fries and they're always doing chicken salad, all their buddies going out on the weekends and they're at home or in the gym training. For what, a little gold medal and their name in a book that no one will remember 20yrs from now and many of us much less than that. But that's not your gig, your training for an eternal reward and crown that won't perish and to have your name; I want my name in the only book that matters, the Lambs book of Life. That's all that matters to me, now if they'll discipline themselves in order that they might be the most effective individual in their field they can be, how much more should we be disciplining ourselves to be the most effective we can be concerning eternal matters? People's eternal well being, and yet more often than not people become disqualified from service due to simple lack of discipline. They couldn't give that area over to the Lord and were ensnared by sin and disqualified, oh maybe not from heaven, but in the service of the kingdom, and the only thing I can figure is that in many cases Kingdom business must not be worth our while.

You say, “but Jeff you don’t understand my struggle.” I don’t have to, the bible says that, “*no temptation has overcome you except that which is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.*” We are all with out excuse, because God promises us victory if we’ll only trust in Him and look to Him, but the sad fact is, we often enjoy our snare and as much as we want to overcome it, every now and then we like to indulge it.

Paul says hey, don’t be so selfish, receive the mind of Christ and run in such a way that you might obtain the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Man I don’t know about you but I want all the eternal rewards that I can acquire, look at how hard we’re willing to work for that nice house that’s rotting away day by day. Yet what do we do to decorate the mansion that we’ll inhabit for eternity, Jesus said lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where the rust and the moth don’t destroy and thieves don’t break in and steal. If we would all put ½ the effort into things of the kingdom as we do the things of this world, this would be a different place to live, but we’re to mindful of the things of ourselves and not the things of others, and may God stir us to repentance even this morning. As we close this ch we’ll see 2 more individuals who had the mind of Christ, who weren’t here to be served but to serve and to give their lives away for the sake and spiritual well being of others. Who weren’t mindful of the things of themselves and what was in it for them, but were mindful of the things of Christ, and seeking to serve others, not doing things through selfish ambition or conceit, not doing things while complaining or disputing, but doing the will of the Lord from the heart, notice with me.

Vs19-24

Now the 1st thing that I would draw your attention to as we examine this passage is something that Paul mentions twice in these 5 vs, once in vs 19 and then again in vs 24 notice he says, “I trust in the Lord.” Now as for what he’s trusting in the Lord for we’ll touch on in a minute, but in reality when it came to Paul’s life it didn’t matter what he was in reference to, or what the circumstance was that he was confronted with , he placed his trust in the Lord.

Now there’s a lesson there for you and me, especially in modern day USA. Because we consent to the fact that our trust is to be in the Lord and we can give a hearty amen to the statement that Paul just made, but the question that confronts us is, where do we place our trust? Notice Paul didn’t say but I trust in my bank account to gain me bail. To keep me in my time of unemployment, he didn’t say I trust in my credentials and education to get me ahead in life, he didn’t place his trust in job security. As a matter of fact we’ll see in ch 3 that what would have been gain to him as far as earthly “credentials” were concerned, those things that could work to his advantage in getting him ahead in this life, he counted as rubbish, absolute trash that he might gain Christ. Anything that would stand in the way of his relationship with Christ, he said its trash, anything that would seek to give him a sense of security other than Christ, he said it’s rubbish, what are you trusting in this morning concerning whatever predicament you presently find yourself in?

Don't answer that flippantly in your heart, you know the right answer to the question, but I didn't ask you what would be the ideal, what is the correct position to take, I asked you what position *you've* taken. Paul found himself in a pretty overwhelming situation, I talk to people who have lost their jobs or their homes and their situations are overwhelming them and understandably so from the finite perspective. But Paul was facing the possibility of losing his life! and When the reality of losing your life begins to sink in, suddenly what seemed to be such a big deal in our homes or our jobs begins to pale and yet it didn't move Paul to be confronted with this possibility, why, because he trusted in the Lord.

The bible says to cast your cares upon the Lord, because He cares for you, do you believe that, do you believe that the Lord really cares for you, then what are you worried about, because if God be for you, then who or what can be against you. and What can happen to us but that God doesn't take it and turn it (in the eternal scope of things) to His glory and our good, that's what the bible teaches. But what determines our confidence in these things is what we place our trust in. You remember Wed I mentioned to you a scripture from Jer that says Cursed is the man who trusts in man, who makes his flesh his strength. Whose heart departs from the Lord, and yet we get overwhelmed and shaken in our faith because we're trusting in ourselves, making our flesh our strength. and I find that when we should be trusting in the Lord the most, that's generally when our heart begins to depart from the Lord and we lean on our own understanding and our own strength.

It's easy to trust in the Lord when things are going our way, but it's when it seems like the world is crashing down on top of us, that's when it's so critical that we're careful to trust in the Lord. Because, *"blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord And whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit."* Paul finds himself in what we might call from the human standpoint "the year of drought" the heat is definitely on in his life, but he's trusting in the Lord and fruit is just busting forth from his life

. How many of us turn anxious in our "year of drought", we're not trusting in the Lord. Ps 37:3 says, *"Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness."* Now this isn't saying trust in the Lord and do good things, this is saying that you do well, or you're doing good by trusting in the Lord, and when you feed on His faithfulness. God has never let you down, now there may be times when you don't understand something, but that's not on God's end, that's on ours and so the psalmist says feed on or rehearse God's faithfulness, because great is His faithfulness.

Ps 125:1 says, *“Those who trust in the LORD Are like Mount Zion, Which cannot be moved, but abides forever.”* and Of course Prov 3:5-6 *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.”* Maybe your bible says, “I Hope in the Lord” but again remember the biblical word for hope doesn’t mean hope like I hope I make it home today, I may or I may not, when you see this word hope in the NT it speaks of an assured expectation.

So Paul says I hope, or I trust in the Lord Jesus, and he was trusting that he would be able to send Timothy to them shortly, not only so that they could find out how his trial went but so that he might be encouraged when he found out how they were doing as well. Because he’s not mindful of the things pertaining to himself but that of others and what brings him joy is the fact that others are thriving in the faith, being good ambassadors of Jesus Christ and There’s a reason that he’s selected Timothy to come to them.

Vs20

Now how is it that Timothy is able to sincerely or purely care for their state, with no ulterior motive or self-serving agenda, because he’s like-minded with Paul, which is synonymous with saying he has the mind of Christ. Not that Paul was equal to Christ by any means but he had allowed the Lord to take him to that place where he had let that mind be in him which was also in Christ Jesus and what he’s saying here is that Timothy is in that same boat. and I love that because it gives people like you and me no excuse in allowing the Lord to take us to such a place in his own due season. Because we’ve seen the example of Christ, and we can all see the need to be there but c’mon, He’s Jesus, God incarnate, how are we to attain such a status. But then we’ve seen the example of the apostle in like manner. But we’d be prone to lean the same direction with him, I mean, he’s an apostle, a writer of the scriptures, surely a different class of humanity, sold out to Jesus Christ But what can you do with Timothy, he’s not an apostle, we never read of any magnanimous miracles that he performed and he’s not even fully a Jew, he’s ½ Greek. and Then when we get to Epaphroditus, it’s believed that he’s a total Gentile, there’s no Jewish blood coursing through his veins at all.

Yet these guys have the mind of Christ, so where does that leave us? with out excuse concerning the transforming, Christ conforming power of the grace of God, but Paul realizes that unfortunately it’s the exception and not the rule that people allow the Lord to take them to this place. Because of all the people in Rome with him he says that no one else is like Timothy, if he had Timothy’s equal he’d send him and keep him for himself. But because he wants to demonstrate his love for the Philippian believers he sends the most genuine individual that he has to them, one who will sincerely care for them. Not seek a love offering by ulterior motive, not seek to make disciples of himself, but he’ll point them to Christ and not seek his own interest. It’s so easy to let our own interests creep into the things of the ministry, or the things that pertain to the kingdom. But when we do that we’re no longer sincere in our motives but rather we’ve began to seek after the things of ourselves and not the things which are of Christ Jesus, and that’s what Paul was seeing happen around him (notice).

Vs21

Now you remember that in vs 4 that word “only” doesn’t exist in the Greek, and so Paul says we’re not to be doing it (looking out for the things of ourselves) and then in vs 21 he says but everybody is doing it. Now don’t misunderstand the thrust of this, because it has the flavor of vs 15, and 16 of ch 1 and to an extent that’s accurate, but Paul isn’t saying that everyone else is out to add affliction to him or harm the work that’s happening through his life. Because if they sought only their own interest and none of Christ’s at all then they wouldn’t even be Christians. But what he is saying is that everyone else has allowed other things to get in there so that they don’t seek the things of Christ *exclusively*. Now that begins to hit home a little harder doesn’t it? When we allow those other things that appeal more to our own personal interest other than being mindful of the interests of Christ in the deal, we’ve fallen into this category, and so the brutal reality of it all is that in a very real sense we either live in ch 1 vs 21 or ch 2 vs 21. We fit into vs 21 that much is for sure (as believers) but the issue to be convicted over is which ch? Paul speaks of Timothy as a like minded (Christ minded) laborer, a rare find in the ministry, someone who just wants to serve alongside you, content with what God’s doing and not looking to further personal goals. and Those words “like minded” in vs 20 literally mean of equal soul, it runs deeper than just thinking alike. There is a unity of soul that we share, a like vision, Christ’s vision, something that many of us lack in many ways. Paul is sending his best man to them, in many ways taking a loss for himself for the welfare of the others.

Vs22

This word “served” literally means “slaved” he’s speaking of laboring for the furtherance of the gospel. You know so many times we seek to justify laziness concerning the gospel through phrases like being under grace and not law. and It’s about grace and not works, but let me tell you that grace in our lives produces works, the apostle Paul who for all intents and purposes brought to the church the doctrine of grace labored more intensely than any other apostle. and He said yet not I but the “grace of God” that was with me. Examine this mans life and you’ll find one who had more works (pertaining to the things of the gospel) probably more than any other man outside of Christ Himself who ever walked the face of the earth. So lets not justify apathy under the cloak of grace, when you understand grace, you’ll want to be busy working in the things of the kingdom. You won’t want to be a spectator any longer because God’s grace has so abounded to my life and now I want to do my reasonable service in offering myself back over to God as a living sacrifice to with whatever He wills. Timothy was Paul’s fellow slave, laboring for the gospel and he says here that he had a “proven” character, and it’s talking about “tried integrity” and having been proved under trial.

In other words he’s been tested or refined by fire and been found genuine. He wasn’t a novice or a fly by night Christian but one who had deep roots and was profitable for the ministry. and I can’t express enough how critical it is that as believers we be those of proven character, and genuine integrity, the bible talks about the need to be of good report from those both inside and outside the body of Christ and Timothy was such a man.

Vs23-24

So when he gets the verdict of his trial, he'll send Timothy to give them the news and then Lord willing when he buttons up a few loose ends or receives a release from the Lord to go, he'll follow behind him. But before then he needs to send their pastor back to them, the one who had been sent to him to minister and bring the financial gift to him. and The last mentioned like-minded laborer

Vs25-26

Now again time would fail us to exhaust these things but look at the report that Paul gives this guy, his brother (again speaking of that kindred spirit) fellow worker, or co-laborer again not looking out for the things of himself but that of others, and as if that wasn't enough he says he's his fellow soldier. and We could get into the warfare aspect of Christianity but we won't but suffice it to say that this guy has in him the mind of Christ and when it came to the gospel he held nothing back but went for it with all his heart. Paul gives him an incredible commendation placing him on equal par with himself in all 3 categories. He's of an apostolic nature, and the Philippians had sent him to Paul to minister *to and for* while he was in prison. and If he were to come back before Paul got out, they may've thought that he some how failed the mission, and so this is really the occasion that inspired Paul to write this letter. To let them know that he was personally sending him back for their benefit and so that they might rejoice and be eased in mind to see him well.

So you never know what God's up to, had Epaphroditus not fallen ill, we may've never had the letter to the Philippians and Paul took the time to address a few things in the church as long as he was writing that no doubt Epaphroditus had informed him of when he got there. But Paul is saying when you found out he was sick you got worried, and when he found out that you were worried, he was worried for you because you were so worried, and so I'm sending him back so that I can quit worrying about the whole thing. and It's kind of humorous but it's neat to see such a bond of love relationship between a congregation and their pastor. But again notice his concern wasn't for himself but for them and this word "distressed" means full of heaviness and is the word that was used to describe the emotion that Jesus experienced in the garden of Gethsemane just prior to the cross, so he was deeply troubled for them.

Vs27

Now this brings up an interesting point that we don't have time to exhaust, but notice that he had fallen sick (most believe from exhaustion) and came to the point where he almost died. and There's nothing in the text to support a miraculous healing in the sense of an immediate healing but rather what we would term as a natural recovery. Now there are those who claim that Christians should never be ill, and that illness is a weakness of faith. But only a fool would argue over the faith of the apostle Paul, he had raised the dead, healed the sick, cast out demons, people were being healed by simply touching his sweat rags.

Now, don't you think that Paul prayed for this man, we also read in 2nd Tim that Trophimus Paul left in Miletum sick. Again I have no doubt that he prayed for him, but healing doesn't take place according to the will of man, but the will of God and God has ordained that we all experience to a greater or lesser degree the school of suffering. Again we don't have the time to get into it but we live in a fallen world, and in this world you will have tribulations and part of that involves sickness, it's part of fallen humanity. I've never understood how those who claim that they're never to get sick or fall prey to cancer or whatever explain death. Do they just go "man I feel great today" and (plop) fall over dead because it's their time or what? People get sick from time to time, and the scriptures demonstrate that. But Paul says that God was merciful to him lest he should have wave upon wave of sorrow crashing over him, the Philippians anxiety mixed with the loss of a loved one and all.

Vs28-29

You see men who are faithful the Lord, His call on their life, and the teaching of His word, you and I are to honor such men and to be glad that their out there fighting the good fight, pray for them, honor them to the glory of God, the bible calls us to do just that.

Vs30

Not regarding his life to supply what was lacking in your service to me, what a Christ like example, in vs 5-8 we read of how Christ didn't regard His life to supply what was lacking in our service to the Father and so to Epaphroditus being willing to lay down his life for the sake of others. and So ch 2 closes with an incredible barrage of examples of like minded laborers, that we're to look to and imitate by the power of the Holy Spirit. and May God conform us to the image of Christ that we might be mindful not of the things of ourselves, but the things of others to the glory of God, serving one another out of our love for one another and receiving God's passion and burden for the lost, and pray that we become like minded slaves, co-laborers in the gospel. (Maybe this morning God's dealing with you and wanting to simply lead you into that 1st step in being conformed to the image of Jesus, through simply giving your heart to Him, maybe all you've ever concerned yourself with are the things of yourself, but today God's calling you out of that mentality into new life, don't resist His call.)