

KEEPING YOUR JOY - The Heartfelt Theology of an Isolated Prisoner - Part 12
Sunday, September 13th, 2020, 10:00 a.m. - Teaching #2048
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THE JOYFUL COST OF BUILDING FAITH IN OTHERS (Part 2)

Philippians 2:17-30 - "Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. [18] Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. [19] I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. [20] For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. [21] They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. [22] But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. [23] I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, [24] and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. [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, [26] for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. [27] Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. [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. [29] So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, [30] for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me."

Last Sunday we studied the first of three life lessons from this passage. ***Kingdom influence can only be found in denying self-interest.*** I must embrace the counter-cultural principle that in terms of kingdom fruitfulness and joy I must lose my life in order to find it as Jesus wants it found and fulfilled.

Now let's consider life-lessons two and three:

2) **IT IS AN UNSAFE PRACTICE TO VALIDATE MY OWN COMMITMENT TO JESUS BY THE COMMITMENT LEVEL OF MY PEERS**

Paul's words in describing Timothy are beautiful but also frightening:

Philippians 2:19-22 - "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. [20] For **I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. [21] They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.** [22] But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel."

These words should haunt us like a ghost. The probing caution lies in the words "**They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ**" (21). This is not Paul's description of the **world**. It's his description of those who were in his own line of work.

In other words, these were the people available to Paul as **options** to Timothy as emissaries to the church at Philippi. These were the people who **were** working for Jesus. These were the Christian people with Paul at Rome. And Paul says not **one** of them truly cared about the **interests of Christ**.

Think about that one for a minute. In other words **not really caring about the interests of Christ was the normal state of many of the Christians Paul knew by name and experience.** I'm somehow comforted in knowing Paul knew what it was like to dwell in such a spiritual climate.

Something else. Notice the carefully worded distinction here. To miss it is to miss

the heart of Paul's logic. These other disciples cared about **Christ** but not the **interests** of Christ. They cared about being saved. They wanted heaven over hell. They prayed. They worshiped. They were into the routines of Christian people.

And yet, what they still didn't do, according to Paul, was care about the **interests** of Christ. They weren't as motivated about what **Jesus** wanted **done** as they were about what **they** wanted **done**. They didn't want to put **time** into the **work** Jesus gave His life for.

I still remember years ago having lunch with missionary Steven Chaloner. The smile went out of his face as he described the coming prospect of saying good-bye again to his children and heading back to Africa. Then he said, "That's part of the **call**. Most of us think of the call as serving Jesus in the things we already **like** to do and **are** doing. I've come to see the call of Jesus as it **cuts across** the things nearest and dearest to me."

One of the best things that happened to me this week was the discovery, after pouring through over 26 different commentaries on this passage in Philippians, of these brilliant words from another era. One hundred and seven years ago **Dr. Robert Rainy** penned these words on Paul's description of these people who sought their own interests rather than Christ's:

"You mistake if you suppose this faulty state implied, in all these people, is a deliberate, conscious preference of their own things above the supreme beauty and worth in the things of Christ. They might honestly judge that Christ had a supreme claim on their loyalty; and they might have a purpose to adhere to Christ and Christ's cause at great cost, if the cost must finally be borne. And yet meanwhile, in their common life, the other principle manifested itself far too victoriously."

“The place which their own things held - the degree in which their life was influenced by the bearing of things on themselves, was far from occupying that subordinate place which Christ has assigned to it. The things of Jesus Christ did not rise in their minds above other interests, but were jostled, and crowded, and thrust aside by a thousand things that were their own.”

The money sentence is ***“The things of Jesus Christ did not rise in their minds above other interests....”*** You just can't say it better than that.

3) **IF YOU LONG FOR GREATER DEVOTION TO JESUS, SET YOUR ATTENTION AND ADMIRATION ON LARGE HEARTED CHRISTIANS**

Philippians 2:28-30 - “I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. [29] **So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men,** [30] for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.”

I close with this thought. If we don't admire the ***right*** people we will come to admire the ***wrong*** people. You can't miss this truth in today's world. Most of the ***“people”*** in ***People Magazine*** are noteworthy for partying all night without underwear. Most movies parade human ignorance and grossness in way designed to make us all laugh. And most Christians can't name ***ten*** famous Christians who have laid down their lives for Christ.

Let me urge a reform in our thinking. Let me plead with youth and young adults to find one person ***radically sacrificial in his commitment to Jesus and, if need be, leave all your other friends to latch on to that one.*** Pick godly examples, ***not just losers who are famous.***

Honoring the right people and ignoring the wrong ones is a huge part of authentic **worship**. This is true because your devotion to **God** can't rise above the **examples** you prize in this world. You can't divide your life around **praising God in church** and **studying ungodliness in life**. Your soul won't long survive that kind of schizophrenia.

Paul **felt** the lack of Christ-centeredness in the majority of professing Christians around him - "**They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ**"(2:21). He was **aware** of the disconnect in their lives. He could **tell** when people weren't devoted to the interests of Christ. He felt the **loneliness** of that in his soul because he knew he wasn't **with** them in their empty professions. **Do you feel that?** Or are you perfectly at home with those who are devoted to their own interests above Christ's.

I pray God creates a holy unrest among the thoughtful today - young and old alike. Test your heart with this passage today. There's more here than first meets the eye.