

Before we begin to look at the passage, I have something that God stirred in my heart this week to share with you. I was very convicted that I do not expect more from you, and have not challenged you to be more engaged with the passages we study. So let me tell you what I believe the Lord desires of this congregation.

Each week we work our way through the book of the Bible we are studying. If you believe that God is sovereignly in charge of where we are studying, as we have seen so many times in the past, then you can expect He has something to speak to you in that passage. Listen with that kind of expectation. Take it home and go over it. Meditate on it. Download it and re-read it. Look up the cross-references. Finally, apply it to your life. Let it transform the way you think and act.

Then look at the passage for the next Sunday. Guess how many verses I'll go over. See beforehand what you believe to be the main points. Read a commentary or two on the passage. Talk to others about the passage and share what you are seeing in it and listen to what they are learning from it.

Is that asking too much? If we believe in a sovereign God who loves us and wants to transform us into the image of His Son through His powerful Word, what could be more important? We act on what we believe. What do you believe? I'm not preaching to entertain you. There are a lot more entertaining pastors than me. I'm preaching the Word so that we all might be changed. Will you take the challenge?

In the preceding passage, the Apostle had challenged the Philippians to be more like Jesus in preferring one another through genuine humility. (2:3) Jesus' example shames those who cause division through insistence on having their way. Instead of expressing the old nature, Paul encouraged them to work out what God had worked in them. (2:12)

One preacher describes it as popcorn Christianity.¹ When you heat up a kernel of corn, the little bit of water inside the kernel begins to boil, turns to steam, expands and BOOM! The whiteness that was on the inside is suddenly on the outside. The self-sacrificial life of Christ in the spirit of the believer suddenly starts to be expressed outwardly. The heat is the Word applied by the Spirit. The Apostle challenged them to shine like luminaries in the darkness of this fallen world. (2:15) Let that new life come bursting forth so that the little grievances would be get swallowed up in the all-encompassing love for Jesus and for one another.

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 2:3 (ESV)

³ Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

Commented [Paul2]: Philippians 2:12 (ESV)

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

Commented [Paul3]: Tony Evans

Commented [Paul4]: Philippians 2:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

Our passage for today is more of a personal note about two men Paul was sending to the Philippians. It's one from which we can draw a number of lessons. ¹⁹ *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.* Paul had met Timothy on a missionary journey to Lystra. (Acts 16:1) He was the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father. His grandmother, Lois, had taught him the Scriptures. (2Timothy 1:5) Paul saw something special in this young man and brought him along to mentor him. He soon became Paul's representative to the churches. When Paul was concerned about a church, Timothy would go and minister there and bring back a report. (1Thessalonians 3:2; 1Corinthians 4:17) Paul was concerned that the animosity between two of the sisters in Philippi may be growing into something far worse. Sometimes the voice of someone not immediately involved can clarify the issues and help a local church to see the big picture and move forward.

This is another indication that Paul believed that through the prayers of the believers he would be freed and continue his ministry because of the great need to get the churches soundly established. He trusted in his Lord, Jesus, that Timothy would no longer be needed to help him in prison so he could go and help the church and then bring back good news. Paul had a positive outlook, but it was because of his faith in his Lord.

²⁰ *For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.* Paul was declaring that Timothy shared his heart for them. He was likeminded with Paul in his love and concern. What a word of recommendation. If you really want to encourage a group to trust the leading of someone, tell them the person genuinely cares for them. Paul probably discerned this care in Timothy's heart through the prayers of Timothy. Remember that Timothy was there with Paul and Silas when the church began in Acts 16. The experiences there were probably a great step in his spiritual growth. God had endeared them to his heart. But there was a greater reason for Timothy's genuine concern.

²¹ *For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.* Paul usually spoke quite highly of his fellow workers, but after some time in prison, he has seen how few are really sold out for the gospel. If Paul walked into our church today, I think we'd be uncomfortable with how fanatical he is. He doesn't even care about his own life. All he wants to do is see the gospel advance and he's not impressed with those who don't share that passion.

Timothy had been growing in Christ. Though he had a very different demeanor than Paul, his heart was growing to be like Paul's heart which is because they were both growing more like the heart of their Savior. Paul had admonished the church at Philippi

Commented [Paul5]: Acts 16:1 (ESV)

¹ Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek.

Commented [Paul6]: 2 Timothy 1:5 (ESV)

⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.

Commented [Paul7]: 1 Thessalonians 3:2 (ESV)

² and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in the gospel of Christ, to establish and exhort you in your faith,

Commented [Paul8]: 1 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

to look on other's interests and not just their own. (2:4) He held up Jesus as an example of how that is lived out. Now he is saying that Timothy models that as well.

Commented [Paul9]: Philippians 2:4 (ESV)

⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Instead of putting his own interests and desires first, Timothy puts the interests of Jesus first. That is where his genuine concern originated. Jesus cared about the church in Philippi. Timothy shared Jesus' genuine concern.

Do you think that perhaps Jesus is concerned about this church? What about the other churches in the community with genuine believers? Doesn't He care about them? So the question we must ask ourselves is this, do we share Jesus' genuine concern for fellow believers, or are we like the bulk of the people that Paul referred to that seek their own interests? (1Corinthian 10:24) Just as the ultimate example of Jesus was set before them, Timothy was used as an example of putting self last. Sometimes we think only Jesus could do it because He's special. Then we see one of those rare examples of the life of Christ in a person and realize we don't have an excuse. (1:21)

Commented [Paul10]: 1 Corinthians 10:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.

Commented [Paul11]: Philippians 1:21 (ESV)

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

More of Christ and less of me,
This I pray so solemnly,
Crucified I long to be,
Christ's alone eternally.

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. They knew Timothy had proved himself in service to the gospel with Paul. The word for "proved" was used for the testing of metal to see if it is fit for coinage. Timothy had been through the fire and come out purified of his own desires. He had genuine value. He was like a son to Paul. (1Corinthians 4:17)

Commented [Paul12]: 1 Corinthians 4:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.

There is a fellowship that sold out believers have that is deeper than family relationship, because it is a fellowship of the heart that is focused on the same thing. We share the same passion. We understand the other's longing because it is our own.

Paul was going to send his dear son in the Lord to them as soon as he learned of the verdict. He was confident that he would be released and also have an opportunity to see them.

Servants of the Lord never know where they will be tomorrow. Jesus said everyone that is born of the Spirit is like the wind. (John 3:8) You can't tell where they are going. Every day is open to the leading of the Spirit. Will the cloud lift off the tabernacle and guide me on? We don't know. We just wait and watch.

Commented [Paul13]: John 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

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,* Meanwhile, until Timothy is sent, Paul will send Epaphroditus. The divisiveness needed immediate attention. Paul realized the destructive power of division. Jesus had taught that a kingdom divided against itself could not stand. (Matthew 12:25) It was urgent that someone go and help them work through this.

Commented [Paul14]: Matthew 12:25 (ESV)
²⁵ Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.

Look at the three descriptions of Epaphroditus. First, Paul calls him his **brother**. There once again we see the family of God. Timothy is a son, growing up under Paul as a spiritual father, but Epaphroditus is a brother, an equal, mature, under the same Father. (2Corinthians 3:13)

Commented [Paul15]: 2 Corinthians 2:13 (ESV)
¹³ my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

Secondly, he is a **co-worker** or fellow laborer. Paul uses this term for a number of people in his letters. (1Corinthians 3:9; Philemon 1:1) Though Paul was an apostle by God's divine appointment, he saw others that were ministering as equals who worked side by side. Paul recognized the Spirit of God in us makes us all equals serving for one glorious goal, that gospel of Christ advance in the world. We must recognize authority in the church knowing that God does call some to lead (Romans 12:8), and yet others have the same Holy Spirit working in them. We are fellow laborers.

Commented [Paul16]: 1 Corinthians 3:9 (ESV)
⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

Commented [Paul17]: Philemon 1:1 (ESV)
¹ Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved fellow worker

Commented [Paul18]: Romans 12:8 (ESV)
⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

Thirdly, he is a **fellow soldier**. This was another term that Paul liked to use. (2Timothy 2:3-4; Philemon 2) Paul recognized that we are in a great battle over the souls of men. God is not willing that any perish (2Peter 3:9), while Satan is determined that all will perish. (John 10:10) Mankind stands on the battlefield with the gift of free will. Satan's weapon of choice is lies and deception. God's weapon is truth. Satan lies about what is of value and the soldier of Jesus swings the sword of the Word and hacks the lies to pieces. (Ephesians 6:14-18)

Commented [Paul19]: 2 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV)
³ Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.

Commented [Paul20]: Philemon 1:2 (ESV)
² and Apphia our sister and Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church in your house:

Commented [Paul21]: 2 Peter 3:9 (ESV)
⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

Commented [Paul22]: John 10:10 (ESV)
¹⁰ The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Commented [Paul23]: Ephesians 6:14-17 (ESV)
¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,
¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.
¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one;
¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

A brother that came to Christ last week had fallen for those lies all his life. Once he heard the truth in his heart, he chose the truth. He declared that he wants to live the rest of his life as a soldier for Jesus. That is why we sing that classic hymn, Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus, to remind us of the heart cry when we were first saved.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Stand in His strength alone; The arm of flesh will fail you, Ye dare not trust your own, Put on the gospel armour, Each piece put on with prayer; Where duty calls or danger, Be never wanting there.

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, The strife will not be long; This day the noise of battle, The next the victor's song. To Him that overcometh A crown of life shall be; He with the King of glory Shall reign eternally.

Epaphroditus had come from the Philippian church with a gift for Paul's support. (4:18) Paul is now sending him back. Paul called him their apostle (messenger) which was the common use of the word, not the official title.

Commented [Paul24]: Philippians 4:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

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.* Epaphroditus was concerned for the church because they had heard he was seriously ill. He wanted to get back to them to let them know he had recovered. Paul says his recovery was the mercy of God on Epaphroditus and on him as well. It would have added to the sorrow that Paul was experiencing, sorrow on sorrow. What was the sorrow? It wasn't imprisonment. Paul praised God for that because the Imperial Guard was hearing the gospel. (1:12-13) His sorrow was the news of the division within the Philippian church. If Epaphroditus, who was one of their stronger brothers, died, it would be even more difficult for the church to overcome their present trial.

Commented [Paul25]: Philippians 1:12-13 (ESV)

¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,
¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

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.* The church's common love for this man and the joy of his return will be a factor in their moving forward. When they see him they'll remember what is really important. His presence and instruction along with this letter from Paul will help them. I think the translation of "anxious" is unfortunate here. The word is usually translated sorrow. It is the same root as the words for sorrow in the last verse. Paul is literally saying his sorrow will decrease.

Commented [Paul26]: Philippians 4:6 (ESV)

⁶ do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

In a few chapters he will order them to be anxious for nothing. (4:6) That is a completely different word. Paul was sure that the Epaphroditus arrival and the letter would help them work through their struggle, so he would have less sorrow about their spiritual condition. It's the same idea he mentioned earlier about fulfilling his joy by being likeminded. (2:2) Paul wasn't having an anxiety attack. He was sharing the Lord's concern for this body of believers that he dearly loved.

Commented [Paul27]: Philippians 2:2 (ESV)

² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

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.* The language sounds like a scolding, but that is not the spirit of the letter. It means they could not be there physically to help him so they sent Epaphroditus. The Philippian church was one of the few that supported Paul's ministry.

There are those who risk their lives for the sake of the gospel or to minister to those that do. We are to hold them in high esteem, not because they are any more special than any other part of the body (1Corinthians 12:7), but because they model for the

Commented [Paul28]: 1 Corinthians 12:7 (ESV)

⁷ To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

rest of us complete devotion to Jesus, putting Him first above everything in their life, even life itself. We should respect all who live this way.

Brother Sam, in a country I won't name, was severely beaten a week ago. He survived and is out of the hospital. He won't stop ministering the truth to those who are under the lies of Satan. I have the utmost respect for him! Those who live like he does challenge us to let go of petty things and be all out for Jesus. What will really matter when we are looking back from eternity?

In our passage today, we've been given an introduction to two soldiers of the cross. We know of others, like Sam. Their interests are those of Jesus Christ. They are focused on His concerns and not their own. They are 100%. I'm not trying to make you feel guilty or manipulate you. I'm just asking **what is your relationship with Jesus Christ?** Is He your free ticket to heaven or your Lord? I'm not here to judge where your walk is with Jesus, but I know one day we'll look back with joy that we followed Him or with sorrow that we were so wrapped up in pleasing ourselves.

Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Paul are in that grandstand in the sky, cheering us on, pointing us to Jesus. (Hebrews 12:1) They're yelling, "Run! Give it all you've got! He's worthy!" We hear them through their testimonies recorded in the Word. We hear it through the reports of the martyrs like Sam. How can we be apathetic when we have such great examples as these? Let's get serious about the transformation God desires.

Commented [Paul29]: Hebrews 12:1 (ESV)

¹ Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

Questions

- 1 What is the popcorn analogy?
- 2 Why was Paul sending Timothy?
- 3 What was Timothy's great asset?
- 4 Is Jesus concerned about Wayside? RU?
- 5 What were Paul's 3 descriptions of Epaphroditus?
- 6 Describe the weapons of the cosmic battle.
- 7 What makes one a soldier of Jesus?
- 8 What is sorrow on sorrow in vs 27?
- 9 Who do we honor and why?
- 10 What matters in light of eternity?