

## Philippians 2:14-30

### "Worth The Risk"

Paul has developed the *principle*, he's discussed the *power*, now he dives into *practical*. The principle? Let the same self-sacrificing mindset that was in Christ Jesus be also in you. The power? For it is God who works in you both to will & to do for His good pleasure. But how does that look in the practical? I love the way the text takes off today because it doesn't get a whole lot more "brass tacks" than this.

Perhaps you recall our previous text? "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation w/fear & trembling." & We took the time to focus on a few things as it pertained to that. #1 He spoke of working *out*, not working *for*. He wasn't speaking of a salvation *by* works, but a salvation *that* works. Those things that God has worked *in*, we're to work out (Divine initiative & human responsibility). #2 The need for personal integrity. We shouldn't only look to be obedient to the will/word of God when other believers are around (in my presence only), but all the more when there's no one around we should be all the more careful to honor the Lord in the everyday goings-on of our lives. #3 We focused for a few minutes on the words "your own." So many times we can get sidetracked by what we think should be happening in someone else's walk w/God that we don't really focus on *our* walk w/God. We need to concern ourselves w/God's heart/plan for us. Work out "your own" salvation...

Question; where do we begin w/that? I think that we can sometimes have the tendency to "over spiritualize" such a command. "Work out my salvation, hmmm. Ok, perhaps I should relinquish all earthly possessions, move to the Mts of Tibet, obtain the emblematic hooded robe & begin w/a vow of silence. Then I'll really draw near to God & get my salvation 'worked out'." ☺ Paul however suggests something much more practical. He says, "How about you start by simply not griping so much?" Look at Vs 14.

### Vs 14-16

Ladies and Gentlemen: it doesn't get much more practical than that...☺ "Oh God, I just want to see You do a *great/glorious* work in my life, I want to know what it means to be *filled* w/all the *fullness* of Christ & bask in the magnitude of His omnipotent presence, I want to see You, & be used *by* You..." & we're pouring out all this stuff before God & it's like He says, "How about you pay attention to the way you talk to people..."

"Oh... Ok." But this is where it begins, right? This is what J. Vernon McGee used to call "shoe leather" Christianity. It's where the rubber meets the road...

If you can't do something (or serve somewhere) w/out griping & grumbling about it, than just don't do it. "Do all things w/out complaining (or griping) & disputing (or debating)." You know, always having to make sure my 2 cents worth is interjected, debating back & forth, arguing over whatever particular point. It's unbecoming of the child of God.

As a matter of fact, the words "all things" are emphatic. They're actually the words that begin the Vs in the Greek text. "All things do w/out griping & debating." I kind of alluded to a monastery a few minutes ago. It kind of reminds me of the man who decided to do just that, to join a monastery. One of the rules of the group was that you were only allowed to speak 2 words ever 10 yrs. At the end of 10 yrs he stood before his seniors & said, "Bad food!" 10 more yrs went by he said, "Hard bed!" Finally, on his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary w/the brothers, he shouted, "I quit!" The head priest looked at him & said, "You might as well. All you do is complain anyway." ☺

Now the question comes up. Was Paul in reference to griping/complaining to one another, or complaining to God about a particular circumstance, situation etc? I say, "Yes." **There's room for both here. Complaining; be it to someone else or to God Himself about your situation (or that person) is a toxic attitude & outcropping of our lives (for out of the heart, the mouth speaks). & It becomes infectious, contagious, it sucks the life out of people & makes otherwise servant-minded or willing people, disgruntled & discontented.**

Maybe you're able to air your grievances & move on, but like a communicable disease the person you spilled into didn't know how to deal w/it & it's disintegrating them from the inside out. You were just griping about your boss & then you got over it, but your wife, (or your husband) is now embittered by what you've said.

Family, I just want to be forthright w/ya, God does not like grumbling, griping & complaining. Why? At its root it's a failure to accept His plans, provisions, & sovereignty...

**We see this all throughout the book of Ex. & Paul points it out in 1 Cor Ch 10. How God did so many miraculous things & in the end the children of Israel just murmured & complained. They complained about God's provision, they griped about God's plan, they griped about God's man, (they didn't like the way Moses was leading & they talked about him, often confronted him) & God didn't put up w/it. He judged them.**

Be careful when it comes to complaining. "I don't like the way so & so treats me." "The church leaders aren't handling that correctly." "This is how it should be." On & on it goes. But what makes us think that God is ok w/such an attitude now if He wasn't then? & That's what Paul points out in 1 Cor 10. God is offended by our griping & grumbling...

So what's the exhortation? What's the take home? Don't do it. Resist at all costs. & Don't think there's a "safe place" to complain. Deut 1:27 tells us that God hears us complaining in our tents... When I think I'm just at home airing out... God's aware of what's happening in my heart.

Last week we discussed the fact that God has a plan for you. He's developing you (& me). He wants to make us like Jesus. & In that, it's not just doing the right *thing*, but it's also in having the right *attitude*. An attitude becoming of a child of God... it'll make you shine. Notice (Vs 14)

### Vs 15

Here's the gist. Complaining & disputing (debating) are indicative of the crooked & perverse generation of this world. It's common for the unsaved to gripe & complain. You & me, we are to be "set apart" from that. Remember God's goal for our lives? Christlikeness. & His work in our lives looks distinctly different from the actions & attitudes found in the world (or the unsaved).

But to pick up on the point here, not only is a bad attitude unbecoming of the child of God, it ruins our witness in the world. Even good actions; accompanied by a bad attitude will render our witness ineffective. Paul is saying that one of the practical elements that makes you distinctly different from the nonbeliever is the fact that you don't complain, you don't argue w/people.

"That you may become blameless". It doesn't mean "sinless", it means "above reproach". Leading our lives in such a way that those who are outside of Christ couldn't justifiably point a finger of accusation at them. "Harmless" speaks to an innocence. Again, the idea is of moral purity.

But family don't miss it. This is to be achieved in our lives not outside of a crooked & perverse generation (we were speaking of the insulation/isolation of a monastery), but right in the midst of a crooked & perverse generation. We're not called on to retreat from the world, but to shine as lights in this dark world. How can the unsaved see Jesus if we're never around them, or afraid to be near them? "I'm thinking I need to quit my job because it's such a dark environment", all the more reason to shine bright!

& I should say that being a light isn't something that you *do*, it's something that you *are*. You & me, we are luminaries in a dark world. When you look up in the night sky & you see stars shining against the darkness, it's like that's God's perspective looking down into this dark world.

The world is dark & every child of God is a point of light on this dark planet. & Think about the purpose of light; it makes evident, it exposes, it guides us. You're in the dark, you turn on the light, break out the flashlight (whatever). Lights are used as warning signals, they create a safe environment. They bring cheer (someone is depressed, hanging out in the dark, what do you do? You turn on the light, brighten the place up, dispel that atmosphere by bringing light). When you enter the room, the atmosphere should change. & Not in a negative way, in a positive way. You are the light of the world.

& We should note that light & life are directly connected. (Vs 16, read)

You shine, not only in your attitude, but in your offering. You have something to offer this world, "the word of life". "Hold fast" yes (hold firm), but perhaps a better translation "holding forth". You dispel the darkness of sin & death by holding forth the word of life, the gospel of J.C. "God loves you w/an everlasting love, & He sent His only begotten Son to die for you. He was crucified for our sins, He was buried & 3 days later raised from the dead. Delivered up for our transgressions, raised up for our justification. But listen, it's hard to "talk up" the gospel w/a mouth that's generally "talking down" about everything else...

& Paul was saying that if they weren't about it. If God's work wasn't really taking root in them, then there was a since in which his time *w/them* was in vain. Paul wanted to rejoice on the Day of Christ, to see his fruit & their reward, all that God had done *in* them & *through* them. But it wouldn't happen if they wouldn't submit to God's work/will for their lives. It's not just about how we begin our walk/relationship w/God, it's about how we finished it as well. We have to finish well.

Vs 17-18

Paul here is speaking of an offering that would often times accompany a sacrifice (perhaps of a lamb, bull, goat etc). It never accompanied the sin offering, but perhaps the sin offering, or the grain offering. & As the sacrifice was being consumed, the drink offering would be poured out upon the altar & as you might imagine it would simply turn to steam & ascend into the heavens being completely consumed before God.

Paul is saying, "That's my life, just completely poured out to God upon the sacrifice & service of your faith." What a beautiful thing, that our lives might be completely, totally consumed, poured out before the Lord. (Remember Paul was facing a potential death penalty here). & He wasn't afraid to die. For Him (Vs 21 Ch 1) to live was Christ, to die was gain.

He wasn't being morbid, he was saying, "Hey, if God calls me home, I'm ready. Rejoice w/me."

### Vs 19-22

What an incredible commendation for Timothy to receive from the apostle Paul! 1<sup>st</sup> He pointed out the self-sacrificing mindset of J.C. & Now he begins to expound on that same kind of humility/servant's mentality at work in this young man's life.

But I want you to underline 6 words in Vs 19, for no other reason other than they need to be an ongoing reality in each of our lives, "I trust in the Lord J.C." What a great statement. Paul was relying on the Lord for each & every aspect of his life & how the details would turn out. The proverbs put it this way, *"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."*<sup>1</sup> Isaiah said it like this, *"You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You."*<sup>2</sup> "I trust in the Lord Jesus."

He knew that at least immediately, he couldn't go personally so he wanted to send to them someone who would genuinely represent *him* & care for *them* & he says that Timothy was his best & only choice. He didn't expect that the Philippians would present problems for him, but that they would eagerly obey God's word to them & that he would be "encouraged" to hear what was happening among them.

It wasn't always that way for Paul, the Corinthian church wasn't so eager to comply, but he trusted it wouldn't be like that w/the Philippians.

But Timothy, like Paul, had the heart of a shepherd, the mind of Christ. He was more concerned for their spiritual health & well being than any other thing. Paul says that he will "sincerely care for your state". Remember our word "sincere"? It means, "W/out wax". There's nothing false about him, he was genuine in his heart toward them. Like Paul, like Christ.

& Paul says, "I'm sending him because I have no one else like him." That speaks 2 things to me. It's an incredible commendation for Timothy. Can you imagine if Paul said, "I have no one like 'Jeff' who is like-minded w/me." It'd take at least a yr to knock the smile off my face 😊! He had a natural care, concern & compassion for others that was "supernatural" in his life, he was unparalleled among the others. No self-serving agenda about him. If Paul cared about it, he cared about it, he was there to serve like a son to his father.

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 3:5-6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 26:3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Paul trusted him implicitly. Incredible commendation for him, but an unfortunate indictment against everyone else... Which category are you in? Makes you think doesn't it?

How many believers were in Rome, even there w/in reach of the apostle? & He says, "No one else is really 'available' to make the trip. They've all got 'their own thing' going on." The truth is (ladies & gentlemen) that we all really live either in Phil 1:21 or Phil 2:21...

But it's not too far from home for us. Something is going on in the fellowship, perhaps an announcement is made about an opportunity to serve (& no one is asking anyone to go over-seas or take a cross country trip) maybe just help w/parking, or serve by ushering (fill in the blank) & suddenly up jump excuses (& I'm not throwing stones, just stating facts).

It's easy for us to maintain 2 degrees of separation from these guys, but when it starts getting personal we feel it. Timothy couldn't care less about what was on his "to do" list. If it was important to Paul, it was important to him, he was there to serve (it was the mind of Christ *genuinely* at work in his life).

It's been said that our churches are filled with commotion and emotion but there is little devotion, that is, devotion to Christ. That wasn't Timothy.

#### Vs 23-24

He wanted to come, hoped he *could* come, but wanted to send Timothy for now. What an honor! Timothy was a spiritual son to Paul, a servant to Paul & now he's a substitute for Paul.

#### Vs 25-26

Here's his 2<sup>nd</sup> example of selfless serving & sacrifice. The one who brought the care package to Paul & was sent to *serve* Paul, Paul says, "I know you heard he was ill, & so that you might know that there's nothing to worry about, I'm sending him home to you."

But look at this, Paul calls him, "My brother" (he's family), "fellow worker" (he's faithful) & "fellow soldier" (he fights the good fight). He shares in Paul's spiritual *life, labors & dangers*. He's a co-laborer, fellow soldier, "Fights w/me, I don't have to worry about him turning *on* me. He doesn't join forces w/those who are against me, he stands shoulder to shoulder w/me for the furtherance of the faith." People like this are so precious & rare... He was about the fellowship of the gospel, the furtherance of the gospel & he knew how to wage war for the faith of the gospel.

When Paul calls him their “messenger” it means he brought the care package *to* Paul & was returning w/the letter *from* Paul.

But while he was *with* Paul he evidently became ill. & The Philippians having heard that were wondering if he was ok & that grieved Epaphroditus to think of others worrying about him. He was “distressed” because you heard he was sick. Do you see how he was “others oriented? 1<sup>st</sup> he was concerned for *Paul*, but when the Philippians became worried, he was concerned for *them*.

### Vs 27

2 Things quickly. #1 What’s up w/this man being sick *even almost unto death* in the presence of the apostle Paul? This was the guy (Paul) who’s sweatbands were used to heal people, he laid hands on people & they were healed, raised to life, he moved in the miraculous. Why didn’t he just pray for him & heal him?

The same reason he didn’t heal Trophimus (2 Timothy 4:20), or Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23), or even himself (2 Corinthians 12:7)! It’s because contrary to the faulty doctrine of many God won’t heal (physically) every person, every time if they only have faith & it’s wrong to put that kind of burden upon the hurting or afflicted. & We could get into this but let me just say that ultimately the reasons for God’s healing lie (not w/in me or those around me) but w/in the scope of His sovereignty. Sometimes He heals, other times He chooses not to. Why? I don’t know. *“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.”*<sup>3</sup>

#2 What’s up w/Paul saying that he wants us to rejoice if he goes to be w/the Lord but should Epaphroditus die he would have “sorrow upon sorrow”? You know, he became sick in his ministry to Paul (which bummed Paul) but then should he die, it would be a double kind of blow... He’s not denying sorrow upon the loss of a loved one. But that we don’t sorrow as the world, as those who have no hope. We’re saddened by *our* loss, but rejoice to the extent that our loved one is w/Christ.

### Vs 28-30

Hey, those men who serve the Lord, who give you God’s word, who think of you above themselves... honor them, esteem them. Respect the platform God has given them & value them as something precious God has given to you. (Look at Vs 30, read).

<sup>3</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). [Is 55:8-9]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“Because for the work of Christ he came close to death” ... notice “*not regarding his life*”. The work of Jesus came before his personal concern for himself. Now watch this, “not regarding” is actually an ancient *gambler’s* term which meant to risk *everything* on the roll of the dice. Do you see what’s happening here? Paul is saying that in order to serve J.C. Epaphroditus was willing to lay it *all* on the line. Whatever the opportunity was, if serving J.C. was in view, there was nothing off limits, even his life, it was worth the risk.

What are you willing to lay on the line in order to serve J.C.? Epaphroditus said, “Everything, I’ll put it all on the line, I’ll risk everything in order to serve J.C.” Is serving Jesus “worth the risk” to you? Where will you draw the line, what will you lay *on* the line?

“To supply what was lacking in your service toward me.” In other words, all the generosity toward Paul in the world wasn’t doing any good (it was still lacking) until the gift finally made its way to him, right?

& This is the heart we should have as well. You can *want* to serve the Lord, we can even in some measure join *in* the work of the Lord, but there’s still something lacking in our service until the job is done. Let’s not be satisfied with good intentions or something done half way. We’re not looking to hear “Well begun” we want to hear those words “Well done”. Lay it all on the line, it’s worth the risk.

### Prayer Points:

God as always we thank You for Your word. Thank You for getting right down to the “brass tacks” w/us. Reminding us that actions & attitudes matter. Forgive us for the mindset which seeks our own & not the things of Christ Jesus. Bring us to that place of which we’re willing to lay it all on the line, we’ll serve You however You call us to, in whatever way might glorify You. Like Paul, or Timothy, or even Epaphroditus who had a heart not only for missions, but his local church body. Have Your way in us & help us to shine as lights in this dark world, holding forth the word of life.

The word of life; forgiveness of sin & newness of life in Christ Jesus who has loved you & given Himself for you upon the cross. Turn to Him, trust in Him even now, believe on Him & you will be saved.



