

Intro: Dog (Blackie) gives life for owner in cougar attack in B.C. There are few things that are more especially inviting to us as humans as stories of sacrificial heroism for the salvation of others (Piper e.g. of Jack Lucas [DWYL, 126]). In an age of wanton selfishness, this is the kind of headline that makes others curious: someone who gives up their rights (ultimately one's life) for the good of others.

Of course these 2 examples but pale in comparison to the headline written in Phil. 2:5-11, where God, not a dog, dies not for His master, but for His rebellious creation.

As theological as this passage is, it is to be viewed primarily as an ethical exhortation for us as believers. Getting the Christology is awesome. But we kind of miss the point if our heads are filled, but our hearts aren't overflowing. The 2 work together.

In seminary, we were always taught that sheep follow better than they listen. And so if Paul can only merely give commands, he is a poor shepherd. And so I want to look at his own personal example of forfeiting his rights, as did his Savior, to advance the gospel. **Phil. 3:17**. Recap Paul's 'example' of Christ.

- Even though an apostle he designates himself a slave for Christ
 - ⇒ Cf. Eph. 2:20; 4:11; 1 Cor. 4:1; 12:28
- Even though a Roman citizen he is imprisoned for Christ
- Even though he prefers death, he lives for Christ's glory & the P's progress
- How different this call for believers differs w/ today! (apostolic succession?)

Forfeiting our Lives for the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor. 11:1)

Like Philippi, the battles in Corinth arose out of self-seeking vainglory (i.e. pride). 'Behind their advocacy of Paul or Apollos or Cephas was a spirit of self-promotion. Paul opposes this spirit w/ the doctrine of the cross b/c it is an antidote to the conceit that boasts in ministers rather than God' (Schreiner). Paul has done the exact same thing in Phil. 2; he opposes their petty differences by fixing their eyes upon the cross of Christ, who though being a King emptied Himself to bring about salvation for us.

1. The Problem: Selfishness (chapters 6-8)

- ⇒ 6:12; 10:23 – "All things are lawful for me" → abused especially in ch. 8.
- ⇒ By their 'knowledge' they were destroying their brothers (8:11). The 'strong' are asserting their 'rights' at the expense of others (harming them).
- ⇒ How often we look & sound like this. What are our rights that harm others?
- ⇒ E.g. of 'pushing' Calvinism on a baby Arminian (or Baptist on Paedo).
- ⇒ There is an infinite difference between being right & being righteous!

2. The Solution: Surrender (chapters 9-10)

- ⇒ This is so against our worldly war-like mentality (only cowards surrender). But in Christianity it is the strong who surrender not the weak (Matt. 20:25).
- ⇒ "If anything makes my brother stumble, I will not do it" (8:13).
- ⇒ Paul proceeds to provide himself as an example of surrendering his 'rights.' *This is what true freedom is.* The C's used their freedom as 'all things are lawful to me.' P thus redefines 'freedom' to exclude the pursuit of self-

interest & instead makes the interests of others in the community paramount. Truly, P is free from the way of the world, which is accustomed to persons holding the whip over others who are weaker & lording it over them. We are free to serve others (cf. Gal. 5:13).

- ⇒ 9:1-14 → P's 'rights'; 9:15-18 → P's refusal to exercise these rights
- ⇒ 9:19-23 → P's service of all people for their good (by preaching the gospel)

Application:

The more we've been given, more is demanded of us. We are given much to give much away. This is what the mind of Christ looks like.

Paul is the acting CEO of Christianity, and yet he does not exploit his status for self-aggrandizement of the furtherance of himself. No, the very fact that he is an apostle is the impetus for why he is spending himself for their progress & joy in the faith. Paul is using his rights for one thing: to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ.

You might not be an apostle, but having the mind of Christ means using your privileges for the good & salvation of others.

- ⇒ Money, talents, authority, time, wisdom
- ⇒ It is *this* kind of sacrifice for others that will make you seem to them as a foreigner. We are not one of them. Tragically, we have forgotten this.

If we don't have this mindset that seeks the good of others first, are we really "in Christ"? (2:5, ESV). Is it your desire to be conformed into the image & likeness of Christ? Well this is a major aspect of Christ-likeness!

It's not about us; it is about the glory of God in Jesus Christ. And God gets much glory when others see us living Paul's motto out: "to live is Christ & to die is gain." And "to live is Christ" means to live for the gospel good of others by sacrificing our prerogatives for their salvation. This is the kind of church that will bring much glory to God the Father through God the Son. But we need the divine enablement of God the Spirit (cf. Rom. 15:5-6).

Conclusion: The story of Blackie's selflessness & sacrifice was one of the main headlines & was read by millions, & I'm sure was a favorite water-cooler topic the next day at work (b/c it's so radically different from the accustomed selfishness that pervades our society). Brothers & sisters I pray that one day those who read such stories will be able to say the same thing of us as Christians who give our lives to save their souls. May others see our selflessness & sacrifice & tell others about it as well! May they see the mind of Christ our Savior fleshed out for them to see.

Blackie, after forfeiting her rights to live to save her owner's life, was praised by her master. Brothers & sisters, it is no different for us. How blessed will be that voice, "Well done, good & faithful servant!"

Cf. 1 Thes. 2:6-9; Neh. 5.