

Rejoicing in God's servants Philippians 2:19-30

Intro: Picture this scene. It is Friday morning and someone is sitting quietly thinking about their lives, thinking about the people in their lives. Your name comes across their memory. How do they respond? Do they frown or smile? Do they rehearse good memories or focus on neglect?

In our lesson this morning we focused on the principle of service and how it is essential to our joy. Tonight I want to show you how it is essential in bringing joy to the lives of others.

Though it runs against the grain of what our world believes, there are those who have caught the vision of true discipleship and give selflessly to the cause of Christ and to their brothers and sisters. And these people are a source of immeasurable joy to their families, to their fellow-workers, and to God. Tonight out text discusses two such men who served effectively. (Read Phil. 2:19-30)

A look at two of God's servants

This morning we looked at the wonderful example of Paul, but tonight let's take a closer look at couple of more minor characters in the Bible who brought joy to others.

Timothy

A kindred spirit of Paul

Can you imagine what a compliment this was to this younger man, that the esteemed apostle should think of him in this way?

Genuinely concerned for your welfare

Timothy really cared about the good of the Lord's people.

Seeks not his own interest

All too often we want to believe we care, but we just can't find time or energy to get involved. The real problem is that our own personal interests dominate our schedules.

Seeks the interests of Christ

Timothy was not exempt from life's burdens, yet he sought to make a difference because he sought the interest of the cause of Christ.

Serves in the gospel

Here we may think of all that Timothy did out of love and concern for the Lord's people—his teaching, his travels to various places to help and strengthen brethren, his visits to Paul in prison.

Here is a young man of heroic proportions, committed to the Lord and His cause and willing to put his foot where his mouth was.

Epaphroditus

My brother, fellow-worker, and fellow-soldier

Here is a man who Paul could think of as a family member and a partner in the work and the battle.

A messenger and minister to Paul in behalf of the Philippians

Epaphroditus had been chosen to take the Philippians gift to Paul. He stayed to continue to help.

Longed for his brethren

He had a close relationship to the people and he really missed them when he was separated.

Was distressed in knowing that they were worried about him

He did not want the Lord's people to be anxious about him.

Risking life itself to serve the gospel

Here is a man who was courageous and tireless in the work, even to the point that he physically suffered.

I could hardly imagine Paul speaking of these men without a warm feeling of admiration and affection for them and a smile on his face.

Today there is a great need for such men and women. And I am thinking of some of you who are committed to do more than attend church, who give of your time to keep this work going, to visit the sick and new comers to our area, to teach and encourage others, to send cards and notes and make phone calls, and make food for others.

How Christians should respond to such people

Receive them with joy

Sometimes the church is indifferent to those who serve them. There are no treasured memories of them to warm their hearts and cause them to extend their greetings and light up in their presence.

I suspect that "receive them" means more than welcome, but extends to help and support since these men appear to have devoted themselves to teaching the gospel. Cf. 2 Jn. Where John urges the church to "receive such men".

Hold them in high regard

Churches of Christ are not generally given to over-exalting their workers. We have a strong doctrinal aversion, and rightly so, against exalting men. We strongly oppose using religious titles that seem to exalt preachers over others.

Is there not a balance needed here? Our sons and daughters will aspire to serve only when they sense that it is important to do so, that the work itself is worthy of our time and effort. Why is it that we can hardly find in most congregations of a couple of hundred members only a couple of men willing to serve as elders or deacons? Why is it that the number of churches seeking men to work with them far exceeds the number available to work. Could it be that we have not set the pattern of holding men in high regard?

Serving as an elder or deacon or Bible class teacher is often a hard and thankless job! God wanted such people to experience the blessing of joyful appreciation! They deserve such treatment and do not always receive it as they should.

Conclusion: What a joy to have people our lives who are so giving and concerned! Do you have such people? Who smiles when they think of you?