

## Lesson 10

### The High Price of Service

Philippians 2:17-30

#### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Every Christian should be in active service for Jesus Christ. The very first responsibility of the Christian after salvation is to present his life a living sacrifice for God (**Rom. 12:1: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—which is your spiritual worship.***). There is a sacrifice to be made for effective Christian service. There is a high price to be paid for genuine Christian commitment.
- B. Service for Christ can only be enjoyed when one has the same attitude as Christ. The mind of Christ according to Philippians chapter two is one of submission, obedience and sacrifice. Christ was equal with the Father in essence because He is the second person of the Trinity. He left heavens glory in submission to the Father's will, humbling Himself He became a man, and sacrificed Himself in obedience in order to be the Sin-bearer.
- C. The attitude or mind of Christ will be reflected by the Christian in his service for Christ. He who gave His life for every Christian expects every Christian to give his own life back to God as a thank offering for his so great salvation.
- D. In Philippians 2:17-30, we see three men who were willing to pay the high price to serve Jesus Christ. Each one had the mind of Christ in some particular area of service.

#### I. THE SACRIFICE OF LIFE – PAUL 2:17-18

- A. But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. -- At the moment of the writing of this letter, the Apostle Paul was waiting for the verdict from the Roman court as to whether he would be executed or set free. A drink offering was common in Jewish and pagan ritual worship. There was a primary animal offering on the altar and then the secondary drink offering which was poured out, usually along side the primary offering. Paul views the shedding of his own blood secondary to the Philippians primary offering of sacrifice and service which flows out of their faith in Christ. Their service and sacrifice for Christ were more important than Paul's martyrdom. Yet, Paul rejoiced in the privilege and honor to die for Christ if he was called upon to do so. Paul was showing true humility in that the service of the

Philippians was more important than his own death. NOTE: Are we ready to serve the Lord even to the point of imprisonment and death if the Lord should ask it? Are we ready to sacrifice everything if the Lord should ask us to reach the world with the truth of Christ? If our answer is “yes”, then we have the mind of Christ in the area of service. NOTE: Paul’s epitaph might have said, “He poured out his life for Christ.”

- B. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. -- Paul desired that the Philippians would rejoice with him if God should call upon him for the ultimate sacrifice of life. Yet he desired that they might also rejoice if they were called upon to give their lives for the cause of Christ.

In the book The Long March, the true story of John and Betty Stram is given. They were martyred in 1934 in China by the Communists, during the long march across China. When these Christian missionaries, newly graduated from Moody Institute, still in their twenties and the parents of a young child, were taken by the Communists. Their captors began discussing plans as to how they would put the child on a bayonet and roast him. An old Chinese farmer in the midst stood up and said, “The child has not done anything wrong. Why not let him go?” The Communists turned to him and asked, “Your life for the child’s life?” The old man said, “Yes.” Immediately, they cut his head off. Then they turned to the parents, and at this point a man who was a nominal Christian, a Mr. Chang the medical seller, who was known as “rather unwilling to witness for the true and living God” stood up and pleaded for John’s and Betty’s lives. The Communists pushed him away but when he persisted they asked, “Are you also a Christian?” Well aware of what his fate would be, Chang replied, “Yes.” He was dragged away to be butchered. The missionaries began to intercede for Mr. Chang. In reply, the Communists ordered John to kneel. Afterwards, those who witnessed the event said there was a look of joy on his face. The Chinese executioner, using a time-honored style, held the sword level with both hands, whirled it round and round to gather momentum and struck. Betty was seen to quiver for a moment then fell unconscious across John’s dead body. A few moments later her head was severed from her body and the Communists were driving the crowds away. This is the highest price to pay in service for Christ.

## II. THE SACRIFICE OF TIME – TIMOTHY 2:10-24

- A. ***I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.*** -- Timothy was in Rome with Paul and he and Paul were as close in the things of the Lord as two Christians could be. There was a deep mutual love and affinity for one another in the service of the Lord. Furthermore, Timothy was Paul’s son in the Lord; he had led him to Christ and disciplined him. It was wonderful to have Timothy with him, but selfless Paul saw the Philippian Church needed Timothy worse than he did. Yet, Paul had a secondary motive and that was Timothy would find out how the Philippian Church was doing and report back to Paul which would bring great delight to the Apostle. Paul was willing to sacrifice companionship and resign himself to a period of loneliness for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Loneliness is a terrible feeling but often Christians must be alone for the furtherance of the gospel.

I often think of David Livingstone when I get on this subject of loneliness. Livingstone went to Africa determined to open it up for the missionaries. Africa was then closed. He went through Africa and came back to England and was honored by the English Parliament. He went back again to Africa and decided to stay. He was there for several years and nobody heard about him. He lived for the black men around him – learning their language, trying to tell them about the Lord, and opening Africa and making charts for new missionaries who might come to Africa. The New York Herald sent out Henry M. Stanley to find Livingstone, and you remember the famous line of Stanley's when meeting Livingstone, "Mr. Livingstone, I presume." Stanley tried to get Livingstone to come back but he said "no." Stanley said, "They are waiting in England to receive you and honor you." And Livingstone said, "No, I'm here to open this great continent to the Gospel of Christ. He died on his knees in his tent in prayer. That's a lonely way to die don't you think. Alone in Africa, pleading for Africa. The black servant closed the flap of his tent at night and left Livingstone on his knees. He opened it again in the morning and Livingstone was still there. How long he prayed that night nobody knows. Yet, he went to be with the Lord on his knees, willing to be alone for the cause of Christ.

- B. ***I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*** -- In all of Rome, there was only one Christian Paul could really depend upon and that was Timothy. He had a real concern about the gospel and was willing to give up comforts and time to see the gospel furthered and the churches cared for. All the Christians in Rome shrank from visiting far distant Philippi when Paul asked them to do it. These Christians in Rome were living for themselves – my interests, my needs, my wants, my securities, my comforts. From Paul's tone, we can detect he was somewhat disgusted with the apathy of the vast majority of Christians in Rome. NOTE. Timothy was willing to involve himself in the lives of other people. HE was willing to sacrifice time, energy and well-being in order to help others. Timothy did not take the "balcony approach" to Christianity and become a spectator. He got involved. Timothy really had a humble spirit, for he had the mind of Christ. He was constantly thinking of the interests of others rather than his own interests. NOTE. Today, in our "hurly burly" twentieth century American society, Christians are ready to sacrifice anything but time. If you ask Christians to give money, they say "yes." If you ask them to pray, they respond with "I'll try." If you ask them if they would die for the Faith, most would answer, "I suppose so." But ask Christians to sacrifice time in service for Christ – things such as teaching Sunday school, nursery workers, home Bible study teachers, singing in the choir, work of the missions committee, work with the youth or what have you – and the excuses start flying, "I don't know enough. I don't have enough time. I have already done my part," and on and on they go. My friends, we need many Timothys who are willing to sacrifice time in the service of Jesus Christ. NOTE. Timothy's epitaph might have said, "A man who served Christ first."
- C. ***But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*** -- Timothy who was around 35 years of age at the time of the writing of this letter had been tested and proven a faithful servant (slave) of Jesus Christ. He had learned well that a slave has no rights of his own and that service in the cause of Christ is the only thing which counts for

eternity. Paul makes a wonderful compliment to Timothy when he says, "He has served with me in the work of the gospel." Timothy was Paul's trusted companion in spiritual matters. NOTE. Have you ever had a deep, genuine companionship with someone in the Lord's work? I have and it is a wonderful experience. Sharing ideas, aspirations, burdens and blessing with another Christian without any fear of reprimand is an exhilarating experience. This is one of the real thrills of Christian comradeship. NOTE. Timothy "proved himself" a capable leader. He was a deeply committed Christian. He had a kingdom mentality. Whatever else Timothy may have been, he was committed, dedicated and set out to Christ and ministering to people. The ministry is people, not books or programs or sermons but people! We need Timothys today who are willing to commit to Christ and his cause.

Douglas Hyde was a leader in the Communist Party, left the party, became a Christian, and now spends his time seeking to show the Christian Church ways and means it can challenge Christians to deeper dedication. In his book Dedication and Leadership he says, "The first requirement, if you are going to produce a leader for a cause, is that he should be dedicated." He says a person joining the Communist Party knows this is required. He says, "The strongest impact made upon the mind of the recruit by the first Communist with whom he associates is likely to be that of dedication. He knows that in joining the party he will have to be dedicated and active as well. He knows from the start what is involved in being a Communist. He comes to the party, therefore, prepared to have to give of himself to an exceptional extent."

Hyde tells of interviewing a communist soldier who had been in the siege when in Vietnam, the Communist forces besieged the French garrison at Dien Bien Phu and finally after great losses to the Communist, they overcame the garrison and drove the French out of Vietnam. In his interview, Hyde asked this soldier, "What did they promise you to get you to undergo this tremendous sacrifice? What kind of briefing did they give you before you went into action?" Here is the briefing, "You will almost certainly die. Already, even to get within gun range you have to slither over the rotting bodies of dead men, the bodies of your comrades. The probability is that you will die just as they have done. If you do, you will not have died just in the fight against French colonialism: you will not have died just for Viet Nam. You will have died for suffering and oppressed humanity all over the world. Your death will help to make the world a better place." NOTE. If we were to issue a call to die for the cause of Christ, how many would be willing to go? How many have the kind of commitment where they put their own interest second to the interest of Jesus Christ? Timothy had that kind of commitment!

- D. ***I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.*** -- Paul desired to send Timothy to them but he was not absolutely sure how things would turn out in Rome for him. While Paul was confident, he would be released, he would not presume upon the sovereign will of God. He knew that he would be released or martyred, send Timothy to Philippi or keep him in Rome according to the sovereign will of God over which he had no control. NOTE. There are Christians who say, "I know it is God's will for me to do such and such." Yet, mature, wise Christians say, "I believe it is the Lord's will" or "I think God wants me to do this" or "It seems as though the Lord is leading in this direction." God's plan may not be our plan and we know God's plan

for sure only after it happens to us. Until then we walk by faith and confidence in a sovereign God who is leading us.

### III. THE SACRIFICE OF SELF – EPAPHRODITUS 2:25-30

A. ***But I think it necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.***

1. When the Philippians heard of Paul's imprisonment in Rome, they were deeply concerned and immediately dispatched Epaphroditus with a financial gift to minister to the physical needs of the Apostle Paul. His main task was to take care of Paul – do his laundry, clean his house-jail, cook his food, run his errands or whatever.
2. Paul calls Epaphroditus "my brother." He took the place of a servant yet Paul calls him brother. Think of that! Insignificant Epaphroditus is a brother with the great Apostle Paul. Only in Christ are all men equal. NOTE. Christianity levels off artificial earthly distinctions and places all, rich and poor, nobility and peasantry, educated and unlearned on the same level. All are equally in Christ. All Christians belong to the aristocracy of heaven.
3. Paul also calls Epaphroditus "fellow-worker." Paul did not think himself superior to Epaphroditus in ministry. Epaphroditus was not a preacher or teacher. He did not have the verbal speaking gifts. He had the gifts of helps and service. He did menial physical tasks to make Paul comfortable. Paul the great evangelist calls Epaphroditus "my fellow-worker." Paul certainly was no spiritual snob.
4. Paul lastly calls Epaphroditus "fellow-soldier." Paul saw the ministry of serving him as important as his ministry of reaching the Gentiles for Christ. They were both soldiers in Christ's army. Paul was on the frontline and Epaphroditus was behind the lines in support. NOTE. Did you know for every soldier on the frontline doing battle it takes ten soldiers behind the lines giving support? All are important to the ultimate cause of victory.
5. The words "take care" in the Greek often refer to the spiritual ministry of priests. What Epaphroditus was doing for Paul was no secular task but a spiritual duty.

B. ***For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.***

1. Epaphroditus loved the Philippians and grew homesick for them, especially when they heard he became very ill but had not realized he had completely recovered.
2. Again we see in Epaphroditus a spirit of humility. Always thinking about the interests of others. Always viewing others more important than himself.

**C. *Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.***

1. It appears that Epaphroditus' illness was brought on by over exertion (although we cannot prove this dogmatically). The tone of the passage seems to indicate that this illness was service related. He had been trying to do too much in the Lord's service and his health was broken. Because he had the mind of Christ, he was willing to endanger his health for faithful service to Christ. NOTE. Ministerial burnout and depression has hit most ministers at one time or another if they are worth their salt as pastors and missionaries. Burnout comes to ministers because they believe (and it is true) that they are handling life and death issues. They have a hundred demands upon them and live in glass houses. They often get involved in doing many little tasks and forget the big task of loving and serving Christ. Burnout comes when the devotional life of the minister is low and yet he is constantly serving people. Burnout comes when our ideals are shattered and our confidence in people is shaken. Burnout has and almost has killed many a good minister for Christ.
2. There is a truth hidden in this verse. Apparently, Paul who had the spiritual gift of miracles and healings, did not or could not use this gift at all times. At least he did not heal Epaphroditus.

**D. *Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety.*** -- Paul was concerned about the Philippians concerns for Epaphroditus. Paul was willing to suffer more loneliness that the Philippians might rejoice when Epaphroditus returned. When the Philippians were happy, Paul was happy even if it meant the departure of his second closest friend in Rome.

**E. Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him.** -- The self-sacrifice of Epaphroditus was to be recognized in the Philippian Church, for his faithful serviced was a true example of one who had the mind or attitude of Christ. NOTE. We are to recognize people in the local church for their faithful service (**1 Cor. 16:17-18: I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived,**

***because they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.***.) This is not glorifying man but recognizing faithfulness to Christ.

- F. ***Because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.*** -- Just as a gambler takes great chances, Epaphroditus risked his life for the cause of Christ. Christians should be willing to risk death for Christ and his kingdom. NOTE. Epaphroditus' epitaph might have said, "He risked all for Christ."

In the early church there were societies of men and women who called themselves the parabolani, that is, the riskers or gamblers. They ministered to the sick and imprisoned, and they saw to it that, if at all possible, martyrs and sometimes even outcast enemies of Christians would receive an honorable burial. For instance, during the pestilence in the city of Carthage in A.D. 252, Cyprian, the bishop, and the parabolani took upon themselves the care of the sick, risking their lives for saved and unsaved alike. In contrast, the pagans threw the sick and the dead over the wall and ran.

## V. CONCLUSION

- A. Saved. Every local church needs its Pauls. Those who are out front doing battle with the world in evangelism. Every local church also needs its Timothys. Those who love people, sacrifice for people, give up personal time to be with people – Sunday school teachers, children's church teachers, home Bible study teachers, visitation teams or whatever. Can your pastor say of you what Paul said of Timothy, "I have no one else like him." Every local church needs its Epaphroditus'. Those who labor in the physical and sometimes menial tasks of the ministry – cooks for Wednesday night dinners, workers in the nursery, workers on the sound system, those who feel a burden for the building and the grounds and a thousand other little things which have to be done to make the ministry effective. All are important. Are you doing your part at Howell Branch Fellowship?

### B. Unsaved

1. For you without Christ, I want to warn you about confusing Christian service (good works) with salvation in Christ. A person becomes a Christian through trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. One is not saved by works through faith in Christ (***Eph. 2:8-9: For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.***).

2. After Christ comes into the life, then it is the Christian's privilege and responsibility to serve Christ out of appreciation for salvation which he cannot lose.