**Lesson 8: Selfless Servants**

Text: Philippians 2:19-30

**Introduction**

Perhaps the spirit of our age could be defined by a relatively new word of our day: “Selfie.” It seems that many are obsessed with taking pictures of themselves! It is clear that even more are absorbed in living for themselves. This is problematic for those who would find joy in Christ. In the previous lesson we discovered that joy is produced as we cooperate with God’s work in our lives to serve others. Paul commended two men in Philippians 2 who had the mind of Christ at work in their lives. Timothy and Epaphroditus were selfless servants. God was at work in and through their lives! Their love for Jesus translated into love for His servant Paul and the church in Philippi. Today, I hope you will be inspired by the example of these men who demonstrate the joy of selfless service.

1. Paul commended Timothy as a selfless servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 19-24)
   1. Timothy was most likely saved during Paul’s first missionary journey to Lystra.
      1. His mother and grandmother shared his new found faith in Christ. (2 Tim. 1:5)
      2. He did not immediately join Paul because he needed time to grow.
   2. After a time of spiritual growth and the formation of a godly testimony, Timothy joined Paul on his second journey. (Acts 16:1)
      1. Spiritual growth must precede spiritual service.
      2. “The submissive mind is not the product of an hour’s sermon, or a week’s seminar, or even a year’s service. The submissive mind grows in us as, like Timothy, we yield to the Lord and seek to serve others.” (Wiersbe)
   3. Paul intended to send Timothy to know the state of the church. (v. 19-20)
      1. We should note this as a selfless decision on Paul’s part. Although he would have loved Timothy’s company, he had the best interest of others in mind.
      2. None of the believers who were with Paul in Rome shared his concern. (v. 20a)
      3. Timothy was “likeminded.” This means that he genuinely shared Paul’s concern for the church. (v. 20b)
   4. Other believers in Rome were too busy with their *own* concerns. (v. 21)
      1. The list of names in Romans 16 indicates that there were many Christians in Rome, but evidently they were too busy to get involved.
      2. If you are too busy with your own concerns you will miss opportunities to serve others.
      3. “All of us live either in Philippians 1:21 or Philippians 2:21” (Wiersbe).
   5. Timothy had proven himself as a true servant of Christ. (v. 22)
      1. The word “proof” conveys that Timothy’s value to the ministry had already been demonstrated.
      2. He worked with Paul in the gospel ministry like a father-son team.
      3. “Timothy stood out as a rare gem in a world of self-seekers (cf. 1:15,17).” (Robert Lightner)
   6. He intended to send Timothy and hoped to visit when he was able. (v. 23-24)
   7. In the meantime, he sent Epaphroditus.
2. Paul commended Epaphroditus as selfless servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. (v. 25-30)
   1. Epaphroditus had been sent by the Philippians to deliver their love offering and to minister to Paul in his Roman imprisonment.
   2. Paul had a glowing opinion of Epaphroditus. (v. 25)
      1. He was a brother in Christ. This indicates fellowship.
      2. He was a companion in labour. This indicates his work in the gospel ministry.
      3. He was a fellowsoldier. This indicates that he was a defender of the faith.
      4. “Epaphroditus was a balanced Christian! Balance is important in the Christian life. Some people emphasize ‘fellowship’ so much that they forget ‘the furtherance of the gospel.’ Others are so involved in defending the ‘faith of the gospel’ that they neglect building fellowship with other believers.” (Wiersbe)
   3. He had a sincere love for the Philippian believers. (v. 26)
      1. He missed being with them. (v. 26a)
      2. He knew that they had heard about his illness, but he did not want them to worry about his well-being. (v. 26b)
   4. His sickness was life threatening, but God intervened by healing him. This was a relief to Paul. (v. 27)
   5. Paul sent him back to the Philippian church that they might be relieved to see that his health had improved and to honor him for his sacrificial service for Christ. (v. 28-30)
   6. He was to be respected because he put others ahead of himself. (v. 30)
3. Central Idea: Paul commended Timothy and Epaphroditus as selfless servants because they put others ahead of themselves.
4. Application: Selfless servants put others ahead of themselves.
   1. It is natural for us to become self-absorbed.
      1. What concerns can occupy your mind in a typical week?
      2. Are any of these concerns keeping you from serving Christ?
      3. How does Matthew 6:33 apply to this situation?
      4. Are you living a Philippians 1:21 life or a Philippians 2:21 life?
   2. Who has God placed in your life that needs your loving concern?
   3. List some practical ways in which you can put concern for others ahead of yourself. Complete the following sentence:

Instead of seeking my own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I will \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Conclusion**

Joy is produced when you put others ahead of yourself. The examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus challenge us to a life of sacrifice and service. Families, churches, and communities are blessed by those who serve selflessly. Will you put others ahead of yourself this week? “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 2:5)