

Mutual Service in the Body

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Philippians 2. Let's go there this morning. Philippians 2:1-11. Is that sound doctrine that we just sang at the very end of that song? Always you loved me. He's a God of eternity so we are saying that God always loved us. From eternity past he loved us and in time present he loves us and in time future and eternity future he loves us. Always you loved me. That is a powerfully wonderful and humbling thought because I know something of me and he knows me much, much better than that.

Philippians 2, beginning in verse 1,

1 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, 2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Now, this writing of this instruction from the Apostle Paul is to a local church and let me remind you that you've got to think that way if you're going to properly interpret most of the New Testament. I have heard very prominent, even television and radio preachers, who would preacher over and over and 95, 90% of their message was to the individual. "Here are principles for your life. Principles for your life." And while that's not untrue, it's way out of balance because the truths of this text cannot be understood without the dynamic of local church body life. It's almost like trying to help somebody with their

marriage and never instructing them in the context of the marriage relationship. You can't just talk to the individual alone, you've got to teach them the truth that the marriage relationship encompasses. So keep in mind that this is instruction to a church family, a single local church family so it is very adequate and accurate instruction for us as a church family today.

Now, if we want to really understand where he's coming from, we need to look at that first word in verse 1, it's the word "therefore," which means it reflects back to what he's been instructing in the previous chapter and a summary of what he's been instructing is verse 27. Look at chapter 1, verse 27, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ," notice these are plural pronouns, this is the whole church family, "so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm," notice the unity here, "in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." That phrase "striving together" literally means "in concert." If you're going to hear a band in concert, they'd better be playing together. I don't even know the musical terms but they need to be playing the same notes or it's awful.

So he's talking about a oneness, a mutual striving in serving together and that's what I've entitled this, "Mutual Service in the Body." Mutual service in the body. The goal of any real or true church is every member ministry. The church is not a spectator sport. You don't really join a church and as I've said often today, church membership far too often has come to mean, "I'm joining a Sunday spiritual recreation event. If the place I go to has better, more amusing, more enriching, more blessing of a service, then I'm going to join that." So really you're joining an event but church membership is not joining a worship event, church membership is joining a body of believers. The question is not, "Where do you go to church?" the question is, "Where do you belong?" Listen friend, when you join a church, you have taken a wife. You know what I mean by that phrase, don't you? You have made a covenant bonding obligation to be a part of a reciprocal interconnected mutual serving body to the end that God might get glory through us corporately on the earth and that we might help and bless and encourage one another individually in our walks and lives. But it's always a corporate and body emphasis in the Bible.

Now, while I'm still talking in way of introduction, let me throw out some balancing thoughts here and this is not even reproof at all but just an encouraging exhortation, that is: be wise and be discerning about whatever fellowships, ministries, discipleship groups, whatever you involve yourself in outside of your local church. Not that they are wrong but that they are secondary because you've already taken a wife. You already have a body, a group, that you're obligated to, that you are bound to. The Scripture doesn't allow Jeff Noblit or you to be a freelancer on God, to just kind of freelance out there, "I'm going to meet with these guys. Or I'm going to meet with these ladies. I really like the way they love the Lord or whatever." Well, that would be fine. If that were that way, I would just meet with deer hunters and we'd be deer hunters for Jesus. But I don't get that option because God has ordained that in the body of Christ there are all kinds of folks with all kinds of interests, some that don't interest me but that's good, then I get to learn to love, serve and care for people who are not like me which shows the Gospel has

changed me. If the Gospel hasn't changed me, I'd find me a religion that fits me. But the Gospel has changed me so now I embrace a religion that's different from me or what my natural wants, propensities and inclinations might be. Are you with me church?

So we could just go down the list of good stuff that comes and goes. You know, there was Promise Keepers a while back. There are ladies ministries and events. Here is what I want to challenge you to do: if and when you're involved in anything outside of your local church ministry, be wise and honest and say, "Is this gobbling up my energies, my emotional reserves, so that when I go to my small group, I'm just kind of going through that? My heart is not there to really care, minister and spend energy there because I really want to spend energy with my buddies on Thursday." Are you with me? If we all had that mindset, we'd probably give away half of our kids and just hang with the ones we like but you don't get that option. Once you sire them, they are yours and when God brings those into the body of Christ and there are all kinds and all stripes and some are really sold out and some are really committed and others are kind of coasting on us, and some even at times act carnal but we are here to love and encourage and care for all of them. It's not always fun and it's not always blessed but it's the body of Christ and I'm bound to that first.

So all kinds of other good things may come and go, be careful though about extinguishing your energies there because, you see, I'm convinced, if Satan can't get you on error and in sin, he'll get you sold out to the second best and Grace Life Church exists to prove that God's means mandated thoroughly in Scripture of local churches is all you need as a spiritual, maturing child of God. I don't mean that other things can't be helpful but there is the notion today and I have a heart of sympathy for folks because many come out of very weak, compromising churches and they love the Lord and define the kind of spiritual fellowship they long for, they have to join groups outside of their church and that may just be where they are. I understand that but they shouldn't stop there. They should look until they find a church where they can get that kind of spiritual environment and fellowship because that's God's ordained means. Now listen: we don't want the world to look at us and say our creative discipleship strategies work. We want them to look at the church and the church to be true so that they'll say, "God's design of the church works." That way I don't get any credit and God gets the glory because I didn't come up with the church, he did.

So this is written to a local church about them pouring their energies into loving, caring, encouraging, sacrificing for, reproofing, rebuking when necessary but just caring and serving mutually one for the other. Well, I've poured that foundation with concrete. I think you are with me there. Let's go to the outline now. I. The fuel. The fuel for this mutual service. How does a person get to where they will, I mean, I'm going on 35 years here on staff, how do you get the fuel and David tells me last time we had visitation we 324 people participate. There are people literally around the world who ask us, "How do y'all do that?" Well, you have to burn the right kind of fuel. You'd better be burning the kind of fuel that doesn't burn up or burn out. If you build a church on anything less than the eternal infinite power of the Holy Spirit of God, it's going to burn out.

Well, notice how he words it here as he begins there in verse 2, "Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion." Now, the Greek scholars tell us the word "if" there is first class conditional which means it is assumed it is true. He is almost being facetious here. He's almost saying, "Of course there is incredible encouragement in Christ. Of course there is wonderful affections and love once you all know Christ together. Of course there is amazing blessing to the fellowship. Of course these things are true," is what he's saying.

Let's just talk about them, first of all, he says, "if there is any encouragement in Christ." In other words, since there is such overwhelming encouragement. Let me ask you church, let me ask you child of God, have you been encouraged since you've been united with Jesus Christ? Has it brought encouragement to your soul? When is the last time you sinned grievously and the flood of guilt came on your life and instantly thought, "Oh, but my Christ took it on Calvary"? Tell me that doesn't encourage you. Since there is such wondrous encouragement in Christ, nothing can compare to that. I mean, if the whole world forsakes me and I realize I have Christ, I'm not under wrath, I'm not under judgment, I belong to God, he loved me before I even knew who I was in the world, before I was even born. He chose me. I'm chosen in Christ Jesus from the foundation of the world. Of course there's wondrous encouragement in Christ.

I'm so glad that I'm lashed with the burden of praying and preparing and preaching sermons because it causes me to unfold more and more and more from the word of God the glories of Jesus Christ. God help those churches and God help those poor pastors who get ready, who start their sermon preparation absolutely exhausted because their unspiritual and unwise congregation put on them burden after burden after burden of what they must do other than preach the word. But your willingness to free your preaching pastor to spend the majority of his energies in the word of God has caused me to develop a love affair with Jesus Christ that I can't get over.

Of course there is encouragement in Christ. When you walk, I'm not saying it's the same every day, but when you walk with that gratitude and encouragement that, "Christ has saved me. I can't be lost because he holds me," then that's a fuel that propels you to want to care for, serve, minister to one another in the body of Christ. It just does.

Secondly, he said, "if there is any consolation of love." You could say, any comfort from knowing his love. Of course there is. He died for me. He says because I am now converted and regenerated by the Spirit of God and my unrighteousness was imputed into Jesus on the cross, his righteousness in an unmerited fashion imputed into me and he says, "I now stand righteous before him. I no longer have to tremble before him and formally call him heavenly Father, though that's proper. I can even call him Poppa or Daddy." That's the word Abba Father. Of course there's great comfort in that kind of love relationship. He tells me he will never leave me or forsake me. He tells me that he faithfully sits at the right hand of God the Father to ever intercede for me on my behalf. What comfort in that unconditional love.

He says, "if there is any fellowship of the Spirit." In other words, as we come together as the children of God, the Spirit of God really encourages us as we sense a oneness, listen to me, that is beyond human stuff. It's beyond personality. It's beyond personal dispositions and likes or dislikes. It's bigger than that. It's greater than that.

I stopped in the hallway this morning and was talking to another church elder and we just hadn't talked in probably several months and just immediately we're talking about the things of God and what he is showing us. I said, "You know, isn't it amazing that we're not buddying around at all but the moment we walk up to each other we're just as if we had been praying together last night for 2 hours." It's amazing what God does in the body of Christ like that. My heart breaks for so many. I think true brothers and sisters who are in fellowships where there are so many unregenerate people, they don't get to enjoy this. They know something's wrong but they are not sure what it is and, again, that's why many of them seek discipleship groups and other things because they long for that spiritual fellowship. Well, we need to show them, "No, you just need a true church." God's means and the church meets every need, fulfills everything we're about and to have any desire for.

Then he says, "if there is any affection and compassion." That means because of being transformed and born again by the Spirit of God, we're burning the power of the infinite Spirit of God and from that Spirit, we have great affection and compassion one for the other. We have this enablement. We have a supernatural enablement working within us that fuels our ability to selflessly, mutually serve and care for one another in the body of Christ. And what we find is this is the most powerful witness to the world. Now, I'm all for evangelists preaching the Gospel. We support that around the world. I'm all for a dozen other things but the thing Jesus said would have the most impact on your lost community, "All men will know you are my disciples," Jesus said, "by the love you have one for another." By the way you bond together, covenant to serve one another, sacrifice for one another, get over your silly self-centered lust for this thing and that thing because you're saying, "That doesn't matter. I want to serve my brothers and sisters." When the world sees that, the world says, "We wouldn't do that. God must be fueling that service." It shows the world the power of God.

Well, not only the fuel, you'd better be burning something from a changed heart and a regenerate spirit. Secondly, a motivation. I didn't say the motivation. I might should have because it's the only one really that jumps out of this text but it's a motivation and I would dare to say even perhaps a primary motivation for why the body of Christ should selflessly, even sacrificially if necessary, serve one another. What is it? Look at verse 2, "make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Then he continues on in that vein, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit." In broad summary: keep serving one another selflessly in this mutual service. Why? What's the motivation? He says, "So that you will make my joy complete." Paul functioning at this point as the pastor of this church, the church at Philippi says, "You ought to be motivated to do right in the church and faithfully serve one another, not let yourself get pulled aside to secondary things so that your energies are

limited for your church work." He said, "You ought to be motivated to be faithful in your church work and mutual service so that it brings joy to me, your pastor."

That's what the text says, right there it is. Literally when he says "make my joy complete," he means fill it to the full. Now there is a good context for this. The church at Philippi, comparatively speaking, was a more solid church than other churches. He called them his joy. He said, "Church at Philippi, you're my joy," and he never said that to the church at Corinth. They were a very carnal church, had a lot a worldliness, a lot of compromise. So he said, "I have a lot of joy in you but if you will continue on in this Spirit-empowered, selfless service one to another, then you're going to fill my joy up to the top." Hebrews 13:17, the same idea, "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls," in other words, you're going to gain greatly spiritually if you obey your leaders and submit to them, "as those who will give an account." Then, "Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you."

This last week in Canada as I talked to the churches there and some pastors there and preached, I kept talking about you guys. I kept commending how you functioned as a church family and I felt a little bit though about this the way Paul must have felt when he wrote to the Corinthian church about their giving. Now, there wasn't much to commend in the Corinthian church but one area where Paul thought they would do a good job was in giving to missions. So as Paul is raising offerings in the churches for mission work, he comes to the church at Corinth and he says, "Do you know what?" Now, I'm paraphrasing the English here, he said, "I've been bragging about how you guys are going to give a great gift to missions everywhere I go, to all these other churches." He said, "So don't embarrass me. Don't let me down because I've been holding you up as an example everywhere I go." Well, Grace Life Church of the Shoals, I've been doing that just this last week, not that you have arrived, not that you're perfect and your pastor certainly isn't but you do walk in such a way and you do serve in such a way and you just don't let stuff that doesn't matter be an issue in this church. We just don't have the party spirits and the grumbling and the taking sides. We just don't have that anymore and that's because you choose not to let that happen. I want you to know, that does give your pastor joy and not grief and that's a motivation for conducting yourself in this selfless, mutual service one to another.

We want to face our God one day and when our God says, "I gave you men to lead you, imperfect men, men that had to repent and mature just like you did, but I gave you men you were supposed to obey and submit to so that you could please me better. Did you do that?" It's not about Jeff Noblit. It's not about a personality, it's about the office of pastor. Spiritual people respect that office because they humble themselves under God's ordained means to do his work, his way, for his glory.

Now, as he continues in verse 2, he in one way or another restates and amplifies what he said in verse 1 as he's giving some guidance here. "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind." It doesn't mean you have all the same personalities but it says we are going to be intent on being glory of God focused, Christ honoring, Bible saturated, Spirit empowered, maintaining the same love, that's that love the comes from the Spirit, united

in spirit, intent on one purpose. It means we let secondary and personal preferences die so that we can all be about the main purpose that God has given us. Then verse 3, "Do nothing from selfishness," you could say contentiousness, "or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves."

Now, so that's something of a primary motivation for why you are to selflessly strive to exercise mutual service to one another in the body of Christ, to bring joy to your pastor's heart. So not only the fuel we are to burn, you've got to be functioning out of a born again regenerate heart or you're not going to make it in this. You're not going to be happy with it. It's going to bother you. It's going to frustrate you. But if you're born again, you slip and slide, you're not always what you ought to be but if you are born again, you keep being brought back to, "I love Christ and I love my church family." That's the fuel you burn. The motivation, to give my pastor joy. Obviously to glorify God but, you know, some people have a hard time with that. Have you matured in your understanding enough to know that you honor God and honor God's authority one and the same? A wife submits to her husband for the glory of God but also because she loves her husband. It's both things, it's both and. A husband loves his wife like Christ so the church, sure for the glory of God but also because he wants to bless his wife. Children should honor their parents, sure for the glory of God but also because they want to bring their parents hearts joy. That's what he means here. Sure you submit to your pastors and faithfully serve under their leadership for the glory of God but also it blesses you to bring your pastor joy.

Now, number 3 in the outline: the exhortation to this mutual service. He gives some real direct application of what we are to be doing in this service one to another. Verse 5, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." I'm sorry, I read the exact wrong verses. Verse 3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit ." That idea there is, "Let no group or individual in the church have an eye for its own interest." Now think about that, that's real simple, isn't it? I mean, once you get with a group and it's kind of a power takeover kind of spirit, "We're going to get our way," he says, immediately get out of that. Immediately get away from that. There is no place for that.

If ever there is something in the church that you think ought to be changed, first of all, do you have a real clear biblical foundation for it? If you don't, just get over it. No church anywhere on earth can function by the personal preference of 1,000 different people. Are you with me? And I'm just telling you, I will not respond to the squeaky wheel. I just won't do it and neither will the church elders. We're not going to do that. Just because you can throw your weight around and have influence, it just doesn't matter to me. I've been through dozens of those, you'll just be the next one. But if you've got a good biblical thing, come and show us. We had even a man come one time some years ago and he thought at our church picnic we ought to have a certain kind of thing. He said, "Why can't we do this at the church picnic?" Do you know what the elders said? "Well sure, we'll do that," because it was something that didn't matter and if that would please him, well, fine. Now, if 20 of you came with 20 different ideas, somebody would have to hear no but the point is the contentious, self-exalting, party spirit, he says, "Let no one do that." If we

have that, I am absolutely unaware of it and I thank God for your hearts not to have that. It shows the genuine spirituality that you have.

"Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." You know, our fallen nature causes us to suppose that life's greatest happiness can be found in one satisfying his own desires. Isn't that what your heart tells you all the time? "If I get what I want, I'll be happy." It's absolutely a lie. Real happiness comes when you die to some desire to serve your brother or sister for the good of the church and for God's glory. Then you will get happy. Have you noticed that? Have you noticed that? Have you experienced that joy? Now, listen to me, unless you get point number 1 right, none of this works. You've got to be regenerate. If you've got a born again changed heart, then you will find that as you say no to your fleshly desires and purpose to serve and honor Christ by supporting your brothers and sisters when their viewpoint may be different from yours, then joy will come into your life.

Verse 4, "do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Another way of saying the same thing, it's a present active here which means: have as your lifestyle pattern the goal of purposing to say no to yourself and say yes to someone else. Obviously that can't be done all the time. You have God ordained responsibilities to work and feed your family and honor your husband. We're not talking about extreme unbalanced stuff here but in general the things that you can bend on, you should always be quick to say, "Sure. Sure, I don't have to have my way, at least not on anything that's outside of biblical parameters."

As you know, I've done some reading on the inventor, the scientist, Michael Faraday. Michael Faraday invented the electric motor and really laid the foundation for electric transmitters and, brothers and sisters, in Michael Faraday's day, this is the middle to the early part of the 19th century, electricity was discovered but nobody could use it. They could make a little thing, they had these little scientific expositions and Faraday would pack out the room and he would make somebody's hair stand on the end with static electricity and stuff but nobody knew how, it wasn't harnessed in any way. So when Faraday invented these devices to make electricity useful, it's mind-boggling the effect it has had on the rest of us, is it not? Think about everything electricity has to do with today. I mean, just everything. Electric motors are in everything today so Faraday was brilliant. He was a genius and as I told you earlier, he was honored and esteemed by every form of high society and cultural elitism of the day. Everybody wanted him in their club. Everybody wanted him in their fellowship because in the early to middle part of the 19th century, listen, if you were a scientist of renown, you were a rock star. I mean, everybody, the woman swooned at your feet. The men just thought you were the greatest thing.

So he had the world by the tail but the biographers note that Faraday was a very devout, committed Christian, so much so that he would not join the Church of England. Instead he joined a little scorned, outcast group on the side, they were Baptist, because he said the Church of England had left Bible doctrine and Bible practice and he was committed

to the word of God. Faraday would even say that the reason he became a great scientist was because he knew God had infinite intelligence and God made the universe in a structured and orderly way and that he had given man a degree of intelligence so we could glorify God by figuring out some of the way he made stuff. So he viewed all of his science to the glory of God. Our children understand that the first modern scientists were God-centered men. You have to go later to modern, modern science, I call it, to get to the atheistic scientist. All the foundation stones of science were started by men who believed there is a God who made this, let's see how he made it.

Anyway, so Faraday turns down all of these honors, he didn't even show up for the ceremonies. Even the knighthood by the Queen, he said he didn't want. But one time, the Queen invited him to dinner and he agreed to go to the dinner. So Michael Faraday goes to the dinner with the Queen and it was on a Sunday so he missed church that Sunday and he was an elder in his church. When Michael Faraday got to church the next Sunday, the other elders voted to dismiss him from the office of elder because he missed church to have dinner with the Queen. So he was excommunicated from the office of elder. But do you know what I think is interesting and it puts Michael Faraday so high in my thinking, is every testimony I could find said that Michael Faraday did not grow angry, he was not resentful, he in no way embittered the church against the elders. He 100% submitted and supported the decision and stayed faithfully serving God in that congregation for 14 more years and then the elders reinstated him again to be an elder in the church. Do you know why? He was burning a fuel bigger than human ego and pride. He said, "This is for the good of the church and for the glory of my God and if I can just take up garbage at the end of the service, amen." This is Michael Faraday, one of the kings of the world at this time.

Don't you appreciate a heart like that? I love to see that. And, you know, it's been my witness now after 35 years of God having to humble me many times and watch young men going in the ministry, the guys that are impatient, the guys that will not humble themselves, the guys that will not stay under the loving authority of their church and the elders, I'm just telling you, they don't do well long-term. But if they have a selfless attitude of honoring authority and serving for the good of the body and the glory of God, it's amazing what God will do with them and for his glory.

So the Apostle Paul is exhorting this church. He gives them the fuel they are to be burning. He gives them a motivation: bring joy to your pastor's heart. He gives them a clear exhortation to do it. Now lastly, then the example. Of course, the premier example is Jesus Christ. He begins in verse 5, "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." Now, we could literally unpack the glories of these statements and be here for days. Jesus did not think of his deity as something he should use to his own advantage. He gave up his rightful, divine prerogatives, now listen to me, to the end that he might serve his church. Who did he come to empty himself for? Who did he come to lay aside the glories and the privileges of his deity for? For the benefit and the good of his church. That's what Paul is getting at here. Jesus laid aside more than you could possibly lay aside in a million lifetimes for the good of the church, why can't you

get over your petty opinion for the good of the church? Now, I don't mean you, I mean as a point of illustration. Amazing, the power in this.

"Who, although He existed in the form of God," verse 6, "did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped," verse 7, "but emptied Himself." If you could just think, if you could just somehow by the Spirit of God put yourself picturing Christ and the glories of heaven where he is rightfully worshiped and adored and perfectly obeyed, putting voluntary aside all of that, putting on the form not of a servant but a bondservant. It means a galley slave, a slave in the bottom of the boat who is just working one of the oars with a cracking whip on his back. He took that kind of form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man. He laid aside all of those privileges. In other words, he rendered void or to no affect all the glories of his Godhead. He laid down his position, his rank, all.

He became a bondservant, a galley slave. To what end? You're going to miss it completely if you don't understand sound doctrine. Listen to your pastor: he did not do this for this blanket good for all mankind, he did this for his church. If you begin to teach a sloppy atonement, if you begin to teach that Christ absolutely only died that all men everywhere would have their sins forgiven, then you are one half step from liberal universalism which says all men will be saved and all will go to heaven. Yes, Christ's death is sufficient for everyone and everyone who repents and believes will be saved but on the other side of the coin, Christ died for his church. What is the point? The point of Paul is to say, "Look what he gave up for the local churches so why can't you serve your local churches?" "We do good to all men," the Bible says, "as far as it is possible but," he says, "especially do good to the household of the faith." What does that mean? My church family.

Isn't that good of God? Were you like me? I was a Christian for several years and I thought every good and decent thing that came along I was to give myself totally to it. It's like being married to 1,000 wives. It's like, "Oh, I've got to go and help them. Oh, these people are saving dogs and I'm going to go and help them save dogs." Boy, I don't want to be too crude here. Boy, I've got to be careful here. I'm going to be in jail one day. If a stray dog's got the mange and he shows up at your house, just shoot him. They are not people. They are not people. Be humane, shoot them where they die quickly. Folks, that's just the way I was raised. I'm sorry, my granddaddies weren't evil men but that's just the way it was. Do you know what's wrong? We've got an effeminate sissy culture is what we've got. Sometimes men have got to do manly things. Amen? If the ladies can't handle it, they can go inside and make biscuits. We'll shoot the dogs. I told you I shouldn't have said that but I get so tired of this apologizing, whiny, wimpy, sissy. Oh, it just drives me crazy. Doggone. What was my point? Now I'm completely lost.

I didn't mean to get trivial or even humorous. That was not my intent but Christ laid aside so much, listen to me, for a specific group of people. I don't care what you say. Are you listening to me? All of those who will be in hell one day did not have their sins atoned. If they had their sins atoned, they would be in heaven. There is a special, unique, devoted love Christ poured out for his church. I can't grasp the glories of all of that, I just know it's all taught in Scripture. And so listen, my application point is: so go to your small

group and go to your small group leader or go to Brother David this next year in small groups and just say, "What do I need to do? If my Lord left all of that for the benefit of the church, I can be an outreach leader."

Now look, there is time for rest, there is time to take a break. I understand that. As a matter of fact, if you hadn't given me some breaks and some rest, I wouldn't be your pastor today. That's just the truth. Preaching is emotional work and it drains you enormously and if you don't let me restore some, I just can't make it long-term. But you do and you're gracious that way. So I understand. You have to have a break every now and then but not permanent retirement, just a break. I take my breaks to the end that I can come back and preach to you with conviction and passion and spiritual power hopefully. And you should take a break from your service only so you can get restored and serve again because our Lord left so much for the good of the body and I've got his Spirit in me. Are you getting this? Don't you love the word of God? I could've never come up with this. The word of God is so wonderful.

I've got to hurry on. Real quickly. Verse 8, "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." God, the dimensions and the glories of that. "For this reason also," here it is, "God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name." Listen to me, listen to me, listen to me, listen to me. Don't you go to sleep on me yet, listen to me: Jesus denied and selflessly laid aside so much to be spit upon and scorned. Everybody in his culture and even at the end his own disciples said, "You are a fool. You are a fanatical, radical fool. You spent your whole life publicly shaming and powerfully denouncing the religious authorities and now look what's happened to you." But God said, "Alright, religion, men, Rome, the Sanhedrin, the culture, has had their say about my Son, now," God says, "I'm going to have my say and I'm going to highly exalt him and give him a name that is above every name."

What is the corresponding application in this context? His point is this, listen to me: when you give your life and energies for the glory of God through his church, when you give your life and energies for the good of the church Jesus died for, God says, "You are motivating me to highly exalt you because you're showing you care for what I care for. I cared for that group so much I sent my Son to die for them and when you have that same heart, when you have that lifetime devotion to help the body of Christ and strengthen the body of Christ and serve the body of Christ, then I want to tell you, you've got my Son's heart and you've got my heart and that's what turns me on," God says, "and I will highly exalt you." The Bible even says we are not just going to be up there with Jesus, we're going to be, what? Joint heirs with Jesus Christ. That's the point of application here, folks. Sure, this shows us the glories of Jesus but it shows us what's coming from us. But now, you listen to me: if you're just a nominal churchgoer, not born again of the Spirit of God, you just do a piddling thing every now and then, don't expect to be received into his heaven with blessings and glory. That's the point of this text.

Well, the rest of it has really already been touched on. Verse 10, "so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Now, you have to understand that the culture, the Jews, the religious establishment of the day, who claimed to be God's people and follow God's word, by the way, that's what they claimed, they were all against this little church at Philippi and the little church at Rome and the little church at Ephesus and the little church at Collosae and all the little churches in this first generation. So Paul is trying to motivate them. "Don't quit," is what he's saying. "Don't grow weary. Don't give in. I know. I know. I know you're in the minority and I know even you doubt at times but keep on going. Jesus gave his life for the good of the church, you keep serving and living for the good of the church and one day it's going to be glorious." It's just a temporary pilgrimage we're all in right now. Only what's done for Christ last.

Alright, lastly, this is not new but let me give you 4 quick CPAs, conclusions for practical application. 1. Do not focus on gifts or callings. Don't come into the church, "Now, I've got this gift. I've got this calling. I ought to do this. I ought to do that." Don't do that. What's good for your pastor is good for you. My first job here was hauling sheet rock up the steps and I was glad to get to do it. Then I did a million and one tasks for many, many, many years. I'm not telling you I'm the perfect role model but that's what I did. It was many years before I became a senior pastor and Lord knows, it should have been many more because there was so much I didn't know and what I needed to learn. So don't focus on, "Well, I ought to have this place. I ought to have that." No, look, do not focus on gifts or callings.

2. Do focus on selfless service. Just say, "Lord, what can I do?" I've often challenged you to think this way, now I'm talking about in your small groups. That's where we are organized to serve one another. If we don't do it in small groups then a whole lot of people are going to miss being served and cared for because there are just too many people to think about to remember everybody but a small group package, we can. In your small group, ask yourself, "Is there a job that needs doing?" Ask your small group leader, "Is there a job that needs doing?" Secondly, can you do it? Now, if it's something you can't do or you're just really uncomfortable, don't worry about it. So the job that needs to be doing, can I do it? Thirdly, does the leadership affirm me doing it? If the small group leader says, "Man, I appreciate that heart. I've really got somebody else I think is going to do that. Let me get back with you." Then you need to say, "Praise the Lord. I'm like Michael Faraday, it doesn't matter. I'm just here in the body and whatever I get to do is fine." How do you get selfless pride-abandoning people like that? You have to be burning the right fuel. The Spirit of God's got to be in here. Fourthly if they do, do it. Is there a job that needs to be done, can I do it, does the leadership affirm me doing it, then do it.

3. Stay at it until God opens a new door. Can you imagine probably the number 3 man in the mightiest nation on the earth, his name was Moses. A powerful man and yet God puts him in the desert tending sheep for 40 years. I can imagine Moses saying, "God, do you know who I am? Do you know who I am kin to? Do you know I am in line for the throne of Pharaoh of Egypt?" God said, "Don't focus on your callings or your gifts, you just do the service I've got you. You just keep these stinking sheep." "Well, Lord, how long?" "Until I get the character built in you that I need built in you so that when you do get the

office of leadership, you'll handle it with humility and godliness and not arrogance and pride." Some of you young guys, you're gifted and I thank God for you but you need to let the leaders in the church put you where you ought to be until you develop the character needed. Then 40 years later, God appears in a bush to Moses and says, "Moses, I think you're ready. You're not perfect yet but now fulfill the office I have called you to perform. Go deliver my people." And you knew Moses was ready because he said, "Lord, I think you've got the wrong guy. I don't think I'm qualified." And God said, "No, that's why you are qualified. That's why you are qualified because you are humble now." So stay at it until God opens a new door.

4. Look to Jesus. Every time you think about, "Well, I'm doing this in my small group and nobody is helping. I'm doing that in small group and nobody appreciates me. I don't know why I've got to do more." Well, sometimes there's a place to pull a brother or sister aside and rebuke them a little bit and say, "Look, I need some help." That's okay. That's okay to do that. Do it privately but that's okay sometimes to do that. But very often if you're going to do anything for God in his church, you're going to have to keep looking to Jesus and saying, "You laid aside the glories of heaven and all your deity and divine prerogatives, considered it of no account and no worth for the good of the church and if you did that for the good of the church then I can serve for the good of the church." Look to Jesus.

Mutual service in the body of Christ.

Let's just pray for a moment, alright?