**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 9-24-2023
Two Humble Servants Phil. 2:19-30**

One of the things that happens this time of the year in America are baseball celebrations. Teams will soon be winning their divisions or making the playoffs. And in a little over a month, we will have a new champion. And cities love to celebrate their winners, their champions. Don’t they?

And this is true for many sports. People are excited to welcome them and they cheer them on and are eager to hear them speak. There are parades. Maybe you have even attended one. And there is this focus on honoring these winners that takes place during these times.

And this can be fun and exciting. I do not know if anyone here participated in anything like that, whether as an athlete or as a fan. I remember when I was a senior in high school; our girls’ volleyball team won the state championship that year. Obviously, I was not on the team myself, but I was at Shippensburg University to cheer them on when they won. And it was exciting! We got an excused absence that day and it was fun to be a part of this. And we all celebrated when the team won the championship. It was a very memorable moment.

And I remember late that night there was this caravan of cars that drove through town beeping their horns to celebrate the victory. There was this sense of honoring and welcoming home that was a part of this.

And I know it was just a few months ago that Northern High School won the state softball championship. This would certainly have been a very similar joyous experience for many to celebrate and to honor the hometown athletes as well.

And honoring athletes is really nothing new. This was something that was even common in the days of the ancient Olympics.

Now while much of the larger culture in America, and in the world for that matter, seeks to honor and be especially welcoming towards highly successful athletes, the church is called by God to be a culture of welcoming and honor that is far broader and deeper.

Christians are called to welcome and show hospitality to visitors and we are called to honor one another and value each person as important.

And believers are also to honor and welcome leaders in the church. And this is really the core of what Paul is speaking about in today’s highlight passage from Philippians.

Today we are going to learn about two humble servant leaders whom Paul was sending to the Philippians. And Paul’s words would instruct them on how they were to receive them.

So let us hear Philippians 2:19-30 together and reflect on these 2 faithful servants and how the church was called to respond.

# Philippians 2:19-30 New International Version (NIV)19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 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. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

**25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.** **26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.** **27 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.** **28 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.** **29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him,** **30 because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.**

So, who are these two humble servants of Christ whom Paul is commending to Philippians to receive? They are Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Each of these men was not seeking to care for their own interests, but the interests of Christ. They were not living to please themselves, but to honor and please Christ. And both of these men sincerely cared for the well-being of others. And this clearly shows. Their witness for Jesus was strong. They were shining brightly as stars for Jesus in warped and crooked generation.

**Interestingly, the text we are looking at today is actually the center passage structurally in the entire letter. This would mean that Paul was trying to highlight these words of being especially important for the readers to grasp.**

So why was Paul taking the centerpiece of Paul’s letter to highlight the example of these two humble servants? I believe there are two main reasons.

**The first is rather obvious. He wanted the Christians in Philippi to learn from their example.** As they were to learn from the example of Christ, they were to also learn from the example of these two faithful servants of Christ.

Epaphroditus and Timothy had proven themselves as faithful disciples to Jesus Christ. In the passage we see why.

First, let’s take a closer look at Timothy. Timothy was a spiritual son of Paul, meaning Paul had become a spiritual father to Timothy. Paul had poured himself into Timothy and became equipped to pour himself out to others. In fact, Timothy became a leader in helping to oversee some of the churches that had been established in various places, particularly in Ephesus. But in this case, Paul was sending Timothy to Philippi.

Paul states of Timothy **“I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare.”** The name Timothy means ‘honoring God,’ and Timothy was doing just that in the way that he was living. He was the real deal and the church was to be honoring and welcoming towards Him. He would have been a great leader to listen to and learn from.

By honoring Timothy and welcoming Timothy and seeking to learn from Timothy, the church would be following Christ. This is because Timothy faithfully represented Christ.

Now let’s consider Epaphroditus. Paul refers to him as a co-worker and fellow soldier. The Christians in Philippians knew what being a soldier entailed, many of them being retired soldiers.

Soldiers are to be people of discipline. Soldiers are to be people of honor and respect. Soldiers are to be people that are willing to fight for what is right and to put others before themselves.

And Paul is referring to Epaphroditus as a fellow soldier. Jesus was his Master, his King, His general. But Epaphroditus was a faithful follower of the Lord.

Paul doesn’t normally use military language in his letters. But it is quite likely because Philippi was in many ways a Roman military colony that it was fitting to refer to Epaphroditus in these terms.

Also, Epaphroditus appears to be from Philippi and it was he that was the one sent by the church there to help care for Paul’s needs when he was under arrest in Rome. At that time, prisoners had to rely on their friends and family to meet their needs. They were not given regular meals and other amenities, as is common today.

It was Epaphroditus who came to Paul on behalf of the church in Philippi and who brought the resources needed to care for Paul’s needs. And it appears that he became ill during this time and nearly died. Now, Paul is sending him back to them and urging them to honor him and honor people like him.

Again, Paul invites the Christians in Philiip to learn from Timothy and Epaphroditus. They had stories to tell. They had lessons that they would teach. The people of Philippi would be blessed to honor them and welcome them and seek to learn a lot from them.

But I also believe that there was a second reason that Paul was highlighting these two humble servants, which was that Paul was seeking to promote a culture of honoring and welcoming in Philippi. Paul wanted the church to be a community where giving honor is part of its DNA.

Paul writes in his letter to the church in Rome 12:10 – “Be devoted to one another in love. **Honor one another above yourselves**.”

When someone is focused on honoring others, it is hard from them to be self-centered and self-focused.

How then how are we to live out these instructions from Paul today? **I believe we do this by intentionally practicing honoring and welcoming as a church community**.

First, we do this by how we interact with one another in general. We show honor by building relationships with one another and getting to know one another. We show honor by seeking to do life together in some ways, rather than just as individual Christians that gather once a week to worship. We show honor to one another by working through challenges and differences of opinion on things.

And second, we show honor and welcome when we seek to learn from the teachers among us. When we are taking notes during a sermon, it is one way of showing that we are seeking to intentionally learn and grow. When we make attending Bible Study or Sunday School a priority, we are practicing honor and a desire to be nurtured by teachers in our midst. When we are taking part of the Bible Book of the Month or another intentional Bible reading plan, we are showing honor and appreciation to God and to one another.

I have been very blessed to learn from several very godly and knowledgeable Christians over the years. By learning from them and allowing them to speak into my life, I have grown a lot in my faith. We need to posture ourselves in a similar way as we seek to grow in the Lord.

Maybe you can think of men and women that have inspired you. Some of you may know, whether recently or from years past – godly parents, grandparents, mentors, friends, children. And others of you may not know personally, but are blessed to know them through reading about them. Godly women and men we read of in Scripture or through church history. We honor them by seeking to learn from them and by following their example.

Friends, we live in a wider culture where disrespect and dishonor are common. While Americans do honor their sports heroes and champions, many Americans commonly practice dishonor, especially to those they may disagree with. Even the sports winners may find themselves getting booed if they get into a slump later on. People can be fickle.

But as Christians, God wants His church to be very different. The church is meant to be a community and a culture where honor is the norm. The church is meant to be a community that honors one another, honors and welcomes visitors, that honors those that are preaching and teaching.

And this is done not just with words, but more so through actions that demonstrate this as well. While not all of us are named “Timothy,” all of us are called to be intentional in honoring God and honoring others. All of us are called to strive to be faithful soldiers for Christ, like Epaphroditus. All of us are called to have genuine concern for the welfare of others, like Timothy.

Finally, at the very center of the letter, Paul mentioned one more visitor that he hopes will soon be making his way to Philippi. It is found in verse 24. Paul writes, “And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.”

Paul is telling them through this that not only does he want to come and see them soon, but also that he is eager to further equip them in their Christian living. And Paul would trust that the Christians in Philippi would welcome him and be eager to grow and learn from him.

At Chestnut Grove Church, may we have that same spirit of welcoming and honoring here. And as we strive towards this, we cannot help but become that light on a hill sharing the love of Jesus Christ in brighter and more powerful ways.

Let us pray...

Resources: [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+2%3A19-30&version=NIV>

Paul’s Letter to the Philippians by Gordon D. Fee