

# The Prison Epistles 05 phil.2:4 - 'Others'

by David Clifford

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of humility and unselfishness in living for Christ, using the example of the Lord Jesus and Apostle Paul's willingness to serve others.*

**Duration:** 52:14

**Scripture:** Isaiah 58:1-3, Luke 11:1-2, Philippians 2:4

**Topics:** "Humility", "Repentance"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the importance of humility and unselfishness, using the example of a friend visiting another friend who is hungry. The first friend goes to ask for food from Mr. Lord, emphasizing the need to look out for the interests of others. The speaker then transitions to discussing a passage from the Bible, where God instructs his people to confront their sins. Despite appearing to be good and godly, the people still needed to acknowledge their transgressions and seek God's guidance.

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## Transcript

Well, if there's somebody be good enough to go up to Long Island, New York, and preach for me on Sunday next, I'll go to Disneyland on Monday. Be very nice indeed. Now let us turn to the letter, Paul's letter to the Philippians, and chapter two.

Philippians chapter two, we read part of verse twenty-seven of the previous chapter. Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel. In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them, that is your unity, is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

Chapter two. If there be therefore any consolation in Christ. Now there's no if of doubt there, you know.

The sense is, since you know of the consolation that is in Christ, since you know of the comfort flowing from love, that is God's love, and the fellowship of the Spirit, and the compassions and mercies, fulfill ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better, superior than themselves. Look not every man on his own interests, but every man also on the interests of things of others.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of mere reputation, took upon him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men. And being found in passion as a man, he humbled himself, became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him.

Verse seventeen. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I join rejoiced with you all, for the same cause also do ye join rejoiced with me. But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state.

For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ. But you know the proof of him, that as a son with the Father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go well with me. How it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Yet I suppose it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour and fellow soldier, but your messenger. And he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

For indeed he was sick, nigh unto death. But God had mercy on him. Not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the most reputation, that he is honour such. Because for the work of Christ, see, Epaphroditus was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me. Or as another translation puts the last verse, he risked his life to do for me in person that which distance made it impossible for you to do.

May the Lord bless this precious word, the reading of it to our hearts. Sadhu Sundar Singh, that famous well-known Indian Christian, paid a visit to England some time back, and had a conversation with a professor of comparative religions in the University of Cambridge. Tell me, said the professor, tell me, Mr. Singh, what have you found in Christianity that you did not find in your old religion in India? Professor, our dear brother, I found the dear Lord Jesus.

Oh yes, said the professor, I quite understand what you mean. But what particular principle or doctrine, what new philosophy have you found in Christianity that you did not find in your old religion? Professor, he said, I found the dear Lord Jesus. And you know, you couldn't get any further than that with Sundar Singh.

And what a blessing. And I trust that the most glorious person of our Lord, we might find him in the word tonight, for he is the secret on every page of scripture. Christ in all the scriptures.

I thank God for the Bible, the truth it brought to me when I was sinking down in sin's dark ways. For since I've searched its pages, I've found the rock of ages, and my happy soul is singing, Jesus saved. Now we were talking, we have been speaking during these days about the main themes of these prison letters.

And some of them are very interesting, and I trust helpful to us. And we were saying this morning that when the Apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Philippi, that's the scripture we're reading tonight. When he wrote to the Christians at Philippi, he was really not languishing in prison, he was rejoicing that he was in the will of God.

And everything was turning out wonderfully, many were hearing the word and being born again of the incorruptible seed of the word of God, and getting gloriously saved. So one of the key words and key themes of the letter was joy and rejoicing. We noticed however that the Apostle Paul was trying to tell them from his own personal experience as far as he was concerned, what he wanted to live for, who he wanted to live for was Christ.

But indeed more than that, he said for me to live is Christ. And we gathered that the meaning of that central and main theme of this letter was to be that Christ was the very life of his life. And if he passed away, if he was called upon to die and give his life as a martyr, then he would even have more of Christ when he saw him face to face on that occasion.

Now we also must mention that the Apostle uses the word mind in this letter quite a lot. He wants the Christians at Philippi whom he loves to think, to use their minds and to think about things that matter most. He says, finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, are honest, are just, whatsoever things are pure or lovely or of good report, there's any virtue in them, there's any praise in them, think on these things.

Exercise your minds in the right direction. Chapter 1 verse 27 he speaks about one mind, we were reading that at the beginning of our scripture portion. Chapter 2 and verse 2 he says the same thing, one mind.

Verse 3, the lowly mind. And verse 5, the unselfish mind, the mind of Christ. Verse chapter 3, 15, the Pauline mind.

And chapter 3, 19, the earthly mind. And chapter 4 and verse 2, one mind. And chapter 4 and verse 7, restful mind.

And although we're not going into the details of these this evening, I wanted to show you that this is one of the main themes of this letter to the Philippians. But we're going to centre our remarks this evening, with the help of God's Holy Spirit, around verse 5 of chapter 2. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. We're going to take the whole of the chapter, or most of it, out of our context to illustrate the text and this important theme in this letter this evening.

Now I know that in some of your Bibles there is a new paragraph beginning at verse 5. Well now I don't hold with that view. I ought to tell you that right at the beginning and offer my apology for giving a different view. You see, I'm quite sure that verse 5 comes out of, is a continuance of, verse 4. And verse 4 is the key verse to the whole of the section and the whole of the chapter.

Look not every man on his own interests, but every man also on the interests of others. Now of course the Apostle is building up to this great kenosis passage from verse 5 or 6 onwards. This is a well-known passage which is called the kenosis passage because it's a Greek word which means self-emptying.

It's to do with the self-emptying of the Son of God. And the word is at the beginning of verse 7, He made himself of no reputation. He emptied himself, that is.

And we shall look at that in a moment or two. But leading up to this great and very well-known kenosis passage, the Apostle Paul is really making an appeal for unity amongst the saints at Philippi. And he's trying to tell us, as a matter of fact he tells us quite loudly and strikingly, that it is humility that leads to unity.

See verse 3, in lowliness of mind that each esteem other superior than themselves. Look at verse 2, fulfill ye my joy, being like-minded, we'll do that, having the same love, that is love and be loved equally, being of one accord of one mind. But first of all then, humility leads to unity.

And then secondly, unselfishness leads to usefulness. And that's going to be our main idea underlying the message this evening. Because this is verse 4, unselfishness leads to usefulness.

If you're not taken up with your own interests, then God will use you to the blessing of others. And the first illustration of that is the Lord Jesus in the kenosis passage. The second illustration is Paul himself in verse 17.

The third illustration is Timotheus in verse 19. And the fourth illustration is in the same chapter, Epaphroditus verse 25 to the end. So the first idea is humility leads to unity.

Well of course it does. We should be one with another if we esteem others superior than ourselves. If we love one another with a pure heart fervently and equally, humility is sure to lead to unity.

And unselfishness is sure to lead to usefulness. If we're not thinking of ourselves, we're thinking of others. God will bless us and use us to be a blessing to others.

And thirdly, obedience leads to unction. Now this was the case with the Lord Jesus. It speaks of him as a servant, being obedient.

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. And in verse 12 it says, Wherefore my beloved, as you have always obeyed, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God who worketh in you.

There's the divine unction, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. So you see the Apostle Paul is leading us up to the general idea of usefulness for God as a result of unity in the church and unselfishness in our own hearts and minds before him. And he says, your unity will spell my joy, verse 2. But he says more than that, your unity will bring blessing to others.

And more than that, your unity will bring glory to God. So in unity amongst the Lord's people, how grand it is. And thank God for that beautiful measure of unity we discern here in your conference and in your assembly experience here.

It is glorifying to him how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. It is like the precious anointing oil with which God's servant Aaron was anointed on his head and it flowed down to the hem of his garment. And there the Lord commanded the blessing even nigh forevermore.

I was at conference or something somewhere once when one brother was describing this and he was saying how that the whole garment would be covered with oil. Well that would be a mess, wouldn't it? It would be a terrible mess for him to have all the garment covered with oil. Now you see, he not only has the skirts of the garment down at the bottom, you know, but he has the top skirts of his garment as well.

And the oil would be placed on his head and some of it would drop down to the skirts of his garment. So he wasn't a filthy mess, you know. And it wasn't so bad as all that after all.

But you know, unity amongst God's people is precious to God and it always brings blessing to others. There the Lord commanded the blessing even life forevermore. And humility which leads to unselfishness are the key notes to bring unity and blessing to others.

So the apostle says, don't get taken up with your own interests. Be taken up with the interests of others and let this mind be in you. Put the word and in there, just to bring the connection.

Because the first five flows out of verse four. And let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Now you see, the mind that Christ Jesus had was a very noble mind.

But it's not talking about that here. The mind of Christ was kingly. It's not talking about that here.

The mind of Christ was well stored with the scriptures. But it's not talking about that here. What is it talking about in this context? It's talking about humility and unselfishness.

Looking on the interests of others and let this kind of mind for others, which was in Christ Jesus, be in you. And that's the secret of blessedness. So the apostle has in mind the word others.

That's the end of verse four. And to illustrate this key text, verse four, he gives four beautiful illustrations in the chapter itself here. And the first illustration is concerning the Lord Jesus.

Remember in John 10 the Lord Jesus said, Others I have, who are not of this foe, them also I must bring. Here is divine compulsion in the heart of the Saviour, before ever you were born, thinking about you. And it was because he was thinking of you that he emptied himself and came as God's servant to this earth and went to the cross of Calvary.

Not only was he thinking about you, but you know he prayed for you in John 17. I pray not only for these my disciples here, but for those that shall believe on thee through their word. He was praying for you then, as a matter of fact he's praying for you now.

He's our intercessor and advocate with the Father. Thank God for his work of advocacy there at God's right hand. Because you know secret sin on earth is open scandal in heaven.

And the accuser or the brethren accuses us night and day before God. But he is there and he's there by virtue of his own shed blood. And it is his blood which speaks our peace before a holy God.

Though the accuser may roar. But he's not only there as our advocate, he's there as our intercessor. He is praying for us today as he prayed for you and thought of you many, many, many years ago.

So it was because he was taken up with the interests of others, your interests and mine, that he emptied himself. In verse 6 it says he was in the form of God. Now that doesn't mean shape, it's a Greek philosophical term which means in the nature of God.

Thought it not a robbery, a thing to grasp after, a thing to hang on to, to be equal with God. Now he was equal with God but he emptied himself of something to become the servant of Jehovah. And what do you think it was he emptied himself of? You say he emptied himself of his glory.

Oh no he didn't because his glory was revealed on the mount. He must have had it all the time. You say he emptied himself of his attributes, of his divine attributes.

Oh no he didn't. He wouldn't have been divine. He wouldn't have been God while he was upon earth.

But if one attribute of deity was missing, and he made claim to deity as God had on many an occasion. He said before Abraham was I Am. Not I was, but I Am.

Here was the Almighty God present before them in human form. And a rich young ruler came running to him once and he said, Good master, he said after a minute, why do you call me good? You know there's only one good and that is God. And the Lord Jesus was not saying it was not good, but he was saying that he was God.

And he claimed deity on many an occasion. Therefore if he did not empty himself of any of his divine attributes, because he couldn't be God with one missing, and he didn't empty himself of his glory because his glory was revealed on the mount of transfiguration, what did he empty himself of? Well he emptied himself here, he made himself of no reputation. He emptied himself of his reputation, that gives us the clue.

His reputation as God the Son, and he became the servant of Jehovah. His, not his attributes, but his prerogatives as God the Son. He emptied himself of his divine rights as God the Son to become the servant of Jehovah.

And incidentally, not only to serve God the Father, but to serve you and context here, because he had others in his mind, looking not on his own interests, but on yours and mine. He pursued the course of everlasting day and chose with us a dark some house of clay, because he came to seek and to save those who were lost. So he was made in the likeness of men, and was found in passion as a man.

He took humanity into union with deity. He became what he was not, a man, but never ceased to be what he was, God. So therefore this was the God man.

If ever a man was God and God was man, Jesus Christ was both. He was made in the likeness of men. I'm very, very glad that my Saviour is God.

Because as our dear brother Hanley Mould of Durham used to say, a Saviour who is not quite God is a bridge broken at the farther end. He is almighty and able to save completely and eternally. But I thank God my Saviour is man.

He has gone this way before me. He knows where I am tonight. And he has touched with the feelings of my infirmities.

And I'm infirm and so are you, because we're still in the body. And we still have that nature which is inclined to drag us down. I thank God my Saviour is the God man.

And nothing else than this would suffice. He was thinking of you and he was thinking of me when he emptied himself of his divine prerogatives as God the Son and became man. So he was the God man.

He was found in passion as a man. And he humbled himself, it says, as though, as though that first humiliation, becoming, being God and then becoming man, that is sin apart, as though that humiliation was not enough. My dear friend, it was not enough for your salvation and mine.

He was taken up with your interests and my interests. And he must do more than this, just become a man. He became a man that he might die as man, for man his creature's sin.

What condescension bringing us redemption, that in the dead of night not one faint hope in sight. God, gracious, tender, laid aside his splendour, spouting to woo, to win, to save your soul and mine. Without reluctance, flesh and blood, his substance.

He took the form of man, revealed the hidden plan. Oh, how I love him. How I adore him.

My breath, my sunshine, my all in all. For it was the great Creator who became my Saviour. And all God's fullness dwelleth in him.

God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. Your interests and my interests were in his mind. And made him stoop from the throne of glory to the cross of shame outside the city wall of Jerusalem.

He became, he humbled himself again and became obedient as the servant of Jehovah, obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God hath highly exalted him. Now that is the first illustration or example that the apostle uses by the Spirit to illustrate the key text.

Look every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, this mind for others, this unselfish mind which was in Christ Jesus. And the second example is in verse 17.

Yea, he says, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all. Now to read this in another translation I'm sure would be helpful because it's not easy to understand first reading in the authorised King James Version. But you see the point is this, the apostle had already to some degree poured out his life in seeking to be a blessing to the Christians at Philippi.

And he was saying if I ever get released from prison then I'm coming to serve the Lord with you and for you again. I want to pour out my life as a libation is poured out on an offering in service to you and for you and with you for the glory of God's name. Now that is exactly the same idea.

This is the second illustration of verse 4. Look every man also on the interests of others. He had gone to Philippi, he preached the word, he had suffered need, he had been imprisoned for Christ's sake. He coded it a joy to be a blessing to them whatever he suffered.

And he said if ever I get released I'm going to pour out my life again in exactly the same way to be made a blessing to you and to others. Well now in Luke chapter 11 we read that the Lord Jesus was praying in a certain place. And when he ceased his disciples said to him Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples.

And the Lord Jesus said unto them yes all right I'll teach you to pray. When you pray start by worshipping God the Father. You see start with worship.

And then he said think of God's coming kingdom and make supplication in relation to that. Worship first, supplication next. And then of course continue your supplication by asking for your daily needs.

And he said and don't forget confession. Worship, supplication, then confession. Forgive us our sins.

And then of course there must be petition he says for holiness because this is the will of your Father which is in heaven that you are perfect, that you follow after holiness. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. And then he said almost as though it was an afterthought but it certainly wasn't because he went right on.

Now he said one more important thing please in your petition. But he said first of all let me tell you a story. There were three friends, three friends.

And the first friend lived in a kind of lodge we'll say. You know what they're like in England. There's the roadway and there's the lodge and there are the big iron gates and there is the drive up to the big country mansion.

About half a mile or so up the drive, an avenue of trees you see. And we'll say for the sake of our illustrative argument we will say that it is Mr. Christian who lives in the lodge. He takes care of the tradesmen and so on coming to the big house.

And we will say for the sake of our rights that it is Mr. Lord who lives in the big house you see. Now here's friend number one. Mr. Christian is friend number two.

And there's another friend. It's the story of the three friends and the three loaves that the Lord Jesus told them. Now he said one night round about midnight this Mr. Christian and his wife had just had a snack and read the scripture portion and they were just about going to bed.

As a matter of fact she'd gone upstairs to bed you see. There was only one bedroom in this little lodge. She'd gone upstairs to bed and he said, John Christian said, I'll be up in a little while.

And just then the clock on the mantelpiece struck twelve you see. And he just about was going upstairs and he heard some footsteps coming along the road. And he said to himself I wonder who's this so late at night.

And the big gate opened and somebody came knocking at his door. So he put on the light and opened the door and there was a man outside. He said, excuse me, he said, can you help me? He said, what do you want help for this time of night? He said, well I'm lost.

I'm out of my way. I've lost my way. He said, can you help me? He said, come inside.

He said, sit down. He said, it's no good me directing you this time of night. He said, I'll put you up for the night.

You can sit in the chair there. And he said, well he said, as a matter of fact I'm very, very hungry. I've been walking for hours and hours and hours.

I haven't had anything to eat since breakfast time. Can you help me? Well, as a matter of fact we just had a snack a little while ago and there's nothing left in the larder. That's what we have in England is the larder.

And there's nothing left in the larder. So wait here for a little minute. I'll go up the drive.

It's very late, but I'll go up the drive to Mr. Lord's house and he will give us all that we need, I'm sure. So he left him there. This third friend did the second friend to visit the first friend.

And he knocked at the door, you see. And when eventually, because I'm cutting a long story short, when he eventually came to the door, Mr. Christian said to Mr. Lord, will you please give me three loaves? He said, what do you want three loaves for? He said, not for myself, Mr. Lord, but I want three loaves for another man, a man who's lost and out of his way and he's come to my lodge and knocked at the door at midnight and I had nothing to give him. Give me three loaves, not for myself, but for him.

And Mr. Lord was only too pleased to do so. He gave him all that he needed. You see, this story of the three loaves and the three friends is this.

Friend number two is nothing more than the Christian, the servant of Christ in between a needy world that's lost and out of the way and a bountiful heavenly Father who has all that he needs, not for himself, but for the man who's lost and out of the way. And then the Lord Jesus said, one more thing in your prayers, please. When you pray, don't get taken up with your own interests, but every man also with the interests of others.

Ask for others and it shall be given you for them. Now, you quote the text out of its context. You do.

I'm charging you with that tonight, in all grace, of course. But you quote the text and you say, ask and it shall be given you. Oh, no, sir.

Take it in its context. Ask for others and it shall be given you by your loving heavenly Father, not for yourself, but for them and others that are in need. And this was the mind of Christ in the Apostle Paul.

He said, I've poured out my life so far to be a blessing to others. And if I get a chance to get outside this prison and live my life in the ordinary way again, it'll be an extraordinary way because I'm going to do the same thing again. Pour out the rest of my life for others.

That's verse 17. Then the third illustration is in verse 19 about this very noble young man called Timotheus. He said, I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly to you that I also may be of good comfort.

Now, he said, Timothy is a very nice young man. He said, verse 22, you know the proof of him that as a son of the Father he's served with me in the gospel. He says, I've proved him for myself.

He's been at my right hand preaching the gospel with me as a son with a father. Now, I know what that means, as a son with a father, because I've often had my son at my right hand, or I've been at his right hand. I'm known these days as just the father of the implicit, you know.

And as you go on in life, that's what happens. But it's so blessed and wonderful to have your son at your right hand when you're preaching the word, you know. It's a tremendous thrill.

And one is very, very thankful to God in deep humility that both our sons seek to preach the word in one way and another. And he said, Timothy's been like a son serving with me. And you know, it takes more grace than tongue can tell to play the second fiddle well.

And Timothy had done just that thing. Now, he said, you know very well, Brethren and Sisters of Philippi, that the general rule in life is that it is everybody for himself. This is verse 21.

All seek their own. He says, you know very well, Brethren, that most people have joined the materialistic rat race and they're all out for what they can get for themselves. But Brethren, this is not the mind of Christ.

Look every man also on the interests of others. Let this mind for others be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. And Timothy, Brethren, had a mind just like that.

Notice, he said, for I have no man just like Timothy who is naturally caring for your state. He has a mind for others. And as a matter of fact, he's thinking about you and he wants to be a blessing to you.

So, I'm going to send him to you. Be nice to have him here with me in prison, to look after me and help me in my ministry and so on. But he's thinking about you.

He has a burden for you. He has the mind of Christ. He has the interests of others.

And you are the others in this case. So, I'm sending him to you. Isn't that nice? You know, I used to work some years ago in the Pilgrim Preachers with Mr. Ernest Luff who was the founder and leader of the Pilgrim Preachers.

He trained a lot of us young fellows in the gospel. We went up and down Great Britain preaching the word not only in the open air but in assemblies and wherever the Lord gave us the opportunity. And it was a wonderful experience indeed.

And we all grew to love Daddy Luff as we affectionately called him. And he often used to put his arm in ours and take us for a walk down the road. And we knew that we were in for some kind of loving exaltation, you know.

And he was a tremendous help in a thousand ways. And of course when he wasn't helping his boys in the team he was helping somebody else in somebody's home. And he was a wonderful example of our key text this evening was Daddy Luff.

You know, after he had to give up the leadership of the Pilgrim Preachers because of illness at home. And he started before long a home for the junior citizens of glory. You know what I mean by that, don't you? Junior citizens of glory.

For those getting on a little bit older he started a home in his hometown of Flint and Onsea on his own responsibility entirely and completely. And it was a great strain. I was often with him when he was earnestly praying that Lord would send him a few pounds to pay this bill or that bill or to provide for the older people in some way.

And by the age of 70 he had founded six of these homes in the same small town, Flint and Onsea, in Essex, the east coast of England. I visited him now and again and at the age of 73 I found out that the brethren in the assembly had provided him with a new cycle, bicycle. He used to go down on ever such an old bone shaker of a bicycle visiting each of these homes every day.

And they bought him a new one at the age of 73. And you know he was delighted with this and used it every day to visit the old people in his homes. And then when I visited him at the age of 75 I said, now Daddy Lough, don't go on your cycle today come in my old car.

So he condescended to do that and I took him around. But you know I had an awful job to get him out of these homes. The people wouldn't let him go.

They just hung on to him. You know he used to put his arm around them and give them a hug and kiss them. And these old people, men and women alike, they just loved him.

They thrilled to bits when he came in the door and when he went out of the door they just wet buckets. And they just loved him because he loved them. And he was living for others as our text so very plainly

said.

Look over him and also on the interests of others. And Timothy was like this. He says he's naturally caring for your state.

So I'm going to send him to you. Now the fourth illustration is Epaphroditus, verse 25. He is the very nice young man who was chosen by the Christians at Philippi to take this love offering that they'd taken up to the Apostle Paul in prison at Rome.

Ever such a long journey he had to go from Philippi about 600 or 700 miles. And he must have been a very faithful servant of the Lord in the local assembly. And they chose him to do this special piece of service for the Lord.

Ministering to Paul's wants as he puts it himself at the end of verse 25. Now on the way he was taken ill. Now I know that some Bible teachers and commentaries say that he was taken ill when he got to Rome.

Now I don't believe a word they say. Because I've come to the conclusion in my... You can come to any conclusion that you like. I wouldn't argue with you or contradict you of course.

But I seem to feel as I've read this about a hundred times that it was on the way he was taken ill. Or else met with an accident. He was very sick.

And in spite of this he risked his life, continued the journey and got to Rome with this precious gift for the Apostle Paul. Now says Paul, I'm sending him back to you now that he has recovered. And he said, you know he risked his life for others, in fact for me.

He has the mind of Christ, Epaphroditus. He wasn't taken up with his own interests. He almost lost his life in being taken up with the interests of others.

Now Paul says, remember brethren, hold such in reputation. In other words, honour such people who do this. And of course even if they hadn't have done it as they did, I'm quite sure God always does.

And God has honoured Epaphroditus because his name is down here in the Word. With such a wonderful commendation for his risking his life, thinking of the interests of others. Now of course, then that honour me God says, I will honour.

And those who empty themselves of their own rights, and privileges and interests for the sake of others will be honoured by me. Epaphroditus was, the Lord Jesus was. And Paul the Apostle was.

And all those who do so, so find that God is faithful to his Word. As I close tonight, I want to refer you to Isaiah, chapter in Isaiah, chapter 58. And you will just meditate for a moment on the first few verses.

You might think there's got nothing at all to do with the message, but let's look into it a little closely. God says here through the prophet, cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, show my people their transgression, the house of Jacob, their sins. Now God is talking about his people's sins.

Now these people were God's people. And it seems to me as I read verses 2 and 3, that they were quite good people and godly people. Wouldn't you think so? You'll notice they had their quiet time with the Lord every day.

See the beginning of verse 2. And notice they sought God's guidance and delighted to do so. See the next phrase in verse 2. Notice they kept God's ordinances. You know, like you do, baptism and the breaking of bread in your case.

They forsook not the ordinances of their God. Think of that. Not only so, they went to the prayer meeting and they enjoyed it as well.

See at the end of verse 2, they took delight in approaching to God. And not only did they have their quiet time and sought God's guidance and kept his ordinances and enjoyed the prayer meeting, but they fasted as well. See the beginning of verse 3. We have fasted, they said.

But the problem was, well what was the problem? God says, show these people their sins, make a noise, cry aloud. Now this is one of my favourite verses, you can tell why. He says, cry aloud, and I'm always doing that.

So it gives me a good excuse for making a noise. He says, cry aloud and show my people their sin. What was their sin? They were lovely, weren't they? Godly, weren't they? Their sin was this.

They were not taken up with the interests of others. They said, oh but more we fasted as well as gone to the prayer meeting. Yes, he said, but you haven't done the right kind of fast.

He says, is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to spread sackcloth and ashes unto him? Wilt thou call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? No, he said, is not this the fast that I have chosen? To unloose the heavy burdens, to look on the needs of others, to let the oppressed go free, when thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and hide not thyself from thine own flesh, deal thy bread to the hungry, bless the needy soul in every way you can, and then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday, and the Lord shall guide thee continually, satisfy thy soul in drought, make fat thy bones, and thou shalt be like a well of water, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. Yes, in New Testament language, you have the mind of Christ, and you are not taken up with your own interests, but taken up with the interests of others. Show my people this, and when they start living for God, and living for others as they live for God, then they will prove God's faithfulness.

Thou shalt cry, and I will answer. You will call, and God will say, here am I, and you'll get answers to your prayer, and a thousand blessings in your life, if you're only made a blessing to others. And this is the mind of Christ.

He was thinking of others when he left the glory, and came to earth, and went to the cross, and as a matter of fact, he was thinking of you, and left this life for others. Be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. Let us pray.

O Lord, we sometimes feel that we come so short of thy word, and the example of the Lord Jesus thy Son, and the example of Paul, and Timothy, and Epaphroditus. And we ask thee now that thou would forgive us for any failure thou dost see in our hearts and lives, and make us from tonight onwards very, very happy in the Lord, as we live for the Lord by living for others, to be a blessing to those in need. Accept now of our decision, determination, by thy grace, lead us in a plain path because of our enemies, and help us to remember that humility leads to unity, and unselfishness leads to unction, and blessing to many.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus, thy love our God, the fellowship and enabling of the Holy Spirit, be with us all today and always, until our Lord shall come again.

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