

Genuinely Concerned For The Interests of Christ

by James Jennings

This sermon emphasizes the importance of genuine concern for the interests of Jesus Christ and fellow believers. It delves into Paul's example of sending Timothy to the Philippians as a display of genuine care. The sermon challenges listeners to examine their motives, prioritize Christ's interests, and cultivate a love that abounds more and more. It highlights the deadly nature of unlove and the need for unity and sincere care within the body of believers.

Scripture: Matthew 10:30, 1 Corinthians 13:1, Philippians 2:19, Romans 8:32, 1 Corinthians 12:25

Topics: "Genuine Care", "Unity in Christ"

Description

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Transcript

Well, have any of you ever eaten at the same restaurant two times in a day and had the same food? Probably not. But, it just so happens, a lot of what John shared on in the 10 a.m., I'm going to be sharing on that as well right now. And we don't conspire like this.

We don't talk ahead of time. I didn't know what John was going to deal with. And so obviously the Lord wants us to hear certain things again and a different aspect that I'm definitely going to emphasize on that John briefly touched on at the end.

So let's turn to Philippians 2. And you know what, if we're lacking in a certain area spiritually, it's good to eat a lot of that specific topic. It's good to feast on it. To get all we can.

To chew down to the bone all the more to get all the meat we can. I want to deal with being genuinely concerned for the interest of Jesus Christ. So Philippians 2, 19-24.

Let's read those verses. Paul says, I hope, I hope, I hope in the Lord Jesus. Paul is very thoughtful in what he says.

Are we the same way when we make our plans? I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. For I have no one like Timothy who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interest, not those interests of Jesus Christ.

But, in contrast to them, you know Timothy's proven worth. How as a son with a father, he has served with me in the Gospel. I hope, therefore, in view of that reality in his life, to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me.

And I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. Amen. Father, Lord, I just pray, help me now to feed my own soul on these words, that these precious sheep of Yours would be fed as well.

I commit this time to You in Christ's name. Amen. Now, if you've got eyes to see it, this section clearly contains a lot more than just Paul's travel plans.

And what he deals with in the following verses in verse 25 and on. He deals a lot more with just travel plans. But ultimately, everything in the Christian life, whether you eat or drink, whether you make travel plans, you do all to what? The glory of God.

Everything that we do, it should be with some sense of a hope in the Lord Jesus to allow and bring it to pass. And as Paul just expressed here, it should even be done in a sense of recognizing things could change. Verse 23, I hope therefore to send Him just as soon as I see how it will go.

James 4 mentions we can't arrogantly say, I know I'll go to this city and trade and make a profit, because we don't know what tomorrow's going to bring. Paul recognized life is full of uncertainties. And here he is in prison writing this letter to those Philippians, those precious saints of this church.

And Paul there in prison is writing this. And if we were to read from the beginning of the letter to this point, what you would find is at this point in the letter, Paul has already expressed his desire. Look at verse 25.

He's convinced that to remain in the flesh, verse 24, is more necessary on your account. He's convinced that I know I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith. Paul is so focused on serving the saints.

He looks at his life being sustained. Even though it feels like he's ready to burst into heaven, he looks and he says, you know what? It's necessary I stay. Right? For you guys.

For others. For your joy. For your progress in the faith.

And he wants them to live out 127. He wants their manner of life to be worthy of the Gospel. And then he even adds in verse 27, whether I come or see you or I'm absent, I want to be able to hear of you that you're standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel.

Then he goes on to talk about how we shouldn't be fearful. And how are we going to have this unity? And our brother Mike Nyam even hit on these realities about a month and a half ago. How are we going to have this unity? Well, you've got this mind of Christ in chapter 2. And John referred to these verses.

If you weren't here, let's look again briefly. Verse 3 of chapter 2. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility... so we've got to have humility, a right view of ourselves, count others more significant than yourselves. Lead each of you, look, not only to your own interest, but also to the interest of others.

And then he mentions where this mindset even originates. Verse 5, have this mind among yourselves which is in Christ Jesus. And then he goes and he mentions these incredible realities about the incarnation and Christ humbling Himself.

Verse 8, even going to the cross, to the point of death on a cross. And isn't that what we always find in the Christian life? We come back to Christ is the supreme example. I mean, you just can't beat what the Lord Jesus has done in dying for you.

You're not going to find a better example than Christ. But, despite Christ being the supreme example, Paul goes on to give some other examples. And Timothy is one of those.

That's what we just read in verses 19-24. And then he even hits on Epaphroditus after that. Now, Paul states it's rare to find someone who is genuinely concerned for others' welfare.

Where does he say that? Look at verse 20. For I have no one like Him. What aspect, Paul? What aspect of Him is really, really unique? Who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare? For they all seek their own interest.

Who's the they? And who's the for I have no one like Him. For they all seek their own interest. He talks about genuinely being concerned.

What does it mean to be genuine? What would you say is a synonym of genuine? Yeah, real. People like to say, I like real people. Right? They'll make that statement.

Meaning, they're real. They're honest. Compared to the person, they're holding back.

You don't really get a sense that they're opening up to you and being real. And you feel like you're struggling to get that transparency out of them. It's to be undisguised.

The genuine person, they've got no disguise. I mean, what you see is what you get. This is what I am.

The person who's not genuine, the person who's insincere, they disguise things. But the genuine person, they're not trying to hide. It's someone who does something without hypocrisy, without insincerity.

And is this mentioned much in the Bible? What are some other verses where it mentions sincerity or genuineness? John hit on one. What was one of the others John hit on? Romans 12. Let your love be genuine.

It doesn't say let there be love. No, no. Paul wants a genuine manifestation of the love of Christ.

Romans 12.1 Peter 1 Sincere brotherly love. James 3 talks about wisdom from God. What does it say? Impartial and sincere.

Ephesians 6 talks about servants obeying your earthly masters with fear and trembling with a sincere heart. What does it say next? Sincere heart as you would Christ. Right? Amazing.

The same sincere heart that I'm serving Christ with, He wants me to do that towards my earthly master on the job? 2 Corinthians 8.8 He says, I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine. Paul wanted to prove forth that the Corinthians' love was really real. Was really real.

The Apostle, when defending his ministry, he doesn't want any fault to be found with his ministry, and he mentions a list of things by which he commends himself. And you know what one of those things on the list is? This very reality. He says in 2 Corinthians 6, we commend ourselves in every way, and he mentions through genuine love.

So whatever real love is, Paul can look in a humble way and say that was a reality in my ministry. That was actually being manifested through my life. But we can pretend to seek the things of Christ, but we could really be seeking our own vain glory.

Here's a classic example of that in the Bible where it just states it very clearly. Think of any passage in John. Herod, yeah, he did not seek the glory of God and God killed the man.

But Judas, listen to this. John 12. Why was this ointment not sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? That's Judas' statement, right? Judas is making it appear like what? He's very concerned about the poor.

Well, what was really going on in Judas' heart? We don't have to assume because the author actually gives us an interpretation of what happened. A correct interpretation of it. Verse 6, Judas said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief.

And having charge of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. So Judas is a classic example of one who outwardly appears like he's genuinely concerned for the poor. But internally, his concern is not the poor.

His concern is his own financial gain. And apparently, one's motives can have a clear enough indication to discern what's going on where John writes what he does and where Paul says what he says here in our text. I mean, Paul says this about Timothy in v. 21.

And what's something that should stand out about Timothy? V. 22, you know of Timothy's what? Proven worth. You're able to really know who someone really is. It takes a period of time.

You don't just prove yourself in a moment. Over time, people really see who you really are. We have that reality right there.

But motives are not impossible to discern. Or we wouldn't have Paul saying what he is saying right here. And so, yes, Paul is speaking about his plans to send Timothy, but Paul's plans are deep.

His plans are in the Lord. And when he says in the Lord right there in v. 19, you don't want to forget what he has just said in 2, v. 9, 10, and 11. He's just talked about every time confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord one day.

So Paul's ahead of that program. He realizes there's a day coming where every time he's going to confess Jesus is Lord. So right now when Paul just makes a simple plan, he's confessing Christ is Lord in the midst of that plan.

Because one day, everyone's going to bow and confess Christ is Lord. We need to be doing that right now even in little decisions that we're making acknowledging the Lordship of Christ. Now the significant idea that I want to travel down the road and consider this morning is found in v. 20-21.

For I have no one like Him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. Who's the your? It's the Philippians. It's the church at Philippi.

V. 21, For they, whatever this group of people is that Paul could send from or where he's at, if he's in prison in Rome, is it some group there? He looks at the group and he sees Timothy stands out as the one who's genuine. But he says, for they all seek their own interest. And then what does he say next? Does he say they don't seek the interest of the Philippians? They don't seek the interest of others? Wouldn't that be what you would expect Paul to say? You'd expect Paul to say when you get to that verse, well, they all seek their own interest.

Not the genuine welfare of the Philippians. But what does Paul interject instead of talking about the genuine needs of the Philippians? What does he say? Jesus Christ. Now, this is huge.

For one, this is Paul just writing this or speaking and it's being written. And we just got a sense of how Paul thinks. Paul is able to use these two things interchangeably while he's thinking and this letter is being written.

It just kind of comes out like that. He doesn't even really go on and give an explanation. This shows how much his mind is even thinking like this.

So yeah, I think we would expect Paul to say they seek their own interest and not the welfare of the Philippians. So how does he go from talking about Timothy's genuine concern for the Philippian believers to then talking about the interest of Jesus Christ? Well, Paul considers Timothy's concern for the genuine welfare of the Philippians as the same thing as being concerned for the genuine welfare and interest of Jesus Christ. He interchangeably speaks of the church at Philippi's welfare and the interest of Jesus Christ as being the same thing.

This means that when Timothy genuinely serves the Philippians, Paul actually looks at Timothy's service and he sees him as actually serving Christ. Not primarily the Philippians, but primarily serving the interest of Jesus Christ. The genuine welfare of the Philippians and the interest of Jesus Christ are synonymous.

This is huge. Look, this is even huge for you and I as a Christian. If you really get a grip of this, it shows you how interested Christ is in you, believer, and in us.

That the Lord would even guide Paul to send the right person to the church in order for their benefit because Christ is interested in that church and things happening there. Paul stating this reveals how Paul thinks. We want to think like Paul.

I mean, these are his words. They just come out in this letter. He views someone's lack, therefore, of genuine concern for a believer to be a lack of concern for the interest of who? Of Jesus Christ.

Rather than looking and saying, oh, they really lacked concern for that brother, Paul would even come in there and say, wow, they really lacked a concern for Christ. That kind of makes it stain a little more than it might initially stain. When I say stain, it convicts us.

It should convict us. So Paul does not get stuck viewing this merely on some human level. You know, of a person failing another person.

Oh, I didn't fail to love you right. Paul looks at this and says, no, your failure to love the Christian at Philippi is a failure to love Me, the Lord. So having concern for fellow believers is being concerned for that which Christ is concerned for.

And I would add that being concerned for Christ ultimately will lead you to be concerned for other believers. Because you become concerned for the interest of the person you want to please. If you want to please Christ, Paul is automatically assuming you're going to want to serve those in the church.

You're going to want to love your fellow Christians if you really have a love for Jesus Christ. That goes all the way through the Bible to almost the end in 1 John when he says, how do you know you've passed from death to life? You love the brethren. Why didn't he say that you love Christ? Because loving the brethren is loving Christ.

They're interchangeable. You don't divorce the two from each other. Yes, there's different nuances in each, but there's clear overlap.

And I realize some of these thoughts are similar to what I dealt with a month ago on how do you treat the brethren from Matthew 18. But think of that. This is all over the Bible.

It's in Matthew 18. John quoted at the end of his sermon, where in Matthew he talks about as much as you do to the least of these, you do unto Christ. Right? The Bible is so full of this idea, so full of it that Paul automatically says the interest of Christ, not the interest of the Philippians.

We want to be able to think like Paul is right there. So if concern for Christ doesn't lead to concern for the brethren, for the church, then you don't have a true concern for Christ. That's one of Paul's conclusions you could say, because true concern for someone is being concerned for what they are concerned for.

And if Christ is concerned for the interest of the Philippians, then true concern for Christ will manifest itself in being concerned for those Philippians. And even think of this, when Paul starts this letter, he says Paul and Timothy, what does he call themselves? What word? Servants. Of who? Of Christ.

You could read that over. That's what he's saying here in Philippians 2. As servants of Christ, I'm sending Timothy to serve Christ by serving a church. You see, it all comes back to serving the Lord.

Thinking in that direction, not just, oh, I'm serving a fellow brother. I'm serving a fellow sister. No, I'm actually serving Christ.

I'm serving the interest of my Master. I'm serving the interest of the One who shed His blood to pay my debt. All my sins are gone.

This unpayable debt. And now He's given me the privilege to be one of His servants and to love and to be patient and outdo one another in showing honor. It's remarkable.

And if you think about it, if you see how interested Paul is genuinely for the Philippians, how much more, believer, is the Lord genuinely interested for you? If Paul is thinking this much about his plans in order to help the church at Philippi get what they need and keep them from being harmed by someone being sent who doesn't have genuine motives, if the Lord's guiding Paul like that for that church, think about all that He has done in your own life to provide you with the specific needs that you need. The Lord is very, very genuinely concerned with your welfare. It's one thing to have the Apostle Paul genuinely concerned about your welfare.

It's another thing to have the Lord Jesus Christ genuinely concerned with your welfare. So Paul wants the best for the church. I mean, we already looked at it.

In 125, he's basically saying that's why he's alive. He's alive for your progress and joy in the faith. I want to fulfill this goal of helping believers grow because that's ultimately serving the very interests of Jesus Christ and Christ is interested in His church.

This is the same Paul who says in 120 that his eager expectation and hope is that he will not at all be ashamed, but with full courage now as always, Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ. Right? He's seeking to live as Christ.

He's seeking to love others as Christ. And he sees the others as the very interest of Christ. And look what he even says in 1.8. Paul says in 1.8, he calls God to the witness stand to judge his love.

For God is my witness how I yearn, how I burn for you all, that's the Philippians, with the love of Jesus Christ, with the affection of Christ Jesus. He calls God to the witness stand to judge his motives, to judge his love. Paul who's saying you need to be genuinely concerned for the welfare of others, he is so bold as to actually say God is my witness that I love you with the love of Jesus Christ.

You could look at that and almost think the man is being arrogant that he's saying he's loving them with the love of Christ. That could feel like a dangerous statement to make. But clearly, the grace of God is such that it could work in someone's life like Paul's to where he did make that very statement.

And this person, full of such love, plans to send Timothy to the Philippians because Timothy is genuinely concerned for their welfare. And Paul, being genuinely concerned for their welfare, wants someone genuinely helping them. You see? And Timothy's going for their welfare.

But actually, he's going for the welfare in the interest of Jesus Christ. So Paul actually wants the best for Christ to be honored. That's what he says.

Whether by life or by death, I want Christ to be honored in everything. But it manifests itself by Paul sending Timothy who's interested in the best for Christ and those at the Philippian church. Imagine if Paul sent someone who he knew was not genuinely concerned.

Do you think that's going to help that body there? Someone with ulterior motives? Like those we find in chapter 1? Doesn't he mention those? 1.15, some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry. I mean, they're just envious of one another. They have all sorts of rivalry.

But others do it from goodwill. The latter do it out of love. He mentions love there, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the Gospel.

But the former proclaim Christ's selfish ambition. Not genuinely. Not sincerely.

But thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. And then Paul's amazing response. What then do I do? Well, only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice.

Paul doesn't even let people with non-genuine motives preaching take his joy. Because his joy in Christ is such a rock and a foundation, he's not going to let them take that away. At least Christ is being preached even though their motives are wrong.

That's Paul's reality there. So Christ being the husband, Christ being the husband of the church, the church who is the bride, that's what our Bibles teach, is concerned about the things of the bride. And he's concerned that you and I are concerned about things of the bride.

Because when we serve those in the church, Christ takes that as how we are personally treating Him. To insult the bride is to insult the husband. You can't divorce the two.

You can't ill-treat a fellow Christian and it's totally disconnected from your treatment of Jesus Christ. We have to see things like this. And if you remember what the Lord spoke to Saul prior to his conversion, he was busy doing what? Persecuting the church.

And what does the Lord say to him when He appears to him? What's one of the statements being said to Saul? Saul, Saul, why are you what? Persecuting me. Me. The damage Saul was doing to believers was a personal attack on Christ.

So it is. Our ill-treatment of fellow believers is a personal attack on Christ. When we do things that are not genuine, when we do things that are the opposite of sincere, when we do things out of selfish ambition, we might want to call it loving, but Christ comes along and He says it's not loving.

It's not loving. It's actually ill-treatment. So when we fail to genuinely love others by serving them or by taking advantage of them or assuming the worst about them, it's not just an attack on them.

It's an attack on Christ. Hospitality is a major part of the Christian life. I mean, I've been converted now as of a week ago.

It's been 14 years. And in 14 years, I can barely even think of a week in my Christian life where I haven't been at someone's house or haven't had someone over. Hospitality is always happening.

We're in each other's lives. We're one body. It should be like this.

And you have commands in the Bible about not neglecting to show hospitality. Think about it like this. To neglect to show hospitality to the least of these is to neglect to show hospitality to who? Christ.

Because as you treat the least of these, so you do what? Treat me. When you look at it that way, when you think that way, that's how Paul thought. Clearly, if we renew our minds to think like this, it will affect our conduct.

Not as some burden, but out of a love for Christ. It will give us a greater love for those whom He is loving and has a concern for. Now, if anything, what does this make you say? Oh, I need more.

I need more love. Right? Didn't you feel that? I need more love? You know what? Paul already knew we were going to need more love. Look at v. 9-11.

Paul had thought this through. And it is my prayer that what would happen? That your love would abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment, so that you might approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes to Jesus Christ through the glory and praise of God. Paul's already praying for this very church who he's talking about genuine love and genuinely being concerned for others' welfare.

He's already praying for them. He's already been praying for them prior to this letter being written. You see, Paul's already looking at the situation and praying for their love to abound.

He tells them what his prayer request for them is in this letter. But he's already praying that for them. And that even actually could answer part of the question.

You want more love? Do you pray for that? Do you pray, Lord, let my love abound more and more? I don't have enough. My love is often small. Lord, give me more.

Give me more love. And you know, what is it love for? Is it for fellow Christians? For Christ? Well, guess what we already determined. They both go hand in hand together.

I want more love for fellow Christians. That is more love for Christ because fellow Christians are Christ's interest. And if you get more love for Christ, that's going to lead to you loving fellow Christians.

They go together. Can't separate them. So what are the interests of Christ? What am I practically to do here? If I need to have genuine welfare for the interest of Christ through being interested in the brethren, what does that look like? And you could find maybe 20 things in this letter that you could make a list of practical things that no doubt were on Paul's mind for this church.

That he no doubt was wanting Timothy to manifest before them. I'll just shoot through some of these briefly. In chapter 1, v. 5, he talks about partnering in the Gospel over the lawn hall with godly missionaries.

In 1.9, he talks about praying for the brethren that their love would abound. In 1.25, he talks about remaining for the progress of their joy and their faith. I mean, am I involved in people's lives to make them have more joy in Christ? Do I make people depressed? Striving side by side together.

1.27, clearly Paul wants unity. Genuine concern for their welfare will manifest itself in unity. Paul wants them, 2.12-13, he wants them recognizing the supernatural grace that's working in their hearts to will and to work for God's good pleasure.

And 2.14, he doesn't want them grumbling. You see people who grumble or complain. Is there a burden there for them that I want to help them? To see that in Christ, they don't ever have to grumble.

He wants them shining His lights in the midst of the world. He wants them not boasting in their own works in 3, v. 8. In 3.11, he wants them pressing unto the mark by any means possible. In 4.2, he wants them resolving disagreements between believers.

I treat Eotika and Syntyche, agree with one another. In 4.6, he doesn't want them being anxious. And in 4.11, he wants them being content.

You know what? When you're looking out for the interest of others, you're wanting to bring all these things to be a reality in their life. How do I know that? Because that's what Paul wants for the Philippians. I mean, hello, he just said these things to them.

He's basically saying what he wants for them. He just told them, do not be anxious. And then he gives them ammunition on why they shouldn't be anxious.

Because there is a peace that exists that surpasses all understanding that can guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. So, are my interests in you all to bring these things about as realities in your life? Am I coming and seeing a weak Christian who's anxious and thinking, how can I help them to get them out of this anxiety where they no longer fall into that and they have victory in Jesus Christ and have peace that they didn't have prior to that? Or disunity or contentment? And think, who's writing all this to them? It's a guy who's currently where? In prison. You can stick Paul in prison and it's not going to keep him from

serving the body of Christ.

Because he's that zealous about the interest of Christ. So his own present circumstances of suffering do not prevent him from loving the body. He's going all out right here.

It's incredible. So by faith, doing these things is pursuing the interest of Christ. When you're building up others and these qualities would be in your life, it's pursuing the genuine welfare of Christ.

And we do this by living out the mind of Christ. That means we're holding others' interest as more significant than our own. Now, before we pat ourselves on the back and proudly commend how loving we are, we should consider what Paul has just said.

Verse 21, For they all seek their own interest. Now, I have struggled to know who they all is referring to. I know earlier in this chapter, he talks about people preaching from goodwill.

So clearly there were some in Rome, if that's the prison he's in, who had goodwill. He doesn't condemn everyone in Rome as being selfish. He condemns Epaphroditus after this.

I don't know how to specifically figure out what group he's thinking about. But the point being, there's some group in Paul's mind where he looks at Timothy as standing out above the rest. And he says of the rest, they all seek their own interest.

Now, that almost shocks me. Isn't that kind of judgmental of Paul? To make that statement about people's motives? Don't we hear that sometimes you can't know what's in a man's heart or you can't judge someone's motives? Paul does that here. He judges their motivations.

He judges why they do what they do. He already did that in chapter 1. He says they do it out of selfish ambition. So clearly in Paul's mind, there can be enough evidence in someone's life for you to know why they're doing what they're doing.

And a classic example is Acts 8, where Simon the magician is baptized and then he wants to go pay for the Spirit of God to come upon him because he wants to do miracles. And what does Paul say? It's not right in your heart. You have neither part with this or with God.

And he calls the man to repent of that. And so, we can reveal what's going on in here. I'm not saying we should go around being critical of others, but we should be able to recognize knowing what's going on in here, it's not some ambiguous thing by which you and I have no idea to discern it.

Paul doesn't think that way, so we shouldn't think that way. But should we proudly commend ourselves for how loving we are? I mean, what would Paul say of us? If Paul was here for a few years, what would he say of those at GCC? I mean, Paul in a way is saying people with pure motives are rare. Now, I don't think as rare as the text makes it sound, because the people I mentioned he commends.

But Paul deals with this often. What does he deal with in 1 Corinthians 13? You can have a man with all the preaching gifts and all the prophecy and all of these things, but if he has not love. What does it mean if he gives his body to be burned and he has not love, he's what? He's nothing.

He gains nothing, he profits nothing, he is nothing. So Paul sees this often in his day. And these guys earlier were busy doing ministry.

They were preaching, but they had the wrong motive. They weren't holding others' interest more significant than their own. Specifically, they weren't holding Paul's interest.

They were actually out there preaching, and something about their preaching was leading Paul's affliction in prison to be worse. So, this is all happening during what period? In apostolic times, right? In which we've had outpourings of the spirits. We've had great manifestations of the Holy Spirit in these letters.

And we've got Paul the apostle himself is still on the preaching circuit. Would you not expect things? Maybe he could have painted the picture a little better than it is. I mean, this is the same Paul who said in 2 Timothy 3 that in latter times, there will be people who will be lovers of themselves.

Well, Paul, you're making it sound like that's happening right now for you. That you look at some group and you've got all these people, they just love themselves. They're just selfishly ambitious in why they do what they do.

So if it was bad then, what's it like today? And you know, Paul's statement about hardly anyone being genuine is not him speaking about the lost who have no profession of faith. I don't think anything indicates he's talking about the lost. The lost obviously are not seeking the interest of Christ.

He's speaking about people who appear to be doing that. And then he's also not speaking about those who are apostates and have totally abandoned the faith. It's like in Paul's mind, there's some category of someone professing, and yet their present motivations, not just professing, but even right now a true Christian, and their present motivations are a selfish ambition.

And they don't really have a genuine desire for the interest of Jesus Christ. Look, that could happen to any of us. Literally, you could be going along with a genuine love for people, and something happens.

It messes up something in here. Something's not right. You kind of suppress it.

You don't fully pick up on it. Something's wrong in my heart. There's some lack of love.

Something's not right. And you go on and you don't even realize. You just shifted into the very category Paul's talking about.

You went from genuinely loving to not genuinely loving. That word there, the one other time it's used is in the Psalms when it talks about David and his friend Ahithophel who he used to take familiar counsel with. He was like him.

That same word there. I have no one like him. David had no one like Ahithophel, but in the end, what did Ahithophel do? He lost his genuineness and he turned on David.

Remember, what did he already say for us? Inhumility? What did he already say in 2 A.D. about Christ who humbled himself? I mean, when I approach this, I really want to approach it. I want you to approach it in a very humble way. Don't think of another person.

Think of yourself. What's going on in my heart? What's going on? If there's a category of professing Christians and true Christians whose present motives are selfish, where do my present motives land? Where are they at? And apparently to Paul, our motives are not just some ambiguous thing that we cannot discern. It's obvious enough where Paul can make that comment about a whole group of people and judge them.

Right? We might not feel comfortable about that. Paul apparently is okay doing that. It's that obvious.

And that should be one of the lessons there. It's that obvious. If you really humbly look at yourself and think about what's going on, as much as maybe we could deceive ourselves at the same time, I think if we honestly, sincerely look at what's going on in our heart, we could come away with the right judgment.

Especially those of us who recognize times we have been selfish, we have been proud. We don't have this proud attitude like oh, this is beyond me. We recognize and see, wow, when I didn't join those people and their prayer group on Wednesday night and I went and joined another group, something wasn't right in my heart.

I had some judgmental thought towards the one person, so I went into this other group. I mean, you're humbly looking at the heart and you realize something wasn't right. I didn't treat that least of the person like Christ.

You recognize that it's on your radar. I mean, imagine the Philippians and you're getting this letter. They all seek their own interests.

I mean, imagine hearing that read. You go, wow. Wait a minute, Paul.

Really? This is that much of a problem? Is people's motivation being wrong? So how can I know within myself? Well, obviously, there's obvious things, right? If my service is just when others are watching, then I'm no different than the Pharisees. What if I'm just half-hearted? Well, half-heartedness, it's a warning sign. Stop wavering between two opinions.

If the Lord is Lord, serve the Lord. If Baal is Lord, serve Baal. As 1 Kings 18 and 21 says.

What about partiality? Partiality. The book of James really hits on that. How should I look at sinful partiality where I treat certain people? Paul just treats Timothy different.

So there is a sense by which we should treat others differently in a certain way, because his treating the church at Philippi by sending Timothy is a good thing. It would be wrong to not show partiality and send some guy who's got a false motive. That wouldn't be right.

So there are distinctions. Paul's making distinctions. So there are distinctions we should make in our heart.

But where do we do it that it's wrong? Am I serving in order to merit salvation? If that's the case, clearly I'm wrong. If the first thing out of my mouth is my good works or something about what I've done, that's going to make me right with God, clearly, I'm deceived. Rather than focus on the genuine welfare of others, you know what I think we should focus on? You know what I think Paul wants us focusing on throughout this letter is on Christ.

And if you focus on Christ and what He's done for you, you know what's naturally going to follow that? You're going to have pure motives towards those other individuals. You don't have to overly look at the motives, because the majority of what Paul's doing in this letter is not driving people inwardly. He's driving them to look at Christ again and again.

He makes statements by which you should examine yourself and we need that. But he's constantly going back to the Lord Jesus. Because when you look to Christ, what does 2 Corinthians 3.18 say? You're being

changed from one degree of glory to the other.

There's something happening there. Now, is there a valid self-seeking? Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added unto you. Matthew 6.33 Within that, look at what Paul says here.

What's his reason for why he wants to send Timothy? What does he say? Verse 19, that I may be cheered by the news of you. Now, isn't that, as one said, doesn't that sound a little selfish of Paul? Right? I'm going to send this person so I can get an update and be cheered by the news of you. Wait, are you using this person to get a cheery update, Paul? Is that what you really want? Look, if you know Paul and if you understand this logic here, you clearly can look at it and realize this isn't some selfish thing of Paul.

There's no contradiction. If you remember 1.25, Paul wants progress in the faith, so him being cheered by their report is because they're growing in Christlikeness and unity. So his motive to be cheered is ultimately for Christ.

In other words, if he's not cheered by them, it's because they're not being genuine and then Christ's interests are not happening in their life. That's what he wants. He wants Christ's interest to be happening and manifested in their life and his hope from this letter, his hope from Timothy coming to them is that that will be happening in their life and he can hear that report and he's cheered because Christ is being honored in this church because these things are happening.

And you know, what am I trying to accomplish on this? It's important to recognize who you're truly serving when you serve fellow believers. If you get anything, don't forget that. Because that's the mind of Paul.

He didn't say they were not concerned about the genuine welfare of the Philippians. He said they weren't concerned about the interest of Christ. Think like that.

If you get anything, leave with that type of mindset. Your treatment of your brothers and sisters is your treatment of Jesus Christ. They go together.

Christ views it as you treating Him. So don't just approach service as you're serving the person, but you're serving Christ. And this should affect us.

Remember the parable of the wicked tenants? After beating and killing the servants that were sent, what did the Master do? Who did the Master send? His Son. Why did He send His Son? He thought they would respect the Son. It's a good conclusion.

Did they respect the Son? No. I mean, it's always an opportunity to inherit everything, kill the guy who's going to be the heir. But you know what? There's an idea there.

That's what Christ is thinking about with us. He's wanting to say to you, that fellow Christian, they are My Son. My adopted child.

And I expect you to treat them differently because they are My adopted child that I purchased, what does Paul say in Acts? To guard the flock. And then what motivation does He give? That was purchased with the blood. The blood of Christ.

So, the Lord thinks they will respect My interest. And then He's saying My people are My interest. So they will then respect My people.

Yet sadly, even us knowing this at times, we fail. We fail. I hate it.

I don't want to fail to love. I want my love to abound more and more. I don't want to have any partiality in my heart.

I don't want to have any frustrations or impatience or whatever, some wrong judgmental thought about a person. I don't want that. I want love to abound.

And yes, love will lead you to rebuke people. Love will lead you to bear with people. Love will lead you to cover things.

Love will lead you to hold their interests as more significant than your own. And you know what? If you have this mindset, it will lead to unity. Paul clearly saw that.

All this mindset, as Mike hit on a month and a half ago, it just came after he's wanting them to strive side by side together. He's showing you how you're going to have unity. You're going to have unity if you have this mind.

If I look at the least of you in this church, whoever that is, whoever Christ would identify that person as the least of those among us, if I look at you and how I treat you as treating Christ, that's what he wants me to do. I mean, look how big genuineness is. I mean, when he talks about sending Timothy, what does he say? Why send the guy? Does it mention his preaching gifts? I realize when he says, you know, Timothy's proven worth, you know, worth, as he goes on to say, it deals with he served with me in the gospel.

So that might imply, you know, some ability to preach or to speak. But the big thing emphasized here about Timothy from all the rest is that he had a genuine love for people. God puts that big of a reality on that topic.

So big, 1 Corinthians 13 says, you do all these things, you don't have love. It's nothing. It's absolutely nothing.

I mean, how serious is it to not love the Lord and His bride? What's one of the strongest verses in the Bible about if you don't have love for Christ? Remember, loving Christ is loving His bride. It's loving the church. It's you and I loving this local entity, this local body of believers.

What's one of the strongest verses? Yeah, 1 Corinthians 16. 22, if anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. And then he says, our Lord, come.

Let him be accursed? Wait, Christ was accursed. Galatians says. But if I don't love the Lord who was accursed for me, then I get accursed.

Yeah. We're either in Christ or we're not in Christ. We're either under the curse of the wrath of God or the curse of the wrath of God has been removed through Christ bearing that for us.

There's only those two categories. Well, lastly, Paul and Timothy's genuine desire for the believer's welfare, as I mentioned, it's just a small picture of the Lord's genuine desire for you. It's just a small picture of it.

You look at Paul's zeal for the Philippians, and you're just thinking this is amazing. I mean, look at how much this guy loves them. Brethren, that's a very dim example compared to the bright sun of the love of

Jesus Christ for us.

Paul is failing even in this. He says in 1 Corinthians 4, I'm not thereby acquitted. The Lord's going to judge me on that day.

All the motives of my heart, they're going to be disclosed. They're going to see why I did what I did. How is Christ genuinely concerned for my welfare? Maybe that's not even the best question to ask how is He genuinely concerned for our welfare.

Maybe ask it like this. Name to me one area in your life in which Christ is not concerned for your welfare. Can anyone think of one? Just one.

Give me one area in your life where Christ is not just concerned, genuinely, sincerely concerned for your welfare. And you know what example stood out to me? The very one Christ gives in Matthew 10. But even the hairs... Wait, wait.

Christ is genuinely concerned for my hair? Even the hairs of your head are all numbered. I mean, who takes the time to number their hairs? And I realize this statement is throughout the Bible. It's just this all-encompassing reality that even the smallest thing here, the Lord is concerned about it.

And then He says, fear not. Therefore, in view of Him even concerned for your hair, fear not therefore, you are of more value than the sparrows. So you might look at the thing in your life that might not be that significant, and Christ is saying even there, I am concerned genuinely for you.

I mean, He humbled Himself. He took Him on flesh. He went through the cross.

And all the anger and the wrath of God that we deserved in hell for all of eternity fell down on His head. And what does Paul say in Romans 8? If He who did not spare His own Son, but He gave Him up for us all, how much more with Him will He not also graciously give us all things? I mean, Christ, the Creator, is that concern for us? The Creature. And you know what? He even died to pay for the sins of me failing to love and doing things with a selfish motive.

I mean, even those have been cleansed by the blood. Because even our prayers, Paul prays through Christ, because apart from Christ's shed blood, my prayers have impurities even in their motives to be received by God. And how does He even end this letter in 417? Not 1719.

My God. My God shall do what? Supply every need of yours. According to what? His riches and glory in Christ Jesus.

I'm sorry, Paul, that can't be true. My God will supply every need. And I realize a lot what Paul is dealing here is financial, right? So no doubt, specifically in context, there's that reality.

But you find enough verses with this reality to realize this isn't just dealing with the financial. The Lord cares for you, even the hair. And we could make a long list here of things by which the Lord is genuinely concerned for us.

He loves you. Satan wants you to doubt that. Satan wants you to believe that God does not love you.

You know what? Others may love you with a false motive, but Christ will never care for you with any hint of a spirit that is not genuine. Others might have a little selfishness in how they treat and they serve you.

Christ has never had that happen.

There's never been any selfishness in any of His care for you. So why doubt His love? Why doubt what He says? And you know what? We have proof right here of Paul. Paul in prison.

Is Paul miserable? He's not. He's full of joy. And the letter records him rejoicing again and again.

You almost want to tell him, well, stop saying that, Paul. It feels fake. He keeps saying you're full of joy.

Just stop it. You know what? That shows Christ is genuinely concerned for Paul. And Christ is sustaining Paul in difficult circumstances.

And Paul, in those circumstances, he's not even concerned about himself. I mean, yeah, he wants to be cheered by the news, right? He's concerned there. But even that, it's about Christ.

You could think of a million applications. Your singleness still being there is actually God's love for you. Psalm 84:11, no good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly.

God doesn't withhold good from you. He withholds things that might not be good right now. But my concern is to have an upright heart genuinely loving the Lord and serving His people.

Do you make the interest of others your interest? Or rather, should I say it this way? Do you make the interest of Christ your interest? And if that's true, you'll be interested in the needs of every member in this body because Christ is concerned about them. And we should too. Or do you think others don't serve your interests well enough and your main interest is others' interests being your interests for your own interests? Right? We could falsely accuse someone from failing to love us when it's really us failing to love them.

But you know what Paul's attitude was even if that happens? I'm going to rejoice. Christ is preached. I'm not going to get phased by that.

I'm going to let it strip me of my joy. When we look out for the good of others, we're looking out for that which Christ died to provide. God is using us as a means to do so.

So what life changes should result from this sermon? A greater love for Christ, which will mean a greater love for the church, which will mean a greater desire to have a genuine concern for people. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:25 that there may be no divisions in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. I want to close on a quote.

I just ran into this this morning. Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India in the early 1900's, took the knowledge of the deadly poison from a cobra. Those were common.

She wanted to illustrate how deadly a lack of love is. And when you think about the amount of neurotoxin a king cobra can deliver, they say in a single bite is enough neurotoxin to kill 20 people. So Amy Carmichael says this, unlove is deadly.

It's cancer. It may kill slowly, but it always kills in the end. Let us fear it.

Fear to give room to it as we should fear to nurse a cobra. It's deadlier than any cobra. And just as one minute, one minute drop of the almost invisible cobra venom spreads swiftly all over the body of one into

whom it was interjected, so one drop of the gall of unlove in my heart or in yours, however unseen, has a terrible power of spreading all through our family.

For we are one body. We are parts of one another. We owe it to the younger ones to teach them the truth that united prayer is impossible unless there be loyal love.

If unlove be discovered anywhere, stop everything and put it right if possible at once. And I would say that's absolutely true. Whenever you pick up some lack of genuine love in your heart and concern for the welfare and the interest of others, a lack of interest in the interest of Christ, don't push it over to the side as some minor thing.

Christ looks at that and says you're treating Me poorly. Stop it. Father, Lord, thank You.

Lord, Your love for us, I fail to capture. The incredible love that You have for us. Lord, I don't even know the depths of it.

Lord, Your own genuine concern for me, these 14 years being one of Your children. Lord, if I journaled enough, I would look back and just see providence after providence after providence after providence of You just doing things to care. And Lord, my brothers and sisters could say the same thing.

And Lord, You're even doing that actively this week in all of our lives. Lord, none of us have dropped off of Your radar. You're concerned for us.

We thank You for that. Lord, we want to be concerned for one another. I pray as Paul did.

Lord, it is my prayer that as a church, Lord, even as John spoke in the first hour and me here, Lord, You just had us talk about this similar topic. Lord, I pray. Lord, I want to affectionately pray to You who work in us to will and to work for our good pleasure.

Lord, I ask You to make our love abound more and more. Lord, whatever that looks like, please do that. Let our love abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that we might approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for that day of Christ.

And Lord, we're looking to that day. Lord, we don't want to live in the here and the now. Lord, we're wanting to honor You all the way to the end.

Lord, help us. We're weak. Lord, You know our frame.

Protect our souls. Guard us. Pray these things in Jesus' name, Amen.

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