

Nuggets and Gems from the Bible

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FOR THE
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Living Stream Ministry

Anaheim, CA • www.lsm.org

THE APOSTLE'S CONCERN FOR THE BELIEVERS

In [Philippians 2:19-30](#) we see Paul's concern for the believers. Immediately after referring to himself as a drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice and priestly service of the believers' faith, Paul speaks of sending Timothy and Epaphroditus, two intimate co-workers, to the saints in Philippi. We may wonder why Paul turned to such a matter, which seems to have no relationship to the experience of Christ. However, if we get into the depths of this portion of the book of Philippians, we shall see that it is definitely related to the experience of Christ.

EXPERIENCING CHRIST AND CARING FOR THE SAINTS

In [Philippians 2:20 and 21](#) Paul says, "For I have no one like-souled who will genuinely care for what concerns you; for all seek their own things, not the things of Christ Jesus." In these verses we find a strong hint that even Paul's concern for the believers was the concern for the things of Christ and for the genuine experience

of Christ. Besides Timothy, Paul did not have another who was like-souled with him. Paul's soul was concerned with the things of Christ. What are the things of Christ? The things of Christ are the churches with all the saints.

Here we see the important point that if our seeking after Christ does not result in a concern for the church, our seeking is at least somewhat abnormal or biased. Many Christians today are seeking spirituality, but they have no concern for the churches with the saints. Such a spiritual seeking is not normal. Where today can you find believers who are truly seeking after Christ with a concern for the churches and the saints? We must check our seeking after Christ in relation to the concern for the churches with the saints. Many desire to be "spiritual," "holy," or "victorious." Those who pursue spirituality without a concern for the churches are misled in their seeking. The normal seeking after Christ includes a concern for the churches and the saints.

In this Epistle, Paul does not cover the experience of Christ in a doctrinal way. Rather, little by little, he unveils the genuine experience of Christ and enjoyment of Christ by dealing with practical matters and actual situations. In [Philippians 2:19-30](#) he indicates that the experience

of Christ must include a concern for the churches and the saints. We may have the concept that the experience of Christ is one thing, but the concern for the church is another. Not many of us may realize that to experience Christ and to enjoy Christ is actually to care for the church, and to care for the church is to experience Christ and enjoy Him. Our natural tendency is to separate these things. We may think that because we are enjoying Christ, we do not have time to care for the church. Or, on the other side, we may think that because we are so busy in caring for the church, we have no time to enjoy Christ. It is important for us to see in [Philippians 2:19-30](#) that these two things must be one. If we truly experience Christ and enjoy Him, this should result in a concern for the church and the saints. There is a principle in the Word that if our seeking after Christ and our experience of Christ do not result in a concern for the churches and the saints, our seeking and our experience are abnormal. The experience of Christ must be for His Body.

I believe that, deep within, as Paul was testifying that he was willing to be poured out as a drink offering upon the believers' faith, he was concerned for them. In these verses Paul seems to be saying, "My desire is to be poured out as

a drink offering upon the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith. Because I am in prison, I have no way to come to you. If I were at liberty to do so, I would visit you immediately. Since I am not able to come, I shall send Timothy, one whose experience of Christ makes him full of concern for the churches and the saints.” I wish to emphasize again and again the crucial point that the genuine experience of Christ will always cause us to care for the churches and the saints.

I have often said that if we have good fellowship with the Lord in the morning, we shall be eager to meet with the church in the evening. This is another indication that the real experience of Christ always turns us to the church and results in a care for the saints.

Paul’s concern for the churches and the saints came out of his experience of Christ. The real concern for the church will always proceed from the experience of Christ and the enjoyment of Christ.

No doubt, both Timothy and Epaphroditus were younger than Paul. In [verse 22](#) Paul says of Timothy, “But you know his approvedness, that as a child with a father he has served with me in the gospel.” The Greek word rendered “approvedness” means approved worth, proof of having

been tested. We have seen that in [verse 20](#) Paul speaks of Timothy as one who was like-souled. Timothy's being like-souled with the Apostle Paul was the secret of his experience of Christ.

THE NEED TO BE ONE IN SOUL

The book of Philippians deals very much with the soul of the believers. We must strive together with one soul in the faith of the gospel ([1:27](#)); we must be joined in soul, thinking the one thing ([2:2](#)); and we must be like-souled, genuinely caring for the things of the Lord ([2:20-21](#)). In the gospel work, in the fellowship among the believers, and in the Lord's interests, our soul is always a problem. Hence, it must be transformed, especially in its leading part, the mind ([Rom. 12:2](#)), that we may be of one soul, joined in soul, and like-souled in the Body life.

In the book of Philippians the experience of Christ is the key point, and the secret of the experience of Christ is to be one in soul or joined in soul. According to this book, we cannot go on in the experience of Christ unless we are joined in soul. If we are one only in spirit but are not joined in soul, we cannot go on in the experience of Christ.

There is a great difference between being in the soul and being one in soul or joined in soul. The secret of experiencing Christ is to be one in soul, not to be in the soul. The dissenting ones who are altogether in the soul find it impossible to be one in soul. Those who exercise their mind, emotion, and will are not one in soul. If we would experience Christ, we need to be one with others in the soul; that is, we need to become like-souled with others. When we exercise our mind, emotion, and will, we may be very individualistic. But if we exercise our spirit to be one in soul, our mind will be sobered, our emotion will be regulated, and our will will be adjusted. Then it will be possible for us to be one in soul with other saints.

The extraordinary expression “like-souled” is used in the Bible only in this one place. The King James Version renders the Greek word as “like-minded.” The mind is the leading part of the soul. According to the context, to be like-souled primarily means to be like-minded. The book of Philippians deals much with the believers’ mind. At the beginning of [chapter two](#), Paul tells us to think the same thing and even the one thing. This indicates clearly and strongly that to be like-souled is to be like-minded.

To experience Christ we must know our human spirit, for only in the spirit can we experience Christ. Furthermore, to experience Christ we must also be one in soul. Experiencing Christ in our spirit is primarily for our individual, personal experience. But our personal experience of Christ must issue in a concern for the churches. If our experience of Christ results in a concern for the churches and the saints, it will be impossible for us to be individualistic. Instead, we shall realize the need to be corporate. In order to care for the church, we must be one with others. Otherwise, the more concern we have for the church, the more problems we shall cause. One brother will enjoy Christ in the spirit, and this experience will give him a concern for the church. Another brother will also enjoy Christ in the spirit, but have a different kind of concern for the church. These different kinds of concern will cause problems. The only way for us to be one in our concern for the church is to be like-souled, to be joined in soul.

Problems between husband and wife arise because the two are not one in soul. In loving the Lord and experiencing Him, they have no problems. The brother experiences Christ in his spirit, and his wife experiences Him in her

spirit. However, when they talk over certain matters, the husband has one concept, and his wife has another concept. In other words, the husband and wife each have different souls. The wife may eventually recognize that her husband is the head and go along with him, but inwardly she still does not agree with his concept. They are not truly like-souled.

LIKE-SOULED

Although Paul had a number of co-workers, only of Timothy could he say that he was like-souled. Concerning the churches, only Timothy had the same soul as Paul. I treasure the expression “like-souled” used by Paul in [Philippians 2:20](#). This short phrase opens a window through which we can see the secret for us to experience Christ in a way which issues in a true concern for the churches. I hope that we all will come to know this precious secret.

Because Paul and Timothy were like-souled, they could experience Christ to the uttermost. However, if we experience Christ only in our spirit and are not one in soul with others who love the Lord and are seeking Him, our experience of Christ will be limited. Those co-workers who were not like-souled with Paul could experience

Christ, but not to the extent to which Paul and Timothy experienced Him.

I was shocked when I first read that apart from Timothy Paul had no one like-souled who would genuinely care for the things concerning the saints in Philippi. Were there not others who also had a genuine concern for the churches? Yes, there were, but their concern was not the same in soul as Paul's concern.

RISKING OUR SOUL

In [Philippians 2:25](#) Paul speaks of Epaphroditus, referring to him as “my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier.” Paul also tells the Philippian believers that Epaphroditus was their apostle, one sent with a commission, and a priestly minister to his need. A priestly minister is one whose ministry is like that of a priest. All New Testament believers are priests to God ([1 Pet. 2:9](#); [Rev. 1:6](#)). Hence, our ministry to the Lord, in whatever aspect, is a priestly ministry, a priestly service ([Phil. 2:17, 30](#)).

In [Philippians 2:30](#) Paul points out a striking feature of Epaphroditus. Here Paul tells us that for the work of Christ Epaphroditus “drew near even unto death, risking his life, that he might fill up your lack of service toward me.” The Greek

word rendered “risking” means venturing, recklessly exposing one’s life, like a gambler throwing down a stake. The Greek word for life in [verse 30](#) is *psuche*, the word for soul. Hence, to say that Epaphroditus risked his life means that he risked his soul. Epaphroditus was one who was willing to sacrifice his soul for the churches and the saints. This sacrifice of soul is revealed clearly by the Lord Jesus in [John 10:11](#), where He says concerning Himself that, as the good Shepherd, He was ready to lay down His soul-life so that we could receive His divine life.

In [Philippians 2:19-30](#) we see two crucial points concerning the soul. First, we need to be one in soul; second, we need to be willing to sacrifice or risk our soul. Both are necessary if we are to have a genuine concern for the churches with all the saints. Timothy was a like-souled person, and Epaphroditus was a soul-risking person. We also should be those who are one in soul and who are willing to risk our soul. We should be ready to sacrifice our mind, will, and emotion to be one with our dear co-workers.

Instead of loving your soul, learn to risk it, to sacrifice it, and to pay the price for the church life. If we love the Lord and the church, we should first experience the Lord in our spirit

and then be like-souled in the experience of Christ for the concern of the church and also ready and willing to sacrifice our soul for the sake of the saints. If we are one in soul as well as in spirit, our experience of Christ will reach the peak.

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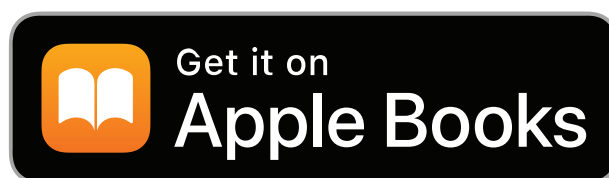
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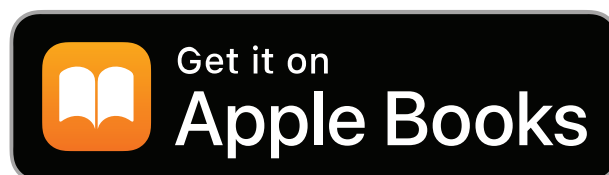
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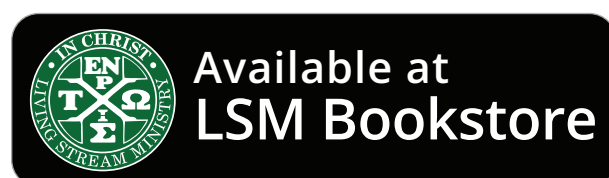
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