

Concern for Christ-Centered Service (Part 2)

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[0 : 00] Yet people in the everyday world have no anchor. And what we just sang together has absolutely no meaning or bearing in their life at all.

And they are adrift in their own self-sufficiency. Finding out how feeble, frail, and empty it is to trust in oneself.

Grasping at all kinds of things to help hold them up. And as the COVID thing moves through again and as the protocols heat up, they have absolutely nowhere to go.

And it's breaking my heart to watch it happen. But I'm meeting them and I'm talking to them. And I'm seeing the kind of effect that it's having on them. Well, as you guys know, I'm taking just a brief hiatus from Ecclesiastes to bring to our church family a treatise from Scripture on how to think biblically about serving in the local church, the priority of the local church, the way that we honor Jesus by being the church, putting a heavenly priority on the church.

The church is more than Sunday. But Sunday is critical to who we are as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the reason that I'm doing this is as we've had all of these influxes of this influx of all these new faces coming in, which we're so thankful for.

[1 : 32] It only makes sense that we would try to do what we always do with the Bible. We try to dispense with personal opinion, with worldly opinion, with anything that we may have been taught in the past that doesn't line up with the Scriptures.

That's what we're interested in. We're trying to get a bead on what it means to serve in the local church because the local church is the priority of heaven in terms of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you think about it with me, when Jesus suffered and died on the cross, who did he suffer and die for? His people. Who are his people? The church. The most valuable thing in the sight of God on this planet are his people.

We are precious in the sight of the Lord. So this is a very precious and valuable thing when we come together as the family of God.

So I'm encouraging all of us to think biblically about what it means to serve the local church on behalf of serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

[2 : 43] Folks, it is so critical that we get that into our hearts and into our heads. The title of the message then is Concerned for Christ-Centered Service. It's a part two. Looking in the book of Colossians together.

In allowing Colossians chapter one. This isn't everything that can be said about this topic in scripture, but it's a great passage to look at together.

Let's read if we could from verses 24 down through the end of the chapter. Verse 29. Colossians chapter one. Paul says, Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake.

And the for your sake drives the theme of everything he's going to say now to the end of the chapter. And in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of his body.

There it is again. Which is the church in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church, this body, I was made a minister.

[3 : 48] According to the stewardship from God. Bestowed on me for your benefit. So that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God.

So there is a purpose behind all of this service that Paul is rendering to these people. It's to honor God and to honor his word. That is in verse 26.

The mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations. But has now been manifested to his saints. To whom God willed to make known.

What is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. Which is Christ in you. The hope of glory.

Up until this time. It was a mystery. As to how the different things that were prophesied. About the future Messiah would come together. And who would constitute the people of God.

[4 : 43] And so now it's being revealed. A mystery here means it's something that has been hidden. Until it could be revealed. And now's the right time.

And that mystery is Gentiles are now part of the family of God. Through Christ. That is the mystery of mysteries. And if you're a Jew reading this.

Or a Jew just coming into terms with this. This is something that's mind-blowing for you. To whom God willed to make known. The riches of the glory of this mystery among Gentiles.

Christ in you. The hope of glory. That's just wonderful. And then we come to verses 28 and 29. We proclaim him. Christ. Admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom.

That is all the wisdom that God has revealed to us in scripture. So that purpose. We may present every man complete in Christ.

[5 : 43] For this purpose Paul says. Also I labor. There it is. I labor. This is a labor. This is work. Striving. That is sweating.

Striving according to his power. Which mightily works within me. Now there's a lot of talk these days. And it's actually kind of ramping up.

About self-identifying. You're familiar with this? Self-identifying. Right. That's biblical. It's not new. It's in the Bible. Transgenderism stole it. From us. And I want it back. So I want to explain a little bit about it.

Paul self-identifies. In Colossians 1. Verse 23 and 25. What does he say? He calls himself a minister.

[6 : 46] And in both verses. He said he was made a minister. This is Paul self-identifying. As a servant of the gospel.

And a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He self-identifies by what Jesus Christ made him. By regenerating him.

That means giving him spiritual life. Church. By justifying him. Which means declaring him righteous in the sight of almighty God.

And by adopting him. Which means putting him into the family of God. The church. Jesus defines Paul.

Now the question is. Does he define you? Do you self-identify? Do you self-identify? As a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. And his gospel? Has Jesus made you his minister?

[7 : 50] His servant? Paul didn't make up this label for himself. Jesus did. Paul knew the most important thing about him.

Was being Christ's servant. And he was great with that. Paul spent the rest of his life. The rest of his adult life.

Bragging on. Boasting in. Jesus Christ. It got him beaten. And thrown in jail. And ultimately they cut his head off.

For that. He didn't break any laws. He didn't do anything wrong or bad. He stood firm as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. And refused to compromise his faith.

And they murdered him for it. Who does that remind you of? Does that sound like anybody else in the New Testament you might think of? Yeah. The Lord Jesus. And Paul considered it a great honor.

[8 : 48] To serve the Lord. Even to the point. Of death. Now I'm going to challenge a number of things. As I go through this with you. As I did last week.

And this is where it really gets nitty gritty. You find out very quickly. Where we are willing to stand. When you hear messages like this. That come right out of the scripture.

And challenge us out of our conformity to the world. And out of our comfort zones. That's just the way the word works. Right? So I want you to be convicted by the word.

I don't convict you. The word does. Through the power of the spirit. But folks. I pray to God. And I have prayed for you this week. I pray you'll be encouraged. That through the conviction.

You'll see in scripture with me. That this is the wise way of God. And we're all called to it. And the more that we are able to come together. And adhere to this in obedience.

[9 : 43] And in willful joy. The more we will see God bless the church. And bless what we do through this ministry. That's what we're wanting. We want God to be glorified.

That's why we proclaim him. Right? That's what we're all about. So here comes one of the zingers. You ready? Paul did not volunteer.

Friends, there are no volunteers serving in the local church. We need to lose that language. Paul was made a minister.

Now I know what we mean. I know what we mean when we say, yeah, I volunteer to do that. Or this. Or that. The other. But what's at stake here is this.

It's not an issue of semantics. It's an issue of theology. And theology matters. We want to build all that we do at Grace Church on a sound and solid theology that honors the Lord Jesus Christ.

[10:50] There are no volunteers serving in the local church. If you'll go back to Romans 12 with me. I want just to remind you of what we read this morning from our call to worship.

And I want you to see this with me. I want you to just look through this with me as I read it. And ask yourself, do I hear volunteerism in this? Romans chapter 12 beginning in verse 3.

For through the grace given to me, I say to everyone among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think so as to have sound judgment.

As God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body, and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ. We're one family. And individually, we are members then of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly.

[11:58] Finally, if prophecy according to the proportion of his faith, if service in his serving, or he who teaches in his teaching, he who exhorts in his exhortation, he who gives with liberality, he who leads with diligence, he who shows mercy with cheerfulness.

Now, in all of that that he lists in the way of different gifts that he's given by the Holy Spirit, so that we can build one another up in the church, it's very interesting to me that he comes to chapter, or to verse 9, and he says then, right on the heels of that kind of service and that gifting, let love be without hypocrisy.

In other words, practice love with one another without hypocrisy as you go about serving one another. Don't offer your gift in the church and then go live like the devil during the week.

Don't be a hypocrite. Live what you serve. Serve out of who you are in the Lord Jesus Christ. Then he says in verse 10, Be devoted to one another.

Why does he have to say that? Because it isn't natural for us to think that way or to operate that way, even in the church. Be devoted to one another. Devoted.

[13:13] What a word. And do it in brotherly love. That is, do it out of your one familiness. Your one bodiness in Jesus.

Give preference to one another in honor. And so forth. Do you see how that's working out right on the heels of the context of here are the gifts given by the Holy Spirit for service in the church?

Do this accordingly. If you've been given the gift of preaching, preach it. If you've been given the gift of service, serve. Whatever it is. Right?

I think you get the point in that. Here's the deal. We are all made, thank the Lord, ministers. We are all made ministers.

Ministers by the grace of God in Christ. We are. This is our. These are our labels. These are our biblical ways to understand each other. We are fellow servants.

[14:22] There's no hierarchy. We are fellow servants. We are one body in Jesus. And individually, we are members of one another.

Now, do you see why we need that? That's not what the world teaches us. The world teaches us a pecking order. And the world teaches us you better get all you can, bring it in, put a fence around it, and guard it.

Because there's lots of folks out there that want to take it. That mentality doesn't survive in the church. It can't. We don't want any oxygen for that kind of selfishness to breathe. What I'm talking about simply is people just don't have regard for one another unless it serves their agenda.

I only have regard for you to the point where it serves my agenda. That is not the church. That's not what we're called to in the church of the Lord Jesus.

And we need scripture to burn that thing out of us. And replace it with this. We are one body in the Lord. And we are all called to service and ministry.

[15:33] All right. So that begs the question, what is Christian or church ministry? Now, folks, listen, please. I've given my adult life to serving the church.

And Suzanne and I have been in so many different ministries and places and people. And we have seen this over and over and over again. In towns we've been in across the country, pretty well traveled.

And in Europe, when we've made trips in Europe to do missions work. There are so many churches that do not understand or have a biblical view of serving in the church or the priority of the local church.

So many don't. Now, you want to start wondering and thinking about why is it that we live in a town where we don't have what we would understand scripturally to be a lot of solid churches.

Now, please don't hear me judging or throwing off on them. I am. I am stating a heartbreaking reality. And there's a reason for it. And I'm calling our church out of it. The reason that so many of these churches are not on solid ground when it comes to these kinds of issues about the priority of the local church.

[16:48] And serving Christ in the local church is because they don't believe in a sufficient scripture. They talk a good talk about believing the Bible, but they really don't believe in a sufficient scripture.

A scripture that will allow us to understand how to define ourselves biblically as the people of God. And then to understand our mission together. And what that looks like is we live it out together week after week after week.

It's sacrificial. It's humble. It's focused. It's sober minded. It's urgent. I tell you, the grayer I get, the more sense of urgency comes on my life.

As a young, I was telling Rob this last week as a younger man. You know, you just kind of think you have all the time in the world. And some of that stuff just doesn't even make sense because you think, you know, that 60 years old is way off.

I'll be 60 in a month. It just got here. We need the truth.

[17:52] What is Christian? What is church ministry? We bring all kinds of ideas about that and answering that from the world into the church.

You'll hear more about that, God willing, maybe next week. Unbelievers. Think about this. If you go outside the church, we really don't have a context outside the church to understand or even to use words like ministry.

When was the last time, for example, you went to work and heard somebody talk about their job as a ministry? I'm glad I showed up for ministry today. No.

Or in terms of maybe your friends or family members who aren't part of a church or Christians talk about the favors and labors that they do for one another being ministry.

No. No. No, me neither. It's just not a word used out there. It's a church word. It's a religious word. Right? So we don't have a context outside the church to really help us understand it.

[19:01] That doesn't keep worldly people from trying to bring it into the church, though. It doesn't. And it's in the church. And we just need to be so careful with this.

And my goal in it is to honor the Lord and see you about the business of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, folks, typically when the New Testament refers to ministry.

It uses the word. You ready? I'm going to put it up here on the screen for you. Diakonia. Diakonia. Diakonia. Humble service to others in something as practical as serving meals. That's the basic definition that the New Testament uses as it uses this word.

Diakonia over and over again. All right. Now, we're going to be able to see this in a couple of places. I'm just setting the table for you here. If you go to Acts chapter one.

[20:04] I want to I want to get you busy. Turn into a couple of places before we go back to Colossians. Acts chapter one. In Acts.

Excuse me. Six. Six one. Six one. Six one. Six one. You'll understand the setting as we get into it.

This is where the disciples have received some testimony from within the congregation that the Hellenistic widows are being overlooked in the serving of meals.

And so they're wanting to answer to that issue. We're just going to deal with one. Now, at this time, while the disciples were increasing in number, that is while people were coming to get saved.

Don't think disciples, the 12 think disciples as in like you people coming to know Christ and serving the Lord. All right. Now, while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

[21 : 21] Serving of food. Serving is our word. Diakonia. Diakonia. Serving. Then if you'll turn to Luke chapter 10.

Luke 10. Let's put this back up on the screen for them, Michelle. I think I've got some. There you go. There it is. That's our word in Acts six one. And then in Luke 10 40. Now, you remember I'm reading from the New American Standard, so my translation might read just a tad bit differently from yours. This is the scene where Jesus is at the home of Mary and Martha. And there the two women are supposed to be helping to serve the Lord and the disciples.

And something comes up and somebody's got a little bit of an attitude and we want to see who this is and what's going on. Let's actually start reading in verse 38.

Now, as they were traveling along, Jesus entered a village and a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister called Mary who was seated at the Lord's feet.

[22 : 34] So Mary is at the Lord's feet listening to Jesus teach. Right. Listening to his word. But Martha was distracted with all her.

Now, my translation says preparations. And she came up to Jesus and said, Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all of the serving alone?

Then tell her to help me. Tell her to help me. So in Luke 1040, I have the word preparations as part of this verse.

That is our word. Diakonia. Diakonia. The next word that's used in that verse is serving. And that is diakonia.

It means to serve. But all of these words are part of the family describing service. Now, I want you to notice that in these examples, what kind of serving is being done?

[23 : 31] They're waiting on tables. They're serving food. It's menial. That's the point. It's just menial every day, but needed and necessary service.

And the word gives priority to that. That is service. The word then, if you go back to Colossians 1. The word that's being used by Paul for himself in verses 23 and 25.

is diakonos or diakonos is the way I've heard some people say it.

Diakonos. It's a servant. And it's where we get our word deacon. So if you want to know where does deacon come from, what does that even mean?

Deacon is diakonos. Diakonos. And it simply means a servant. There's no big religious value put on that.

[24 : 37] It doesn't have to refer to special people in the pecking order of religious authority. That's not the case at all. It's a servant. And it was originally used and came out of the idea of men who were serving tables to widows.

Isn't that interesting? It was to me. In this context, here's what we have. Here's the next slide. In this context, it means ministry in the name of Jesus.

It is humble service offered to the church family out of love and devotion to Jesus. If you bring all of this together, it simply means ministry in the name of Jesus.

It is humble service offered to the church family out of love and devotion to Jesus. It is so important to tie this in then with the purpose of this humble service on behalf of Jesus.

What is the purpose of all of you? Each of you offering humble service on behalf of Jesus to the people in this church?

[25 : 46] What's the purpose in all of that? Why make the effort? Why care? Why sacrifice? Why be inconvenienced?

Why invest your life in God's people? Here's the answer. Because Paul loves Jesus and loves Jesus' people.

That's why he did it. That's why we should do it. And what is Paul's goal in ministry, in service to the church on behalf of Jesus?

Why is the man willing to suffer so much on behalf of the churches that he serves around the known world at that time? It can be summed up in one word.

You ready? Here's the word. What is the goal in all of this ministry and service that we do for one another? Maturity. Christian maturity.

[26 : 45] Or you say it this way. Spiritual growth. So I'm jumping ahead of myself just a little bit.

But we're in verse 28 now of Colossians 1. We proclaim him. Admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom. And I stress the purpose here.

So that. Purpose clause. So that we may present every man complete. Is how my version says it.

Complete in Christ. Complete. There's the purpose. There's the goal. To present every man complete in Christ.

All right. Now. Let me put this slide up here. And help us to look at this together. Nope.

[27 : 43] That's good. That's where we need to be. Complete. The word complete in the New American Standard is also rendered mature in the ESV. Is that right?

You guys have the ESV. Mature. Mature. Now. It literally means perfect. Perfect. Now. Let me stop right there and ask. Raise your hand.

If you feel like you have come to the place in your Christian life where you're perfect. Nobody's raising their hand. Including me. Okay. Well the Greek word.

So we need to understand this a little better. Let's flesh it out a little bit. The Greek word is teleos. Teleos. Teleos. It comes from telos. And it has the idea of reaching the ultimate objective.

Goal or aim in something. All right. Reaching out to the ultimate goal. The highest objective in something. So the idea that we're dealing with.

[28 : 41] Paul gives himself to the ultimate. The highest objective of seeing other Christians conformed to Christ likeness. Friends you're going to ask me. Why do I clean the toilet at Grace Church?

Why do I mop the floor? Why do I put on hinges on doors? Why do I sit and punch buttons for the sound to be right? Why do I run cable? I'm looking at you guys and trying to think.

What have I said? Why do we put floors down? Why do we cut the grass? We've done all these kinds of things before. Why do I have people in my home and take the time to get everything ready and take time out of my week and out of ours?

Why do I give of my money to the church? Why am I doing all of this? Well, ultimately, you need to be doing every single bit of that in faith. In faith.

This is your service to Jesus. First. First. Highest. Your highest objective. And then when you bring that down into the day-to-day with the family of God, the practical outworkings of what you're doing in the family of God, your highest objective is to see your brothers and sisters conformed to Christ likeness.

[29 : 58] We want to see each other growing in Christ likeness. We want our church family to grow in their understanding of what it means to be a Christian and to serve the Lord. Right?

To make wise decisions about their lives as they're hit with the things of the world. Why? So that Jesus is honored. That's why we're still here.

Is to showcase the glory of God to a needing, watching, desperate world. And that starts with each other.

Jesus said, they'll know. They'll know me by the love that you have for one another. Well, that's where it starts. It starts with us loving each other, serving one another in brotherly love.

So again, Paul gives himself to that objective. His motivation to serve Christ's people comes from his life-defining desire to serve Jesus.

[30 : 57] Now, the first church I ever served in, I was on staff. I was the last guy hired. I'm one of four guys. The other three men, we have a senior pastor and two other men my age, serving in their capacity in the church.

And my pastor, once I was hired and brought on staff, I was brought on as the counselor and the family life minister. And we boasted about I was the first family life minister hired in the state of Georgia within the Southern Baptist Convention.

Woo! And that was a big deal. It was published and all this kind of stuff. We're a setting the precedent happening kind of church. Right?

And so I'm thinking, yeah, I'm in on that. Well, we had a meeting one time and the pastor said this. And when he said it, I knew it was wrong, but I didn't know why.

That makes it's going to sound weird to you now, knowing what you know about me. But at the time, I didn't understand why this was wrong. I just I just knew it didn't sound right. He was selling his philosophy of ministry and his long range plan and goals for the church to a committee of people.

[32 : 12] I happened to be involved because I was on staff. And he said this. We are just like McDonald's. They sell hamburgers. We sell Jesus. And he used the McDonald's corporate philosophy to put forward.

And I got I'm getting them now goosebumps. That was a life defining moment for me looking back, because that was the beginning of me going in a different direction.

And it cost us everything. Now, I'm not holding us up as martyrs or anything. I'm just telling you, we need to understand the consequences of being faithful to Christ. It will cost their suffering involved. It's just a reality that we just need to accept that and get over it and move on and say he's worthy. He's worthy. We are not McDonald's.

We are not like the world. We do not have a corporate philosophy about being the church. We have a biblical one. It's not that we don't have structure or organization, but we have one superstar in the church.

[33 : 18] His name is Jesus. We have one Lord, one boss, one man we're accountable to. And it's the man Christ Jesus taken to heaven, sitting at the right hand of authority of God Almighty.

He defines ministry. He defines my role and your role and our role and our mission together. That church didn't believe that. It was a house of cards.

It was miles wide and one inch deep. How do I know that? I was the counselor on staff, and I'd been counseling the people from that church for over two years before I was ever hired, doing the job for free.

And I knew how these people's lives were falling apart. Because they were coming to me and telling me. And I thought, what's wrong with this picture? And I didn't know the answer.

I knew it was broken. I just didn't know why. And that began a trek for me in starting to understand a biblical philosophy of ministry, biblical shepherding.

[34 : 19] What I'm trying to say to you in all of this, let me say it again. Paul's motivation to serve Christ's people came from his life-defining desire to serve Jesus.

God's people are not food or oil for a machine. They're not fodder. And that's what it was at that first church. God's people were nothing more to this man.

And I can say this very heartbreakingly as a reality. The people in that church were there for this man to use in oiling the cogs of his machine so that he could move up in the denomination.

How do I know that? Because he said it. In private. He said it. He said it. He said it. He had a very, very low unbiblical view of the church.

And it was costing people a lot and wearing them out. And I see so much of that. Friends, please believe me when I say being busy in the church is not the same thing as being spiritual.

[35 : 23] Of the Holy Spirit. You can be busy in the church and miss Jesus altogether. Yes? We don't want that for you. Why would we want that?

So I'm trying to help us understand how to keep from that but to honor the Lord in it. Well, let's take all of this life-defining desire stuff and let's say this. That's fine for Paul.

He's an apostle. It's fine for Greg. And it's fine for Jeff. Because after all, we are pastors. And so for the apostles and for guys now who are pastors, you know, we get this kind of sacrificial service in the church.

But none of this applies to you because you're not ministers. Now, for the sake of the tape, I'm waiting for them to pick up stones. Well, let's test that.

Let's just be devil's advocate for a second and test it. All right? Here's the test. You are saved by Jesus. You are regenerated by the Lord Jesus, given spiritual life.

[36 : 33] You are justified by Jesus, declared righteous in the sight of Almighty God. You are adopted by Him. You are put into the family of God by His love and grace.

You've been given at least one spiritual gift as a Christian to use in service to the local church. And that is the context that all gifts are given for and in.

You are called to love and serve the Lord with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength in your neighbor as yourself. Now, that all sounds to me like what Paul was called to minus his apostleship. And it also sounds like what Greg and myself have been called to with the service to you as pastors. So do you see?

We are all made servants. And your service in the church is your service to Jesus.

[37 : 35] That's the difference. That's the difference. I could say it this way and be as theologically accurate. He's the difference. The main thrust of Colossians 1, 24 through 29, is serving your church family as Christ has served you.

It answers the question, what is faithful, God-honoring, people-loving service at Grace Church Williamsburg?

Or at any local church who's striving to be scriptural, biblical, Christ-honoring? So I'm working my way through Colossians 1, 24 through 29, and I've outlined the passage with what I'm calling, here

it is up on the screen, four marks or four features of Christ-centered service in the church. And these four marks grow out of Paul's emphasis of serving as Christ has served you. Now, I know I've used half my time. That's okay. We'll get as far as we get.

Right? It's more important to me that you really grasp this because what I'm laying out for you here are the beginnings and foundation of a biblical philosophy of ministry.

[38 : 57] A biblical philosophy of ministry. Why and how we do what we do as a church. And it might look a little differently the way it's worked out in different churches and different locales with different people and giftedness and that kind of thing.

That's fine. But on the whole, we have a basic understanding of what God calls us to and why we're doing it. So this first mark or feature is the character of Christ-centered service.

The character. Is that up there, too? There it is. Thank you. The character of Christ-centered service. We said that serving one another within the local church is not natural to us.

It's not easy. It's not convenient. Paul's own life was characterized by suffering and stewardship. Now, you say, Jeff, was that all his life was?

No. I'm trying to draw from this text. His life was characterized by suffering and stewardship. You could say the same of Jesus. You could say the same of Jesus. You could say the same of Jesus. But now, friends, hear this.

[40 : 09] Paul did not wear that suffering and that responsibility for stewardship as some kind of badge of honor. He did not boast in his service. He did not boast in his suffering.

He boasted in the Lord. His sufferings in service to Jesus and to the church were a privilege of his salvation and a proof of it. A privilege and a proof.

It's a hard and sobering reality. Coming to terms with service in the church. But Paul rejoiced in his sufferings caused by his devotion to Jesus.

Caused by his sacrificial service to God's people. Now, what was his secret? What was Paul's secret to saying this? Look back at verse 24 with me. Now, I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake. What was his secret? To rejoice for their sake. And in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of his body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.

[41 : 15] The secret, here's a slide for it. The secret to joyful Christ-centered service is this. It's to see serving the church family as your privilege.

Not as a burden. Not as an interruption in your life. Not as an intrusion in your life. I could add some more.

Not as a works in order to earn the favor of God. Or to convince God you're a good person. Not to impress other people.

With your abilities. Or showcase yourself. Or put yourself forward in some way. And beloved, I'll tell you.

Because I'm one of them. Pastors are really. They really have to be careful of this. Pastors can be some of the worst offenders of this. Out there in the church.

[42 : 19] Is putting ourselves forward. Or showcasing ourselves and our abilities. It's. Marivi and I were actually talking about this Thursday night.

Self-reliance. Self-reliance. Self-sufficiency. Doing it out of our own power. Or doing it out of a. This is the hypocrisy Paul was talking about in Romans 12.

Do it out of love without hypocrisy. Don't be standing up in front of people showcasing yourself. So Paul leaves us the example. That he received from Jesus.

Do not neglect. Do not neglect. Serving this church. This church. Because it is the same as neglecting to serve Jesus. And all that he.

Has done for you. Isn't that heavy? That's a bit of a zinger. If you neglect serving in the church. You neglect serving the Lord Jesus.

[43 : 22] Because this is his body. And this is what you've been called to. As a member of the body. Now. If you look at the latter half.

Or so. Of verse 24. Paul offers some needed focus. We need some focus. Look. We need some balance. Or focus. In perspective. Why?

Let me tell you. Before I read it. Have you heard this little adage. That 20% of the people. In any given local church.

Do 80% of the work. That's not true here. We're not boasting in you. We'll boast in the Lord. We don't want that to be true here. Because it robs you.

It steals from you. And the Lord. God doesn't get the glory. In 20% of the people. Doing 80% of the work. But I can tell you. In just about every church.

[44 : 16] I've ever been in. That has been the case. And I don't even know. How to count up how many. That's a tragedy. And we don't want that here.

Because it doesn't bring honor to the Lord. And it doesn't honor the scripture. So this is what Paul says. I mentioned this to you. When I concluded last week. I rejoice in my sufferings.

For your sake. And in my flesh. That is in the work of my body. And what I offer through. My body. I do my share.

I do my share. On behalf of his body. I offer my body. In doing my share. On behalf. Of his body. Paul says. I don't do all. That needs doing. In my service. To the church. And I'm not the star player. Jesus is. So Paul labors faithfully.

[45 : 11] In doing his share. On behalf of Jesus. And the church family. But here's the thing. Church. He is laboring. He is willing.

Even to suffer. He is carrying. His share. Of the responsibility. For Christ. Christ. Centered. Service. So you can see the point.

You are. Involved. You are. Invested. In faithfully. Doing. Your share. And if you are.

Wondering. How can I. Get involved. Or how can I. Become more helpful. Just see Greg and I. And we will be happy. To talk to you. About what is going on. One of the great. Challenges. That we enjoy.

And that we are. Just trying to be stewards of. Is as new people. Come into our church.

Opportunities. Open up. We begin to look. At different things. And I have said this. To you before.

[46 : 09] But it bears repeating. Greg and I. Don't have this big. Programmed idea. Of everything. We ought to be doing. Or need to do.

Or will do. And we are trying. To shove you guys. Into it. Do we have. A structure. Do we have something. In mind. Yes. Generally speaking. But we are leaving.

Latitude. And room. To flex. As people come. Into our church. And we measure. Their giftedness. We. We understand. How did God. Gift them. What if God.

Brings the next. Four people. Into our church. And every one of them. Is gifted in teaching. Ding. Ding. Ding. Ding. Maybe we need to be. Thinking about some more. Teaching ministries. You see what I'm saying.

It's just. It's not rocket science. But it bears. Stewarding. We have to be good stewards. We have to be careful. Stewards. As the personality. And dynamic of our church.

[47 : 04] Changes. Because that's what happens. With a living organism. We're an organism. Not an organization. We're an organism. We are organized. Organism. We are a living thing. We're the body of Christ.

And so as the church. Morphs. And changes. And grows. In Christ likeness. We begin to measure.

Against our ministries. And ask ourselves. What kinds of things. Do we need to be involved with?

How can we better do this? How can we reach out. In this way? You see. And things open up. But what it takes. To do that. Is every member. Ministry. Every member.

Needs to have a place. Of service. And there is a place. For you. Jeff. What can I do? I'm not a teacher. Great. Right now. We don't need more teachers. Well. I can do this.

You don't have to worry. In terms of. But I'm not gifted. In that area. We'll talk to you about that. And work that out. The point is.

[48 : 02] Everybody. Doing. Their share. Paul says this. This is a somewhat enigmatic. Kind of statement. We have to really think about this. He goes on to say in that verse. Look at it with me.

I do my share on behalf of his body. Which is the church. In filling up. What is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Now what in the world. Is lacking in Christ. Why would Paul say that? That doesn't sound biblical.

What does it mean. In light of Paul's point. That suffering. And serving. Go hand in hand. As we give ourselves in service. To Christ's truth.

And Christ's church. All right. First of all. What it doesn't mean. And you've already figured this out.

It doesn't mean. That what Jesus did. In suffering for us on the cross. Was lacking. In any way.

It doesn't. We can. We know that. Right. Across the board in scripture. We know that. It was a once for all sacrifice. And who was it ultimately pleasing to?

[48 : 58] The father. And so that's done. That's a done deal. All good there. Here's what it means. And we can throw this up there. Michelle will put it up for us. It simply means. That just as Jesus was misunderstood.

Maligned. Mocked. Rejected. Ridiculed. And abused. From living day to day. In obedient service. To God the father. Everyone. Who serves. And follows Jesus.

And obedient living. Will also share. In similar sufferings. That's a mouthful. So I put it up here for you. Sometimes what churches do.

When people come forward. And want to join the church. Or get saved. Do both. Or whatever. We fail to help. New Christians understand. What's going to be required of them. And what the Christian life.

Is going to look like. There's the honeymoon period. Where everything's great. And they're feeling really good. About the fact that. God has just washed them clean. In the depths of their soul. Why wouldn't you be excited. But we need to let them know.

[49 : 56] That as they grow in Christ. And serve the Lord. Persecution will be part of their life. It's a very real part. Of serving the Lord Jesus. It's going to cost them. To serve Christ.

Jesus explained this to us. In John 15. I'll take you there. John chapter 15. Beginning in verse 18. As Jesus sits to teach. The disciples. This is just a couple of chapters. Before what Greg was preaching on. A few weeks ago.

The setting. In verse 18. If the world hates you. You know that it has hated me. Before it hated you. If you were of the world.

The world would love its own. But. Because you are not of the world. But I chose you. Out of the world. Because of this.

[50 : 54] The world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you. A slave is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me. They will also persecute you. If they kept my word.

They will keep yours also. But all these things. They will do to you. For my. Name's. Sake. Because. They do not know the one.

Who sent me. That's why. We suffer. In 2nd Corinthians. 1.

5. It says this. I'll put this one up on the screen for you. For just as the sufferings of Christ. Are ours. In abundance. Do you see that in the verse?

Just as the sufferings of Christ. Are ours. In abundance. So also our comfort. Is abundant through Christ. Amen. We got to put that last. Clause in there.

[51 : 51] Because that's true. And then in 2nd Timothy 3. 12. This is up there for you too. All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus. Here's a promise. Will.

Be. Persecuted. Mark it down. Now we don't rejoice in the persecution as such. We rejoice in the fact that we can suffer on behalf of Christ.

And share. In his sufferings. Because we are his body. One author summed up our serving and suffering very well.

It's very short. Very concise. Here it is. We'll put it up here for you. The sufferings of all Christians are simply the continuation of the world's quarrel with our Lord Jesus. That's John 15 isn't it?

That's what we just read. You have to remember that they're arguing with and fighting against whom? Jesus. As you live for Jesus they'll hate you.

[52 : 48] What I wasn't ready for was this. I was ready for the world to hate me when I got out of seminary and started serving in the church.

I wasn't ready for the church to hate me. And we could talk about was it really the church.

That's a good discussion. As it is. We who are reconciled to God. We who are made holy, blameless, beyond reproach through the death of Jesus on the cross.

And now his body on earth are acting in his behalf. What a privilege. All right.

So now real quickly. This is just the second point I want to make under my main heading of the character of Christ centered service. If we can put that next slide up there for Michelle stewardship.

[53 : 48] We have suffering. And we have stewardship. That's verse 25. Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship. From God.

Bestowed on me. So it's from God and it's bestowed on Paul. But notice it's from God and bestowed on Paul for their benefit.

So that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God. Paul turns to the stewardship element of the character of our service to one another. Each of you have a stewardship

responsibility in your service in the church.

So stewardship is like that word ministry, isn't it? When was the last time you heard stewardship used outside the context of the church? Pedro, do you guys throw around stewardship at your job? That word? Not often. I don't ever hear it outside the... Yeah. Stewardship. But it's a good word. It's a good word.

[54 : 52] Here's another slide that will help us understand it. Stewardship is a compound in Greek. It brings together the words for house and manage.

So we get our word economy from the Greek term that's used here. And it refers to the Christian privilege and responsibility involved in our trustworthy management of what is precious to God, his household.

Now, I don't want you to miss that. I'm going to say it again. This stewardship is a Christian privilege and responsibility, and it involves our trustworthy management of what is precious to God, his household.

Whose stuff are we managing? God's. What's the stuff? His people and his truth and his name and his message and why we've been left here.

So here's another slide for you. A steward is entrusted to care for what belongs to and is valuable to someone else. And that's precisely the context of what Paul is applying his own stewardship to.

[56 : 15] I'll read this to you. This reference is 1 Corinthians chapter 4. And here's what Paul says about himself.

Let a man regard us. This is this is so good because this is I've used this before as people have asked me about what I do or that kind of thing. I told you I never like telling them I'm a pastor because it's a conversation killer.

When I'm out and about, I so, you know, but I don't want to lie to him. Let a man regard us in this manner, what manner as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.

That captures both the concepts we're talking about. I'm a servant of Jesus and I'm a household manager of what's precious to him, his word, his truth. That's precious to me.

I'm prepared to lay down my life as a servant of Jesus and a steward of his word. In this case, in verse two, moreover, in this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.

[57 : 25] Trustworthy. Jesus wants, needs and uses trustworthy stewards. God can trust us with his word. So as Christians, we share that same stewardship.

We act on behalf of the owner and the author of our lives. You have a sacred trust from God, friend. A sacred trust.

You are stewards of his truth and of his people. So God entrusts you with serving as a steward of what belongs to him and what's most precious to him.

He entrusts you with speaking and living out his truth, the gospel. And he entrusts you with his wisdom for life and godliness. So living out this stewardship is a privilege and a responsibility and a proof.

You speak, you love, you obey and you serve the word of God. It's a costly, sacred trust of faithfully serving God's agenda.

[58 : 29] Let me throw this quote up here for you. I want you to see this from Pastor Reginald White. A Christ-centered ministry cannot evade the cost of faithfulness. That's what we're being called to.

Paul's simply calling us to being a faithful people. To serve the Lord isn't some great burden that we bear with a huff and a puff and, oh, pray for me.

Serving the Lord is just so taxing. It's not like that. It is hard. It's a lot of work. And we do need to pray for each other. And it can be very, very taxing because it's costly.

But again, Paul didn't wear that as some kind of badge to get people to pity party with him. Paul said, you know, this suffering is worthwhile. And the reason it's worthwhile is because it's building treasure in heaven.

It's an eternal perspective. I'm just an alien and a foreigner and a sojourner here. What do I expect? Have you ever traveled to a foreign country? Now, I'm told this.

[59 : 33] I'm told that people in foreign, I know this is true in Europe because I've been there. But that's pretty much the limit. In Europe, Americans aren't reflected on real well. It's just true.

They think we're a bunch of prideful, arrogant, money-grubbing people, among other things that I can't repeat. People say things to you, you know. I did ask, what do you think of Americans? I'm learning not to do that in Europe. People have all kinds of ideas about who we are and what we are and what we stand for. We don't want to give people the impression as Christians that we're burdened. those who know them. They don't want to give them something. They both go on. They guess we're willing to have time in congregate. Whether they seem to my fight or