

Love Our Co-laborers!

Phil 1:7-8

As we have been driving down the summer of love highway we have seen God's indescribable love for us. We have seen that we are to love our neighbors, our enemies and one another.

Today we will see how we are to love our co-laborers. Now, to be honest, I did a search for a good workplace joke to tell you today. They don't exist. All I found were either boring, centered on the restroom or simply was not church appropriate. So, no joke for you!

When we think of a co-laborer we might think of those we work with in our profession. I'm sure we are called to love them as well, but today we are going to look largely at the people Paul worked with and how he poured out his affection for them.

These were the people that Paul worked with to bring the gospel to the world.

Before we get into Paul's co-workers we should explore some of the other conditions that should exist with those we serve with.

These are characteristics we should strive to have in our lives and interactions with those we serve with in the church.

Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:11 that we are to encourage and build up one another. But too often in the church we complain when things aren't going the way we think they should go.

Psalm 133:1, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!"

In 1 Peter 4 we are told to serve one another. Sounds a little like last week, doesn't it? To serve someone means we are putting their needs first.

Hebrews 10:24-25, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

How often do we see people 'giving up meeting together'? We are to spur one another on, not leave them behind.

People have told me, I don't need to go to church to worship God. This is correct, but it isn't all about you, unless YOU are spurring on others towards love and good deeds. You can't do that from home sitting on the couch.

Notice the last words of this passage? "And all the more as you see the Day approaching." That day is closer today than when the writer wrote them.

The challenge comes in our diversity, but even God demonstrates that our diversity is our strength. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul tells us that we are all different parts of the body, some hands, some eyes, but we are all part of the same body.

What does this mean? We NEED each other.

The writer of Proverbs tells us that iron sharpens iron. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that 2 are better than 1 and we live in a world that, despite having more people than ever before has never been lonelier.

Paul tells the Corinthians to be united in mind and thought, the Galatians to carry each other's burdens and the Colossians to put love above all else.

So, who were Paul's co-laborers?

First, Priscilla & Aquila

In Acts 18 Paul meets Priscilla and Aquila, Jews and tentmakers just like Paul was, so Paul stayed with them for a period of time. When it came time to leave Paul took them with him as he went to Ephesus. When it came time for Paul to leave Ephesus he left Priscilla and Aquila there to continue to minister to the church there.

In Romans 16 Paul sends his greetings to Priscilla and Aquila and the church that meets in their house. He does the same again in 1 Corinthians 16 and again in 2 Timothy 4.

Philemon 1:23-24, "Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. 24 And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers."

Paul encourages Euodia and Syntyche to be united, to put away their differences for the cause of Christ.

How often do we get caught up in squabbles distracting us from the cause of Christ?

Then look at Romans 16:

Romans 16:1-2, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church in Cenchreae. 2 I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of his people and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been the benefactor of many people, including me."

Romans 16:7, "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

They were a missionary couple.

Epenetus in verse 5. Mary in verse 6. Urbanus in verse 9.

Romans 16:12, "Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord."

Rufus in verse 13, it doesn't say he is a co-worker, but I just like to say that name, Rufus.

Timothy in verse 21.

Paul couldn't do what he did without these co-workers. Notice this:

Romans 16:22, "I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord."

Paul even needed help with writing down this letter.

There are others mentioned, but when you read through Paul's letters and listen to his heart in his greetings that he has attached to most of his letters you begin to understand the manner in which we are to treat each other. The value we are to each other in ministry.

Then notice this message to you from Paul:

1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building."