

# THE RISKS OF DISCIPLESHIP!

Phil.2:30

## INTRODUCTION:

Phil 2:30 "because he [Ephaphroditus] came close to death for the work of Christ, RISKING [hazarding-RV] his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me."

- A. There are certain risks [hazards] that would threaten those who yield to the faith of Jesus Christ! But even so, **we can't be like the old Georgia farmer: he didn't plant cotton because of the boll weevil; he didn't plant corn because he feared a drouth; and he didn't plant potatoes because of bugs!** "In fact," he said, "I just played it safe -- I didn't plant anything at all!" There is an old saying that certainly covers his attitude: "Nothing ventured -- nothing gained!"
- B. MANY THINGS in our lives are built on FAITH: our economic system [credit, checks, etc.], private schools, businesses, and of course, OUR CHRISTIANITY! Heb.11:1; 2 Cor.5:7.
- C. BUT FAITH RELATES TO THE FUTURE, and *the future is uncertain!* In fact, when we "act on faith" we're taking a chance, we're risking, we're venturing! But SOME PEOPLE won't take a chance on anything; they won't take any risks; they won't venture out on faith, so they're stuck in a RUT --- and very little is ever accomplished by people like this! HOW ABOUT US, individually and as a congregation, are we willing to venture, or are we always "playing it safe" to the extent we won't initiate ideas or actions in order to serve the Lord more ambitiously? Do you really feel like we're "walking by faith"? If NOT, we're walking by SIGHT, **and not really TRUSTING the LORD!**  
On one occasion Jesus told His disciples to "launch out into the deep", and that's very often where we have to go --- OUT OF OUR COMFORT ZONES --- if we're going to do the greatest amount of good for the Lord's cause! The one-talent-man was unwilling to USE what the Lord had given him, lest he LOSE IT! But you remember the Lord wasn't PLEASED with that attitude, was He?

## I. THERE ARE RISKS IN GAINING CHRIST!

- A. To become a Christian requires a great amount of FAITH!
1. The NECESSITY OF FAITH is seen in such passages: Jno.8:24; Mk.16:16; Heb.11:6.
  2. And the only ACCEPTABLE FAITH is an ACTIVE, or LIVING faith! Jas.2:17 - "Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself." Acts 2:36-38.
  3. And that faith must be a SACRIFICIAL FAITH! Mt.16:24: DS-->TUC-->FM!
- B. But all along the way, there are RISKS involved that TEST OUR FAITH!
1. There's the RISK of estrangement from loved ones. Mt.10:35-37; Lk.14:26.
  2. And the RISK of insecurity: Economic pressure brought to bear on Christians in Italy, Spain [people fired from jobs if obey gospel in some places], and even in Utah & Idaho!
  3. The RISK of contempt: Matt.5:11-12 - "Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. 12 Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." . Jno.15:18 - "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you."
- C. The NT vividly portrays in honor those who risked all to gain Christ!
1. There was the paralytic borne of four in Mark 2:1-12. [Didn't refuse the blessing even though there was controversy between Jesus and the scribes!]
  2. And the woman with an issue of blood in Mark 5:25-34.
  3. Even the apostle Paul epitomized a "RISK TAKER" to gain Christ! Phil.3:5-8 - "circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. 7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that,

*I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ,"*

D. BUT... By FAR the greatest risk is **NOT BECOMING A CHRISTIAN!** **Matt.16:26; Mk.10:30**

## **II. EVEN AS A CHILD OF GOD, THERE ARE FURTHER RISKS IN SERVING CHRIST!**

A. Faithfully serving the Lord has at times even meant **RISKING ONE'S LIFE!**

1. Epaphroditus [text] was risking [hazarding] his life to take their gift to Paul in Rome and in continuing to serve Christ's cause by serving Paul!

2. **IN OUR LIFETIME** it's been a prison offense to make a convert in Greece, and certainly Paul *often risked his life to preach the gospel.* **2 Cor.11:23-27**-*"Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. 24 Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. 26 I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; 27 I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure."*

B. ANYTIME we express our **faith** or **love** or **devotion** it CAN involve great risks to us!

1. Nurses and doctors in going about their saving tasks often risk their lives just to accomplish their dedicated work.

2. A mother's love for her child drove her back into a burning house to save the baby, but once back in she perished with the child!

C. HOW FAR are we willing to jeopardize our health or our lives for the cause of Christ?

1. Are we willing to minister to the sick who are contagious? Or do we have such a phobia [a fear] of germs & filth that we hold back? **Matt.25:45** [*If not to them then not to me!*]

2. Willing to carry the gospel to a hostile land? Attitude of many denominationalists way ahead of many of us! And Paul's thought is so clear in **Rom.1:14-16**.

3. IN FACT, are we even consistently willing to **BRAVE INCLIMATE WEATHER** to assemble with the saints? **Heb.10:24-25**.

D. WE OUGHT to risk our lives serving Christ, for life is so brief and uncertain that even if we lose it, we gain it! **Matt.16:25; Rom.12:1**.

## **III. AND FINALLY, WE NEED TO SEE THAT THERE ARE RISKS INVOLVED IN SUPPORTING THE CAUSE OF CHRIST!**

A. It takes a great amount of faith to venture out into the atmosphere of liberality!

1. First, note the example of the Macedonians: **2 Cor.8:1-5**-*"Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, 2 that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. 3 For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord, 4 begging us with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, 5 and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God."*

2. Or, consider the poor widow in **Mk.12:41-44**-*"And He sat down opposite the treasury, and began observing how the multitude were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. 42 And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. 43 And calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Truly I*

say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; 44 for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on."

B. Liberality DOES involve RISKS, but not always the ones we "worry" about!

1. Liberality with the Lord doesn't cause us to RISK not supporting our family! **1 Tim.5:8**

a) *SUPPORTING OUR FAMILY* is NOT the SAME as "GIVING TO THE LORD", even though He does command it! Our contribution to God's Cause ought to be BEFORE every personal whim and fancy is served! **1 Cor.16:2; 2 Cor.9:7.**

b) It's interesting to note that Tissot painted the poor widow of **Mk.12**, with a small child in her arms. She STILL was most generous to the Lord with what she had!

2. And being liberal with God is NOT A RISK of not providing for our old age! *[It's a sad commentary of our society that many are more interested in old age security than they are in ETERNAL SECURITY --- even among some members!]* **Prov 27:1**-*"Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth."*

**Matt.6:19-21**-*"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*

3. And of course, being generous with the Lord should not cause us to be concerned about missing some comforts or luxuries of this life!

a) ***Christians and soldiers and pilgrims will certainly miss SOME things***, but ONLY THOSE THINGS that would keep from faithful service to the one who CALLED!

b) **2 Tim.2:3-4**-*"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."* **1 Pet.2:11**-*"Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul."*

4. Yes, there are certain risks in supporting Christ, but *they're not necessarily the things we often are concerned with, are they?* "GOING BROKE" or "DOING TOO MUCH (more than our fair share)" or "DISCOURAGING OTHERS WHO CAN'T DO SO MUCH" should not even enter into our thinking!

C. We must trust God and venture out boldly and liberally!

1. **God DARES us to be liberal**, and promises abundant blessings! **Mal.3:10**-*"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."*

2. **God DARES us to sow bountifully** and promises a rich harvest! **2 Cor.9:6, 8, 10-11**-*"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; 10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; 11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God."*

3. **God DARES us to seek Him first**, and promises material gifts! **Matt.6:33.**

D. We ought to be liberal with God because His promises are sure and true riches are not material!

1. We now stand here on the threshold of 1994, the "GREATEST YEAR OF OUR LIVES" in serving the Lord, *because of the great opportunities that are ours to use for Christ!*

2. We need to be **PARTICIPANTS**, and not just **SPECTATORS** in this great glorification of the name of the Lord!

### **CONCLUSION:**

TRUE FAITH is certainly a RISK, because it is recklessly abandoning ourselves to the Will of God! Are we just “playing it safe”, or are we truly “willing to venture out” for the cause of Christ? Don’t we want to share in the blessings of Christ **HERE**, and look forward to that home in Heaven **HEREAFTER**? B+R+C+B=RofS+++RF.

[SSS--45]