

Philippians 2:19-30
Gospel Centered Service

Introduction

1. In the past few weeks we have been studying through Paul's letter to the Philippians
2. We have seen that while the letter is often portrayed as a letter of joy, it is really about the Gospel
3. It's not a theological letter so much (i.e. explaining the Gospel), but a practical letter explaining how to live out the Gospel by making it the center of our lives
4. We first learned about Gospel centered relationships as we look at the relationship between Paul and the Philippians—they viewed one another as partners in the Gospel
5. We then learned about Gospel centered living by seeing all the circumstances of our lives as part of God's plan for the spread of the Gospel, and making our greatest ambitions to exalt Christ and serve others
6. Finally, last week, we learned about Gospel centered purpose and how it requires unity, humility and obedience
7. Today, we are going to look at Gospel centered service as Paul introduces us to two individuals, Timothy and Epaphroditus, and reveals specific traits about these men

Ben White-printer, truck

A. Timothy (19-24)

1. **GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE PUTS CHRIST'S INTERESTS ABOVE ONE'S OWN INTERESTS (19-21):**
 - a. We first learn that Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi (19)
 - 1) He wasn't quite ready to send him immediate, but rather **"to you shortly"** (instead, he would send Epaphroditus)
 - 2) His purpose in sending Timothy was **"so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition"**
 - b. Paul reveals a number of things about Timothy that made him such a valuable asset and fellow minister of the Gospel:
 - 1) Paul writes, **"For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for... your welfare"** (20)
 - a) A kindred spirit is someone who thinks just like you, shares the same convictions, passions, etc., and for Paul that was Timothy
 - b) Here, Paul uses a Greek word that refers to being of the same mind
 - c) This special bond between Paul and Timothy is seen throughout the New Testament:
 - When Paul first meets Timothy in Acts 16:1-2 he was already known as a disciple with a good reputation in ministry
 - Paul then took Timothy with him and ministered alongside him for the rest of his life (up until Paul's death)—he is mentioned 24 times in the NT, and all in relationship to Paul

- Paul often relied on Timothy to minister in his absence (he left him behind at Berea, Macedonia and Ephesus, and sent him to Corinth, Philippi, and Thessalonica on his behalf)
 - He is often mentioned in the greetings of Paul's letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, Philemon)
 - Finally, Paul's final two NT letters were personal letters written directly to Timothy, in which he refers to Timothy as "**my beloved son**" (2 Timothy 1:2) and his "**true child in the faith**" (1 Timothy 1:2)
 - These final two letters are Paul's charge to Timothy to carry on the ministry that Paul was now leaving behind with his death
- 2) But in this particular passage, the kindred spirit Paul was talking about was Timothy's "**genuine concern**" for the Philippians:
- a) There was no one else that Paul could think of that would care as much about the Philippians as he did...except for Timothy
 - b) Based on v. 22 they were clearly familiar with Timothy
 - c) Based on the book of Acts, the Philippian church was the first new church Paul planted after Timothy came on board—this may have played a special part in Timothy's life
 - d) Timothy (and Silas) were also left at Philippi (apparently on more than one occasion) to continue ministering after Paul moved to another city (see Acts 17:14-15; 18:5; 19:22)
- 3) Paul's confidence in Timothy was because Timothy put Christ's interests above his own (21): "**For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus**"
- a) "**They**" seems to indicate that Paul had specific people in mind, possibly the men he mentioned in 1:15-18 who were preaching Christ but out of selfish ambition
 - b) They put their own interests above that of others or of Christ
 - c) Timothy, put Christ's interests above his own
2. **GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE MAKES ONE AN INVALUABLE MEMBER TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST (22-24): "But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father"**
- a. Different English translations render this verse differently but each one provides us with a different nuance encompassed by the word Paul uses (comes from to prove or to test):
 - 1) NAU and ESV: "**his proven worth**"
 - 2) CSB, KJV, NKJV: "**his proven character**"
 - 3) NIV: "**that Timothy has proved himself**"
 - b. Paul's point is that Timothy was a valuable resource:
 - 1) He partnered with Paul: "**he served with me...**"
 - 2) His focus was on the Gospel: "**in the furtherance of the gospel...**"
 - 3) He was devoted and faithful: "**like a child serving his father**"
 - c. Notice that Paul says that the Philippians knew this about Timothy (Paul uses ginosko here which is experiential knowledge)
 - d. Why is this so important?

- 1) The Bible says that each Christian is infused with a gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit that are to be used for the building up of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12)
- 2) In addition, each one of us has natural abilities and talents
- 3) This means that every one of us should be using these gifts and talents to serve the body of Christ
- 4) When we do this, we are naturally serving in a Gospel centered way and become invaluable members of Christ's Body

B. Epaphroditus (25-30)

3. **GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE IS ROOTED IN PARTNERSHIP (25): “But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;”**

a. Notice the words and phrases Paul uses here:

- 1) **“my brother”**
- 2) **“fellow worker and fellow soldier”**
- 3) **“your messenger and minister”**

b. Epaphroditus was a partner to not only Paul but the Philippians

c. The same is true of us—we are supposed to be partners with one another, all members of one Body, no single individual more valuable than another, working toward a common goal

4. **GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE EXPRESSES GENUINE CONCERN FOR OTHERS (26-30):**

a. We saw this with Timothy above when Paul said there was no one else that shared a kindred spirit with him and who would care as much about the Philippians well-being (i.e. their spiritual well-being)

b. There was another, however, that cared very deeply for the Philippians as well but his focus was on their emotional well-being—and Paul was sending him back to the Philippians (probably carrying this letter)

- 1) Epaphroditus had become sick when he was with Paul and almost died
- 2) The Philippians had learned of it and were **“distressed”**
- 3) When Epaphroditus learned of their distress he likewise became concerned over them and **“longed”** to return to them to calm their distress
- 4) So, Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi so that they might **“rejoice”** when they saw he was okay...and that Paul might not worry about them

c. So, when you look at Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and even the Philippians, we see that their ministries to one another we partly drive out of concern for one another and that's the way Gospel centered service works

5. **GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE OFTEN INVOLVES RISK OR COST (27; 30):**

a. Something else we learn from the verses above is that sometimes Gospel centered service involves risk

b. Notice in v. 30 that Epaphroditus **“came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me”**

c. It's not clear what the sickness was, but two things are clear:

- 1) It almost cost Epaphroditus his life
- 2) And it was a result of his service to Christ

- d. We can have such a flawed view of what it means to follow Jesus Christ here in the United States:

Church Website: Under Our Values value #1 is "FOLLOWING God is FUN (ADVENTURE): God has an EXCITING plan for your life...are you living it? Having fun is a huge part of why anyone is willing to embark on an adventure. Life was meant to be lived. Jesus said he came to give us life and live to its fullest! (John 10:10) A life that is fun and full of Joy! <blank church> is intentional about having fun in everything we do."

- 1) I don't share this to shame or judge this church or question their motives, but rather to illustrate a point about how we misunderstand what it means to follow Jesus
 - 2) Listen to what Jesus told Ananias in Acts 9:15-16 when He told him to go minister to Paul when Paul was sitting—blind--in the house of Judas shortly after getting saved:
"Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."
 - 3) Now, listen to how FUN Paul's life was: 2 Corinthians 11:23-33
 - 4) In Acts 20:23 Paul himself said that the Holy Spirit told him that imprisonment and persecutions waited for him in every city (Acts 20:23)
 - 5) In 1:29 Paul said that it has been granted to us to suffer for Christ's sake
 - 6) In v. 30 he calls on the Philippians to experience the same suffering and conflict he was experiencing while in prison
- e. Now we have been fortunate here in the United States that we have not faced that kind of persecution or suffering, but that is NOT the norm and we somehow think—or live—like it should be the norm
- f. So, sometimes our service is only limited to what doesn't cost us anything, or inconvenience us, but that's not gospel centered service
- 6. GOSPEL CENTERED SERVICE SHOULD BE ESTEEMED AND HELD IN HIGH REGARD (29-30):**
"Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;"
- a. You know it's interesting the kind of things and the types of people we esteem and hold in high regard in the Church today
 - b. Often, the most visible members of the body of Christ get all the recognition and attention—the pastors, teachers, worship leaders, etc.
 - c. But here's a man, Epaphroditus, who as far as we know was nothing more than a humble servant who traveled back and forth between Rome and Philippi at great risk simply to serve Paul and the Philippians
 - d. And Paul says to hold men like him in high regard

I learned a valuable lesson in this regard in my first church. It was a small, one room country church 20 minutes from even the smallest town. When I started, there were only about 30 people. When I left three years later it had grown to around 60. But it wasn't me, the pastor, that brought those other 30 people. It was one young farmer who met me outside the church one day shortly after he got saved. It was his love for the lord and sharing his faith that led to the growth of that little church. It wasn't the pastor.

Conclusion