

Finding Joy in Discouraging Times

Phil. 2:19-30; October 28, 2018

DAY 1: Men who Put Care Before Career.

1. Paul has just finished his teaching on how we grow as a Christian. He gave some applications regarding our attitudes and relationships. He then illustrated what spiritual maturity looks like by his own attitude toward the very difficult circumstances in his life, his godly perspective, and his determination to pour out his life for others no matter how difficult life got.

2. Now he illustrates what spiritual maturity looks like in two of his mission teammates. The first is Timothy.

Philippians 2:20 (of Timothy) "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare."

3. "**Genuine**" - the Greek word means "legitimately born," or what we'd call, "the real thing!"

4. "**Interest**"—this Greek word means "care." It is a strong verb that carries with it weight, as in a weight of concern. weight of concern. There is something within him that is deeply moved by their interests.

5. Paul tells the Christians at the church in Philippi just how unique this is!

6. What strikes you about Timothy?

7. What a statement, "no one else like him. How many people would say that about you?"

8. What thing(s) keep you bring being like Timothy?

DAY 2: Men Who Put Character Before Compromise.

1. What does “everyone else” look like? Doing? Paul gives the contrast to Timothy:

Phil. 2:21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

2. What’s striking about Timothy is **not** just that he is looking out for the interests of **others**. Whose interests is Timothy also looking after?!

*Phil. 2:22 But you know that Timothy has **proved** himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

3. “**Proved**” – This Greek word is used seven times in the New Testament. It is used to describe the process and result of testing.

4. In other words, Paul knew more than Timothy’s words. He saw his character in action.

Phil. 2:22 ... because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.

5. Many people serve the gospel, but notice *how* Timothy served.

6. What strikes you about the nature of the Paul and Timothy relationship?

7. It’s one thing for two gifted people to be doing ministry together. It’s quite another thing for the relationship to be of such a sweet nature as Paul described! What does this say about Timothy?

8. Yesterday and today we looked at Timothy. What strikes you most about him?

9. In what way would you like to emulate him?

DAY 3: Men Who Put Cooperation Before Competition.

Phil. 2:25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.

1. Epaphroditus had been a leader in the Philippian church. The church had sent him to Rome to assist Paul in prison.

2. Paul gives quite a testimony about Epaphroditus!

a. “Brother”

Paul’s not saying that Epaphroditus was a blood brother. He was a brother in Christ. While that statement is true, is that “all” Paul is saying about Epaphroditus being a “brother?”

b. “Worker”

What strikes you about this quality in Epaphroditus?

c. “Soldier”

Epaphroditus was not a literal “soldier.” What qualities might Paul be describing in Epaphroditus?

3. Our western culture is very individualistic. There is a strong value of independence and expressing yourself. It’s easy to turn the ministry into something that does more for you than for the people you are supposed to serve.

4. Instead, what Paul is describing in Epaphroditus is what we call “being a team player.” When you think of a great team player what attributes comes to mind?

5. Are you a team player in your church?

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

DAY 4: Men Who Put the Cause of Christ Before Comfort.

1. Paul continues to speak about Epaphroditus.

*Phil. 2:25b ...who is also your messenger, whom you sent to **take care** of my needs.*

“**Take care**” – The Greek word is “leitourgos.” It is the word from which we get our English word “liturgy.” The idea is that it is official and sacred service. It is the word usually translated “minister.”

2. What was the focus of the ministry of Epaphroditus to be?

3. While Epaphroditus was in Rome with Paul, he became deathly ill. When we get ill, we are caught up with getting well. Having some sympathy and care coming our way helps.

4. However notice the mind-set of Epaphroditus while **he** was the one ill:

Phil. 2:26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

5. What does this say to you about Epaphroditus?

Phil. 2:27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.

6. The work of the gospel of Christ was costly to Epaphroditus. How important is the work of the gospel to you?

7. It’s easy in my own little world to get caught up with me, mine, and my. My world can whittle down to soccer practices, homework, play time, chores, friends, and music lessons. It’s easy to forget that the primary task we are about is to model for our kids what it means to love and serve the Lord by loving and serving people. We are so busy doing good things for our kids that they don’t see us doing giving our lives to others.

DAY 5: Men Who Put Christ Before Comfort.

Phil. 2:29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him ...

1. Epaphroditus left home and embarked on an eight-hundred-mile journey. He had physical and emotional stress, faced persecution, and knew that Paul might be beheaded. Why did he take all this on?

2. Paul tells the Philippians to honor men like this. Why is it important to honor someone? “Honor” – not just what he did, but why he did it.

3. What we honor in others becomes a higher standard for the rest of us.

Phil. 2:30 ...because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

4. Paul realized that Epaphroditus **risked his life** to do this ministry to help Paul.

5. Think back on what you’ve learned about Timothy and Epaphroditus.

6. Does your vision of what it means to be a Christian look like these men?

7. A lot of people’s vision of Christianity is something you attend on Sunday, a passive, easy-going, laid-back life that is all about me and my family. It makes no demands on your time or treasure. If you want to make a difference it requires self-sacrifice—of your time, your heart and your treasure.