

## Profile of a True Servant

### *Philippians 2:19-30*

#### Outline

#### I. The daunting challenge of Philippians 2.

##### A. Philippians chapter two precepts:

- We are to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
- In humility we are to consider others as more important than ourselves.
- We are to live our lives in obedience and humility to God.
- In that we are children of God, everything we do is to be pleasing to God.
- We are to be obedient without complaining or disputing.
- We are to be without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation/world.
- We are to shine like stars in the universe!
- God's word is our absolute standard!

##### B. "That's all a great idea but no one can do it!"

##### C. The power of examples.

1. *"personal example illustrates biblical principles in action, showing how they should be lived out"* - J. MacArthur

#### II. Three human examples of the daunting challenges of Philippians 2.

##### A. The Apostle Paul.

1. **"But even if I am being poured out..."** (2:17).
  - a. "Poured out" = The "libation" in a pagan sacrificial ceremony.
    - A valuable animal would be offered as a sacrifice. It would be burned on an altar followed by a second lesser sacrifice of a poured glass of wine.
  - b. In Paul's analogy:
    - The burnt offering (superior) is the faith of the church.
    - the poured offering of the wine is his sacrifice (lesser).
2. Living out those first 16 verses of chapter two would be what Paul calls a ***living sacrifice for Jesus Christ***.

#### III. Timothy.

- A. For Paul— *CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE SPHERE IN WHICH LIE PAUL'S ENTIRE LIFE AND HOPE!* - John Kitchen
- B. Timothy characteristics:
  - 1. Like minded (2:20).
    - a. The goal of true discipleship is reproduction.
  - 2. Large hearted (2:20b-21).
    - a. Timothy was a good shepherd.
  - 3. His concern for Jesus Christ (2:21).
  - 4. Working together (2:22).
    - a. Paul and Timothy both showed their humility:
      - Timothy is not above having a spiritual father.
      - Paul is not above working WITH a spiritual child.

#### IV. Epaphroditus.

- A. Epaphroditus is the common man.
  - 1. Epaphroditus was sent to Rome to get a report on Paul, he is sent back to report to the church.

*Paul now worries that Epaphroditus is worried about his church who is worrying about him so he decides to send him back to stop all this worrying!*

- B. He was a servant to the servant (2:25)
  - 1. He was a brother.
  - 2. He was a fellow worker.
  - 3. He was a fellow soldier.
  - 4. He was a messenger.
  - 5. He was a minister (apostle).

## Profile of a True Servant

*Philippians 2:19-30*

Sermon Notes

Let's begin by reading the passage...I'm adding two previous verses to this morning's passage, so beginning at verse 17 rather than 19:

### Philippians 2:17-30

I've shared with you before a little about the adventure of preaching expositively through books of the Bible... meaning going through individual books verse by verse without the freedom to skip over anything... this means:

1. That at times I will have to preach on things that I would rather not preach on. Tough subjects that might be controversial or unpleasant in today's world.... Or subjects that I personally struggle with... most all of them!
2. That at times a passage... this morning's passage for instance...that at first doesn't appear to have all that much to share...there is no apparent great theological truth or moral instruction... or deep meaning of some sort...

Last Monday as I opened up the passage set before you this morning...Philippians 2:19-30... I read it and thought... "*What in the world am I going to preach on in this passage!*" ... it fits in the latter realities... for there is no *apparent* great theological truth or moral instruction... or deep penetrating meaning of some sort... it reads more like an interlude... a break between thoughts... but its 12 verses!!...I can't just skip over 12 verses and get away with it.!

In the first eighteen verses of chapter two the apostle Paul delivers to us some very profound and deep theology.... He gives us some very penetrating, challenging instructions and exhortations regarding living the Christian life... and now...remembering this is a letter to a church... it's like...Paul pauses the instruction for a personal hello...

*Hey...I would really like to come see you guys...but I'm not sure what is all going to happen to me... I would really like to come visit you... but of course... being in prison and everything... those plans are a little up in the air.... So I may send to you my great friend Timothy....Hope to send him soon....*

*Oh, about my other friend Epaphroditus... I had to send him back to you...you sent him to me and now I need to send him back to you.... because he was worried that you were worrying about him being sick... so I was worried about him worrying about you because you were worrying about him...so I sent him back to you. ....Chapter three.....*

But as always is the case... as I meditated on these verses... God's truth truly began to surface... and instead of thinking these verses are just a break between topics...(which we may be grateful

now!).... I realized that the apostle Paul put them here for each one of us to gain some very practical and vital truth for our own spiritual lives....

Here's how I see it...

Many of you have been sitting in here every Sunday since we've started looking at this book of Philippians... we're just about finished with chapter 2 and you're thinking.... *"This is impossible!"*

*What is required of living the Christian life is impossible!*... I love the analogy theologian of the last century James Montgomery Boyce gives...

*Suppose you are a salesperson who was responsible for fifty thousand dollars' worth of sales last year. The boss comes to you and says, "well, you did very well last year; fifty thousand dollars was a good figure. But we would like to increase that by five thousand dollars for this year."*

*You take a deep breath and say "All right, I'll do my best." But...if the boss came to you and says "fifty thousand was a terrible figure; we would like you to make five hundred thousand this year," you are very likely to quit your job and get another.*

This is the way you may feel after the first 16 verses of Philippians chapter two!....*I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior and now I find out that God wants me to become conformed to the image of Christ...*

We've been looking at what that looks like and entails...His perfect love, his perfect compassion for everyone, his perfect wisdom, his perfect understanding, his perfect holiness and all of his gazillion other perfections... just in chapter two we have seen:

- We are to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
- In humility we are to consider others as more important than ourselves.
- We are to live our lives in obedience and humility to God.
- In that we are children of God, everything we do is to be pleasing to God.
- We are to be obedient without complaining or disputing.
- We are to be without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation/world.
- We are to shine like stars in the universe!
- God's word is our absolute standard!

And on top of all that... the apostle Paul gives us the perfect picture of all that.... Jesus Christ... who in complete PERFECT humility left His home in heaven and lowered Himself as a man.... To eventually die the lowliest death... on a cross on our behalf... to be exalted having victory over death giving us victory over death...

Displaying for us the great spiritual truth ***"lower yourself, humble yourself and you will be exalted!"***..... WHEW!....that's our example.... We're to be like that!

and so like the salesperson... you are sitting there thinking.. *“This is impossible!...I can’t do it!...I guess I’ll have to be content to live as I am....all this has been great... it’s wonderful in theory... but in practice... it is too hard to do!”*

I think Paul knew this is what his church in Philippi...and us... would be thinking and struggling with after those first sixteen verses of chapter two...so he does something I think brilliant...he gives us a breather... He just gives us real live examples of people living out those first sixteen verses.... Live human examples...

Christ was THE great example.. the ultimate example... but not one of us think we can do what He did... rightly so.

Human examples can do something precepts alone cannot do... Precepts tells us what to do... examples show us how to do them... The 17<sup>th</sup> century puritan Thomas Brooks said *Example is the most powerful rhetoric...*

*“personal example illustrates biblical principles in action, showing how they should be lived out”* - J. MacArthur

And I’ll add... that they can indeed be lived out.

So... verses 19-30 Paul give us two real human examples... but by adding verses 17 and 18... we get a third... the apostle Paul himself... so we get a total of three examples.... So let’s take a look at these three men...

One is the apostle... another one is a pastor.... The last one is a layman.... **all three show us chapter two can indeed be lived out humanly!**

## 1. The Apostle Paul

This is brief... but essential... Really only one verse describes for us Paul’s attitude and conduct...

### Read verse 17

This is an amazing image that Paul is showing us... perhaps you’ve read it but never stopped to think about it... it is a bit foreign to us... it begins with the verb that is translated as **“poured out”**

Paul says **“But even if I am being poured out”**.... Poured out is a technical word referring to a certain part of a pagan sacrificial offering.... The Romans and Greeks both offered sacrifices to their pagan gods...

They would take a valuable animal... kill it and then place it on an alter and burn it...the sacrifice was to please the gods... by taking something they considered very valuable... they would be sacrificing something valuable... letting go of it and giving it to them...the little gods.

The pagan worshipper would then make an additional sacrifice... again.. something valuable to them... a glass of good wine... not the cheap stuff... good wine... this was called a *libation*... now you know where the word *libation* came from... a liquid sacrifice offered to pagan gods....

He would take the cup of good wine and pour it over the burning sacrifice that is on the alter... because the alter was very hot from the burning animal sacrifice.... The wine... the libation... would immediately disappear in a puff of steam.

Paul is referring to that offering... that *sacrificial* offering... remember that Paul is in a Roman prison in Rome... He is awaiting sentencing... He has been in prison for two years... and at any time the door could open and they could read to him a death sentence and that would be it for Paul!... He knows this!

So in effect, what Paul is illustrating for the church and us... is that he, Paul is that sacrifice put on a pagan alter... **BUT MY LIFE IS NOT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING!** ... he is not the burnt offering... The primary sacrifice... he is the drink offering...the secondary offering.... The cup of good wine.

The burnt offering is the faith of the Philippian church... and all Christians since... He says *“Your faith is the important thing!...Your coming to Christ is everything!. It is the extremely valuable and substantial offering... when I am killed... I will only be the secondary drink offering that is poured out over the greater offering of your faith!”*

What Paul was doing was illustrating chapter 2 verse 3.... **Consider others as more important than yourself**... He was illustrating in his human example a glimpse of the humility that Jesus PERFECTLY showed us in His coming to earth taking the image of a man to die on that cross on our behalf...

Paul held high the faith and achievements for Christ of his converts... his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ OVER his own achievements and efforts and even his future martyrdom....It’s the picture of having the attitude... ALL I’VE DONE IS JUST A PUFF OF STEAM compared to amazing sacrifice that his beloved have given as they’ve given their lives to Jesus Christ....

And he says: **I rejoice... and share my joy with you all... and you also, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.**

Our take away is that offering our lives a sacrificial sacrifice to Christ is a great privilege and reason for great joy... **Living out those first 16 verses of chapter two would be what Paul calls a living sacrifice for Jesus Christ**.... but we have immense joy when those we are ministering to have also become that sacrificial offering of their lives to Christ....and we all share with great joy... **all of this reeks with perpetual humility!**

## 2. Timothy

I’ll have to go a little faster through these next two than I would like...there is so much I could say but don’t have the time... so amazing how Monday I couldn’t imagine having much to say and by Friday having way more than I have time for!

## Read verse 19

Notice Paul says **But I hope in the Lord**...this is a phrase Paul uses more than any other writer in the Bible... it is found nine time just here in Philippians... he uses it no less than forty-five times in all his letters...

**What it means is that Paul's entire life centers upon Jesus Christ**... it is a phrase that refers to centering on the will of Jesus Christ...in everything! *CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE SPHERE IN WHICH LIE PAUL'S ENTIRE LIFE AND HOPE!* - John Kitchen

Paul doesn't know what the future lies for himself... he hopes to get out of prison soon so that he could personally go back to Philippi and visit his church.... So instead... he plans to send his Timothy...so that Timothy can bring back a report on how the church is doing.

Who's Timothy?... If you know your books of the Bible you know that two of them are named after Timothy... 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy...He was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother... He joined Paul during one of Paul's later missionary journeys... Paul addresses Timothy as "**my true son in the faith**" (1 Timothy 1:2). ... Timothy is very, very dear to Paul.

He was probably no older than late teens/early twenties when he joined Paul...Paul was advanced in age... Timothy had already distinguished himself as faithful, and the elders noticed him... He probably heard and responded to the gospel when Paul came through the area of Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey, but we don't know for sure.

Timothy served as Paul's representative to several churches and he was later a pastor in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Timothy is also mentioned as being with Paul when Paul wrote several New Testament letters—2 Corinthians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon and of course Philippians.... Timothy was in Rome and visited Paul regularly.

Even though there are only six verses here referring to Timothy... there are four or five things that reveal much about what I would call a true servant of Jesus Christ... which is what I hope we all aspire to be.

### 1. Like minded

#### Read verse 20a

Some translations say.... That **Paul had no one else like him**...*"I have no one else of "like mind" ... kindred spirit*... interesting words.... Kindred spirit is two Greek words.... *soul + one...*"one soul"...

Timothy shares Paul's outlook on life... Timothy is like minded in all spiritual areas of life with Paul... what is Paul's spirit?... *CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE SPHERE IN WHICH LIE PAUL'S ENTIRE LIFE AND HOPE!*... Timothy shares this same sphere with the apostle!

This sphere was taught to Timothy by Paul himself....

At first it made me sad that Paul had NO ONE ELSE OF KINDRED SPIRIT... but I realized that is how it is!.... I think you are very blessed to find ONE person of kindred spirit.... it still

makes me sad that Paul could not find any others who would have been “**genuinely concerned**” about the circumstances in the Philippian church (Verse 20)

Paul discipled Timothy since the first day they met... *The goal of true discipleship is reproduction...* Paul taught Timothy everything he knew about the gospel... about Jesus Christ... *how to make Jesus the sphere of your life...* and now... the result of his discipleship is having one of *kindred spirit*.

I know it is still early in our “ministry partnership”... But I am blessed to have Randy here as co-pastor... I’ve known Randy for many years... we’ve shared much over those years... and what has come out as being evident is that I consider him as a *kindred spirit*!...

I don’t have to convince Randy to be on the same page... he already was!...his page was my page my page was his... we will all be blessed by that!... we should all strive to be like-minded... with minds centered on Christ.

It is the idea of being *equally yoked* ...2 Corinthians 6:14

***14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?***

The literal picture is of two oxen in the same harness pulling the wagon in the same direction... If you have two oxen with two opposing souls your wagon will be pulled apart!

Theologian pastor Steven Lawson says that “*what it is like to be in ministry with one of the same soul is not 1+1 = 2 but 1+1=20!... you can do so, so much more!*”

Interesting verse...Amos 3:3

**3 Do two people walk together unless they have agreed to meet?** You won’t walk together unless prior to your walk you agreed prior to the walk!

## **2. Large hearted**

(20b) **For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned about your circumstances**..... Just Timothy!... Timothy cared for others naturally...

***Timothy was a true good shepherd***... He was concerned about his fellow Christians... concerned literally means “anxious” (**Be anxious for nothing**) but here in a positive sense... “*to deeply care for*”...we see a contrast in verse 21:

### **Read verse 21**

The opposite of being concerned about the flock... others is **one who seeks his own interest**.... Selfish ambition... it certainly is not putting others interests over your own.. see how these three men put flesh to the precepts?

By the way... are you seeing that the Christian life is a life centered on Jesus and having it played out on others?... Part of our problem today is the view that the Christian life is about “me” and for “me”...no... once you have your salvation... it’s all about glorifying God through your relationship with Jesus Christ and having that come out in all your relationships.

It’s so much more than going to church to get something for yourself!..Do you attend church just to get something?... *I go to church to get fed...* well.. ***do you ever eat the food?***.... does it ever play out into your lives?...

As you shift from being ego-centric...self-centered *it’s all about me...* all about what I like... and you become genuinely concerned for others... especially the lost... Your love increases... your tolerance with annoying people increases... your critical spirit will dissipate!... what bothers you at church will change from “*I don’t like this or that*” to “*we just don’t have enough time together!*”

### **3. His concern for Jesus Christ**

(21) **for they seek after their own interests, NOT THOSE OF JESUS CHRIST...**

Remember... he’s describing Timothy

Timothy put Jesus first... it is so much easier being the first part of that verse... ***seeking after OUR OWN INTERESTS***.... My plans...my family...my success... All those things we are instructed to do in chapter 2 will all fall into place by putting Jesus first in your life.

### **4. Working together.**

**Read verse 22**

Our nature is that we want to be independent... we really don’t like anyone else telling us what to do... We may want to serve God... but the work is to be MY work... and must run according to MY conception of things... what we see in Timothy and our next one Epaphroditus.... Is that they had **the humility to work for and under other people for the cause of Jesus Christ.**

That’s the definition of a servant.

Timothy was of great worth because he knew the importance of working WITH others... this is an interesting verse because it tells us a lot about Paul as it does Timothy... Paul says... **but you know of his proven worth... that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father....**

We all would expect a child to serve his father... especially in that culture of Timothy’s day... the normal duty of a son would be to obey and serve his father... What Paul would have been expected to say was *As son with his father he has served me in the work of the gospel....* But that is not what Paul said.

He added one little word.... “with”.... **As son with his father he has served WITH me in the work of the gospel...**

WITH ME... in other words... Paul and Timothy were in it together!... the hierarchy of the father is not lessened nor is the sons... but they are working TOGETHER for the work of the gospel ...*both in complete humility within their positions.*

Timothy was not above having a spiritual father.... And Paul was not above working WITH his disciple... rather than over him.

**Read verses 23-24**.... I want to come to you personally...but I don't know what the verdict will be... but I am confident IN THE LORD... there it is again... IN THE LORD... the Lord's will... but if it is not His will... I hope to send Timothy.

verse 25 **I regard it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus...**

### 3. Epaphroditus

If Jesus was too high an example.... And the apostle Paul as well.... And even Timothy a bit intimidating... Epaphroditus is representative of every person... he is you and he is me... but we should all emulate him!

We know very little about Epaphroditus... we know he was a layman... just an average guy in the church... The church at Philippi sent Epaphroditus to Rome to visit Paul...to give him some financial help... to check on his physical, emotional and spiritual state... Paul had been gone for years...they were getting concerned.

Epaphroditus was instructed to stay on and help Paul with anything he may need...But Paul sends Epaphroditus *back* to Philippi... why?... because while Epaphroditus was with Paul he got sick... very sick...

Verse 27 says “**sick to the point of death**”...After Epaphroditus gets better.... Epaphroditus learns.. hears, a report that his church at Philippi is very concerned about his illness...The apostle Paul is sensitive to all of this....so as I said:

*Paul now worries that Epaphroditus is worried about his church who is worrying over him so he decides to send him back to stop all this worrying! ... there's much under these words in this passage...*

We know that Epaphroditus was sick for some time... The distance between Philippi and Rome is 800 miles... Moscow to Sacramento... with only restroom stops and meals... that would take about 6 weeks.... It says that he was sick long enough for news of his illness to get to Philippi and the message that they had heard about it to get back to Epaphroditus...that is... he was sick for at least three months,....

By the way... this refutes modern day faith healing for apostles... Paul didn't heal Epaphroditus... verse 30 also sheds some light on his illness...

**Read verse 30...**

We don't know what his illness was... but we do know it was related to his work for the gospel of Jesus Christ.... Some have concluded that it may have been a result of some persecution.... But here's what we need to learn from Epaphroditus...

**He was a servant to the servant**...everybody is a servant!....He was a servant to his church... He was a servant to the apostle Paul.... did you notice everyone is sending Epaphroditus all over the world... back and forth and he never complains?.... the church tells him... "*go to Rome and check on Paul*".... He travels 800 miles on foot and by boat... this is not a walk down the road!

He gets there... gets sick and Paul tells him to *go back!*.. and he does!... another 800 miles!... we see five things that Epaphroditus was in verse 25:

### Read verse 25

#### 1. He was a brother.

This was a new term by the way... people not physically related to each other did not consider themselves to be brothers and sisters... The Roman soldiers had a type of fellowship with each other... but it wasn't until the gospel of Jesus Christ arrived into the world that the idea of a Christian brotherhood became a reality... in this sense.. Epaphroditus was a spiritual brother to Paul and the church... a spiritual brother... this brotherhood comes with a profound sense of affection for each other.

What developed was an abiding friendship... a bond... a spiritual union within the body of the church... do you consider yourself and others in the church to be brothers and sister in Christ?

#### 2. He was a fellow worker.

There was an article in *Christianity Today* from several years ago that made the observation that "*there is a sense in which our churches today sometimes have almost stopped working...*" meaning everyone in the church actually stopped physically WORKING together...

*"as the church identified more and more with the American culture... it has become more a place to be entertained and stimulated, a place where everything is provided and all workers are hired in... rather than a place that people come together to labor together... to care for one another... to expend energy for someone else other than themselves...."*

The model that I see from Epaphroditus is "*here I am send me!*"...**Epaphroditus my brother, and fellow worker... and**

#### 3. He was a fellow soldier

...yesterday in our men's breakfast we talked about being soldiers in spiritual battle... We are all of us in a war... we are all to be *fellow soldiers*...

Ephesians 6:12

**12 For our struggle is not against [a]flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.**

Interesting but the Romans of the day of Epaphroditus were innovators of combat... Prior to the triumph of Rome... men fought battles mostly as individuals... they often dressed alike in some uniform... but they did not fight side by side...

The Roman armies did... they fought shoulder to shoulder...side by side... and as a result... the Roman armies became the terror of the ancient world!... they are described – ‘as they marched they struck their shields with the spears in unison and sang battle songs...

In such a way.... We are to advance together... in harmony... shoulder to shoulder... side by side against the spiritual powers that are confronting us!.. Epaphroditus was a fellow soldier.

#### **4 and 5 He was a messenger and a minister...**

He was a messenger to and for his church...the Greek word for messenger is “apostle”... so Epaphroditus was an apostle.... Little “a”

There are two kinds of apostles in the New Testament... first there is “**an Apostle of Jesus Christ**”.. referring to the 12 (and Matthias)... the requirement for an Apostle was that they had seen the Lord... and were directly chose by Him. When you see a capital “A” and it is not at the beginning of a sentence... that is what that word is referring to.

But an apostle can be little “a” apostle which is a special messenger chosen and sent by the churches...Epaphroditus was this kind of “apostle”..... All of us are to be little “a” apostles of Jesus Christ

chosen to speak for the church... and minister which is a self-giving, tireless, sacrificial and humble servant of the highest caliber!

All this to say...all those precepts in verses 1-16 of chapter two are possible for us to do...

- We are to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
- In humility we are to consider others as more important than ourselves.
- We are to live our lives in obedience and humility to God.
- In that we are children of God, everything we do is to be pleasing to God.
- We are to be obedient without complaining or disputing.
- We are to be without blame in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation/world.
- We are to shine like stars in the universe!
- God’s word is our absolute standard!

We have three amazing human models that encourage us to make all this our reality!

**There is a bottom line here... the reason these men could live out God’s precepts is because THEY WER ALL IN!**

