

Paul's and his Disciples

Պողոսի եւ իր Աշակերտները

Phil. 2:19-30

In this Father's Day I would like to continue our journey in the letter to the Philippians. Let us highlight three men.

When Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians from the prison cell in Rome, he mentioned **Timothy and Epaphroditus**.

Timothy, meaning honoring God, is better known because he became a pastor himself. His mother was Jewish and his father Greek. He became Paul's disciple during Paul's second missionary journey. (Acts 16)

However, **Epaphroditus**, meaning devoted to Aphrodite, "lovely, charming," is not so well known. Most likely he is from the church of Philippi. I mentioned before how the church of Philippi took care of Paul in many ways. They not only sent him gifts, but also sent Epaphroditus as a disciple to work along with him.

Paul has two disciples serving with him. Paul is very thankful for the gift and for the two men.

However, he decided to send them back to Philippi. Why?

Regarding Timothy:

1. Paul was concerned about the welfare of the believers of the Philippi.
"For I have no one like him (Timothy), who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare." 20

Regarding Epaphroditus:

1. He was ill, near death, and longed to go home.
2. "you may rejoice in seeing him again" 28
3. "That I may be less anxious" 28

Though Paul needed friends and coworkers to care for him, he decided to send the two men, Epaphroditus now, and Timothy later, **because he considered the church's needs above his own**. This was a selfless act. (Remember, we talked about war against selfishness).

It is Father's Day today. I remember my own father. Then I became a father myself. I also became a school principal for students some of whom did not have a father figure in their life. I became a "father" for them. I cannot see myself as a "father" without experiencing God's Fatherly love in my life. The phrase that Paul wrote in this letter: **"count others more significant than yourselves."** In my words: "consider others more important than yourself..."

How about parents, Fathers, isn't this an important characteristic of a Father.

This Sunday we will see Paul as a father figure to Timothy, Epaphroditus, and the church of Philippi. Paul "considered the needs of others more important than his own needs".

What can we learn from their Christ-centered lives?

1. Timothy: Genuine concern for the welfare of others.

For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 2:20-21 ESV)

What does it mean to have genuine concern for others?

I have friend when he says, "I will pray for you" it means he will make a note, and continually pray for you. He will also follow up with you with check on your welfare even after several years.

To have genuine concern means to deeply care for someone, to listen, to be attentive, to not judge quickly, to not use the information for gossip...and so on.

We have become a self-centred society.

Illustration: A few years ago, psychologists conducted a study of the words we use. They went over one million books that were written over the last few hundred years in US history. They compared the words that had been used. They found out that certain words became more popular and certain words became less.

Here are the words which increased in usage: **"I, me, my, choice, unique, special."** Words which decreased in usage: **"responsibility, prayer..."**

Genuine concern for the welfare of others.

This is the way Paul describes Timothy. Timothy served with Paul for many years. Paul disciplined Timothy. Timothy learned what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. Then Paul sent him to the mission field, sometimes alone and sometimes with others. Timothy went to Ephesus and continued Paul's ministry.

2. Epaphroditus: Brother, Fellow Worker, Fellow Soldier

Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need. (Philippians 2:25 ESV)

Epaphroditus was

- **a brother**: meaning they became family.
- **a fellow worker**: meaning they learned to cooperate, to have fellowship
- **a fellow soldier**: meaning they learned to fight together against the enemy. Also, soldiers obey the order, the commander...
- **a messenger**: meaning became a channel of communication between Philippi and Paul; Epaphroditus brought a gift (most likely money), and now he will deliver Paul's letter. Remember there were 800 miles between Philippi and Rome. Epaphroditus took the gift to Paul probably on foot! These men would do anything for Christ. What a commitment...
- **a minister** to Paul's needs: Epaphroditus cared for Paul's needs. Maybe he cooked, did the laundry, practical servanthood...

Now, it seems Epaphroditus became ill. We don't know exactly the nature of his sickness.

We read that he has been longing to go home.

Is he homesick?

Is it because he is very ill? We don't know those details.

Here is an important point. Paul give his disciple high recommendation and asks the believers to receive their "son" with joy and honor.

Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. (Phil 2:27,28 ESV)

3. Paul, the Father

But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. (22)

Father - son relationship:

In verse 22, Paul describes Timothy to be like his own son. The words that Paul uses are very interesting.

He says, **Timothy is serving with him, and not for him.** And the relationship is a father-son relationship.

-This reminds me my youth days and my work with my dad. During summer I worked in my father's shop. Beside me there were also hired other workers. Dad loved all workers. But my relationship with him was a father-son relationship. I didn't feel I worked for him, but I worked with him. He was my dad.

-Last summer I received a video from a father who was in his vineyard with his two children working together as father and children.

Paul learned to be father figure from God the Father.

Paul also learned to make disciples from Jesus himself. Jesus was serving his disciples. He was the master, the teacher, the rabbi. His leadership was servant-leader style. Washing the feet of the disciples? Only slaves would do that... Jesus did.

So here is how Jesus prepares his disciples:

He invites them.

He teaches them. They watch how Jesus does.

Then Jesus observes as they serve: "go feed the five thousand"

Then he sends them two by two...

Paul continued the ministry of discipleship.

Application:

-Who is your Paul? Whom do you go to for spiritual counsel? Whom do you learn from in your walk with the Lord?

-Who is your Timothy? Is there someone you can reach out to and help grow in their walk with the Lord?

Let me end with commentary's summary of these men

What was the purpose of the portraits given here of Epaphroditus, Timothy and Paul?

The grace of God had been at work in them. The effectual work of the indwelling God (verse 13) was changing them, in will and deed, into the likeness of the great Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ. They were varied characters, with varying gifts and diverse temperaments; their backgrounds could not have been more dissimilar; but they were each coming to resemble the Saviour; they loved him and followed his example.

What was true of them can be true of us; God has not changed. (Bible Speaks Today. J. Alec Motyer)

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know Timothy's ^[d] proven worth, how as a son ^[e] with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³ I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

²⁵ I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹ So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ³⁰ for he nearly died ^[f] for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

