

Philippians 2:16-30 — Humility In Real Life

July 5, 2020

Good morning CrossWinds! Happy July 4th holiday weekend. If you are a visitor, I am glad you can join us either in the building or online. We love having you as part of the CrossWinds family.

While we occasionally preach on the Bible topically, most of our teaching is studying straight through Bible books. That means some weeks we study a part of the Bible that has one of our favorite verses. It also means there are other weeks when we study a part of the Bible that appears less than exciting. The good news about studying parts of the Bible that are usually ignored is the parts of the Bible we avoid often yield unexpected blessings. Lackluster Bible passages also hold precious gems. We just need to take the time to dig them out. They lie just below the surface, not on the surface.

A principle worth remembering is some of the most mundane passages of Scripture hold some of the Bible's most beautiful diamonds. We will miss them unless we take the time to study them. This morning, we have one of those passages.

Today's passage has nobody's favorite Bible verse in it. In some ways, it reads like a phonebook. As we will see, it contains lots of spiritual good, but all of it lies just below the surface, not on the surface.

We are studying Philippians 2:16-30. Let's remember the context of these verses. At the beginning of Philippians 2, Paul taught us about humility. He gave us two phrases to define humility.

Humility is considering others more significant than ourselves.

Humility is not just looking out for our interests but also for the interests of others.

After Paul defined humility at the beginning of the chapter, he gave us an example of humility. That is Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate example of humility. He was the humblest person to walk the planet. He set aside all of his glory in heaven to permanently take on a human body and come to Earth. He became one of us so he could die for us. He didn't need to do that. He did it all because of humility. He did not consider himself better than us. He considered our need to be saved from our sin as better than his comforts of heaven. That is humility.

Becoming a humble person like Jesus is not something that happens overnight. It takes time. Humility comes with spiritual maturity.

Last week, Paul taught us about spiritual maturity. It is God working in us drawing us to himself to make us more like him and it is us making the hard choices to become more like Jesus. We described spiritual maturity like pedaling a bicycle. We are on one pedal. God is on the other. As we try to become more like Christ, God works in us to make us more like him. One of the ways we see true spiritual maturity is there is a growing humility in our lives as we become more humble like Jesus.

Another specific area of spiritual maturity Paul talked about was our attitude. Spiritually mature people are not grumbling people, they are grateful people. Even when life is tough, they don't complain about all the things they don't have, they have an attitude of gratefulness for all the good things they do have.

Up this point, Paul taught us principles of humility. He taught us to pursue humility, maturity, and gratefulness instead of grumbling. The only example he

gave us to follow was Jesus. While Jesus is the best example of humility, doesn't his example feel a little unattainable? After all, isn't Jesus more humble than we will ever be?

Wouldn't it be nice if there were ordinary people we could follow, normal people that were working out their salvation with a humble and grateful attitude? If we could see what this kind of life looks like for everyday people, wouldn't that be helpful?

I have good news. The passage we are about to study is exactly that. It is the story of three ordinary people who were working out their salvation by humbly serving Jesus with a grateful not grumbling attitude in everyday lives. Their names were Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, or as I like to call them — Paulo, Timbo, and Ephro. Let's read their story.

...holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 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. But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. 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, for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 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. I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Philippians 2:16–30 (ESV)

Ancient letters usually ended with personal correspondence from people around the author. They also contained greetings to people who would be with readers of the letter. That makes sense. In that day, they didn't have FaceTime or Facebook. This was the way people kept in touch. In addition to greetings, people also included intended travel plans of themselves and their friends in their letters. That gave people something to look forward to. It let them know they needed to prepare a guest room, so they weren't surprised when a friend arrived from out of town.

What is important for us to know is these personal greetings and travel plans were *always* the last part of a letter. You can see examples of this if you look at the end of the book of Romans or Colossians. These letters closed with personal greetings and travel plans. For some reason, Philippians is different. Paul put the travel plans of the people that were with him while he was under house in the middle of the letter, not at the end of the letter. Those reading the letter would have immediately noticed the travel plans of Timothy and Epaphroditus were in the wrong place. Why did Paul switch things around?

Paul used himself, plus Timothy and Epaphroditus, as examples of what it means to work out our salvation by pursuing humility and a grateful attitude in everyday life. If we miss this, we will breeze through these verses wondering why Paul put a travel log in the middle of this book.

Let's work our way through these verses.

Paul — Humility is gladly sacrificing my life for the spiritual good of others.

Humility gives me genuine concern for the day others will stand before Christ.

...holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Philippians 2:16 (ESV)

Paul's consuming passion was not just to love people but to give his life for the spiritual lives of other people. Paul desperately wanted the Philippians, and the other churches he planted, to hold fast to the word of life. He wanted them to hold on to the gospel. All the efforts of his life were focused on presenting those people, and those churches, as mature in Christ on the day everyone stood before Christ. If the people in those churches drifted away from Jesus, he would have felt like all the hard work and sacrifice of his life was for nothing.

Here we have an example of humility. Paul's entire life was focused on the spiritual maturity of other people, not on himself. Paul taught us that humility is considering others better than ourselves and looking out for the interests of others, instead of just our own. Paul illustrated that in the way he lived. The heartbeat of Paul's life was to help other people prepare for the day they would see Jesus. His life wasn't about serving himself. It was about serving other people to prepare them for the day they would be judged by Jesus. That is humility.

In Paul's mind, he lived life thinking of the final day when he would stand in front of Jesus. He didn't care about himself on that day. He cared about the Christians and the churches that he would give to Jesus on that day. Presenting

other people to Jesus that would be saved by Jesus and worshipping Jesus was the focus of his life. That is humility lived out in everyday life.

Isn't that a challenge for us? A humble person is not just thinking about the day he or she will stand in front of Jesus to be judged but his or her heart longs to prepare other people to be saved by Christ and rewarded by Christ on the great day. That should also be the orientation of our lives as well. Unfortunately, most of us don't think beyond ourselves to the day of judgment. That is subtle pride, not humility.

Paul said something similar in 1 Thessalonians.

[For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? 1 Thessalonians 2:19 \(ESV\)](#)

I recently upgraded my computer monitor at home. For almost 20 years I had old monitors at home. The plastic edge of my old monitors was so wide that I cut out Bible verses I wanted to remember and taped them to the edge of my monitor. This is one of the verses I kept on those old monitors. It served as a constant reminder that my job as a pastor was to present the churches I served as mature in Christ on the day I stand before Christ. My joy is to present those I pastor mature in Christ on that great final day. Just as that was Paul's mission, as a pastor, that is my mission. That is the way humble people are to think. They are about other people's spiritual maturity, not just their own spiritual maturity.

This doesn't just apply to me, it applies to all of us. For humble people, the goal of their lives is to present other people mature in Christ on the day they stand before him. This is why adults help with AWANA on Wednesday nights. It is humbling serving children, helping them to know Jesus so they will be presented

mature and faithful to Jesus on that final day. This is why adults help in youth group. It is humbling serving teenagers to present them mature on the day they stand before Jesus. This is why men and women gather in men's ministry and women's ministry. It is not primarily for elbow-rubbing, coffee-holding friendships. As iron sharpens iron, so one person is to sharpen another in spiritual maturity as we prepare one another for that great and final day. That is what humility looks like in real life.

Humility considers it a privilege to spend my life for the spiritual good of others.

The theme of sacrificing my life for the spiritual life of others continues in the following verses.

Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. Philippians 2:17–18 (ESV)

Paul reached back into the Old Testament sacrificial system. In the Old Testament, it was a bloody scene as animals were killed then consumed by fire on the altar. Second Kings 16:13 tells us that sometimes, at the end of the animal sacrifice, after the animal was reduced to coals on the altar, wine was poured on top of the coals. That was called the drink offering. As you can imagine, the wine instantly vaporized with the heat and turned into steam. The scene was like pouring a small bucket of water on a campfire. You can imagine the cloud of steam that followed.

Paul saw his life like that drink offering. As the Philippians were making an offering to God of their faith, Paul saw his life as being poured on the offering of

their faith and being completely consumed. That was OK. Paul was happy to give all of his life for the creation of faith in the Philippians' lives.

What does this tell us about Paul? He was a humble person. He was glad to give his very life so that other people would know Jesus. That is humility in real life. That is considering other people better than yourself. Paul was not a person focused on his own interest but on the interests of others.

Paul was not the only one letting his life be consumed. All of our lives are being consumed. None of us last forever. The question is, is what you are letting consume your life of lasting value? Are you just living for today or are you thinking about how you can prepare others to stand before Jesus on that great and final day? We are sacrificing our lives for jobs, hobbies, or pleasure. The question is, what lasting value will come from the sacrifice of your life? How will you help prepare others for the day they will see Jesus? That is the question a humble person asks of themselves.

That was Paul, a man whose humility was seen in the joyful sacrifice he made of his life for others. Let's look at Timothy.

Timothy — Humility is honoring Jesus and serving people before caring about myself.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. Philippians 2:19 (ESV)

Paul would have loved to travel to Philippi. He loved the Philippians. Earlier in this letter, Paul said that whenever he thought of the Philippians and prayed for the Philippians, he prayed for them with joy (Philippians 1:3-4,8). While Paul loved the Philippians, he couldn't visit them because he was stuck in

prison awaiting the outcome of his trial. Paul planned to send Timothy in his place. Timothy would carry Paul's affection, love, and encouragement.

Who was Timothy? Timothy was a native of Derbe and Lystra, two little towns in the area of Galatia. His mother's name was Lois. His grandmother was Eunice. They were both Christians. His father was a Greek. Timothy was a bridge between the Jewish and Gentile cultures since he had a parent from both worlds. Timothy would have been educated in Greek culture by his father. Don't underestimate mom. Timothy's mother homeschooled him in the Bible and Jesus. Timothy became a Christian because he had a great and godly mother. When Paul met Timothy in Acts 16, Timothy was a young man with a proven track record of serving other people in the church. Paul was so impressed by him that he asked Timothy to join him on his missionary journeys. Soon Timothy became Paul's protege. Paul deeply loved him and often spoke of Timothy as his own son, his son in the Lord.

What set Timothy apart was his incredible servant attitude. He was willing to do anything Paul needed and go anyplace Paul wanted. Timothy was always faithful to fulfill whatever task Paul gave him. Timothy showed incredible humility by being an incredible servant. He considered the needs of Paul before his own. He considered the interests of the gospel before himself, no matter how difficult the task became.

For example, in this letter, we find Paul was about to send Timothy, who was most likely a man in his 20s, on another mission. It would be an 800-mile trip

to Philippi. Paul was waiting a bit before he sent Timothy. We find out why in verse 23.

I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with m,...
Philippians 2:23 (ESV)

Timothy's job would be to travel 800 miles to tell the Philippians if Paul lived or died at the end of his trial. Eight hundred miles was a long trip before cars. Carrying news of Paul's life or death was an important message. The person Paul chose for that important work was Timothy, because he was such a faithful and trustworthy servant of others.

Let's see other ways Timothy worked out his salvation with humility and gratefulness in everyday life.

Humility is modeling my life after someone that is spiritually mature instead of my peers.

A few years ago, the popular rage was to wear WWJD bracelets. That meant we were to always ask ourselves, "What would Jesus do?" in every situation, then follow in his footsteps. Timothy didn't have a WWJD bracelet. I think he had a WWPD bracelet. Timothy constantly asked the question, "What would Paul do?" Timothy made Paul his hero. He wanted to live like Paul and be like Paul. Timothy wasn't interested in modeling his life after his peers. In humility, he chose to model his life after Paul, an older, mature, godly man.

How much had Timothy learned to clone Paul's character and life?

For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.
Philippians 2:20 (ESV)

When Paul said he had no one else "like" Timothy, the word "like" in the Greek is rich in meaning. It means to be of one-soul or one-mind. Timothy was

the only one Paul had who thought like him and acted like him. While most young people try to be different from the older generation, Timothy was trying to learn from and be like his spiritual hero in the older generation. That is humility. It is considering others better than yourself. Look how Paul described Timothy to the Corinthians. Here we get a window into how much Timothy had become a copy of Paul's character.

I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 1 Corinthians 4:16–17 (ESV)

Paul told the Corinthians to imitate his life of following Christ. To show them what that looked like, he sent Timothy, who was just like him! That is a powerful compliment from Paul.

I ask you, "Who is your model?" Do you have an older more spiritually mature man or woman that you want to learn from, that you want to follow? Do you have anyone that you admire in the older generation about whom you say to yourself, "I want to be like them," or "When I get to their age I hope I have lived like them"? Unfortunately, few people today have older spiritually mature heroes they want to follow. That may be because there is a lack of humility in their lives. They don't see anyone they want to imitate because in pride they don't see anyone as better than themselves. They don't want to humble themselves to learn. Humility is intentionally following in the footsteps of older more spiritually mature men and women that have gone before us.

Humility is genuine concern for the needs of others.

For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. Philippians 2:20 (ESV)

What also set Timothy apart was that he genuinely cared about other people. Humility is not just looking out for our own interests but also caring about the interests of others. Timothy was genuinely concerned about the needs of the Philippians. That was unusual.

Paul said that while he had many other Christians around him, he had no one else that would show genuine concern for the Philippians like Timothy. Genuine concern for the needs of other people, not just superficial concern for their needs, is the result of a humble life. Instead of one's thoughts always being about oneself, and what I want to do next, a humble person's thoughts are about other people and a genuine concern for the pain in their lives.

We all know what it is like after church when people talk to us. Sometimes people share about difficulty in their family or sickness of their loved ones. It is easy to listen and show only superficial concern, not genuine concern. When we only pretend to care about other people's lives, that shows a lack of humility. Humble people are genuinely concerned for other people. That is a challenge all of us must take to heart.

The Greek word for "concerned" is a very strong verb. It means to not just show concern in an intellectual way, but your concern is so strong that it is also experienced in an emotional way. The care Timothy had for the Philippians was so deep that he hurt when they hurt. He was filled with joy when they celebrated. His concern connected them both intellectually and emotionally. That is what a humble person does. They don't show superficial concern but genuine concern

for other people. That genuine concern is not just in their heads but it also touches their hearts.

Humility is being more focused on what pleases Jesus than what pleases me.

For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Philippians 2:21 (ESV)

This is a revealing statement. There were many people in the church of Rome. At this time, Rome had as many Christians as Jerusalem. Rome was a large church. Unfortunately, in Paul's estimate, all of the other Christians around him, except for Timothy, were out for self-promotion, not for Jesus. Let's be honest. Isn't it easy to use Jesus to promote ourselves and our reputation? Christians do this all the time. If someone is given a leadership position in the church, he lets it feed his ego. When we attend church, we look at it as an opportunity to build business connections. That is using Jesus for self-promotion.

That wasn't Timothy. He was a humble man. Instead of using Jesus to promote himself, Timothy was content if people forgot his name. He truly only cared about Jesus' fame and Jesus' name. For Timothy, it was OK if he was forgotten. It was OK if his name never ended up in lights or on a book. Timothy was the kind of guy to write a masterful letter that points people to Jesus, like the book of Hebrews, and then like the author of Hebrews, never sign his name so people only remember Jesus and never remember him.

At this point in Paul's life, with so many people coming to Christ and churches being planted, you would think there would be many humble, godly men around Paul. There were not. Timothy was one of the few.

This is a challenge for all of us. A humble Christian is a Christian that is willing to be of no fame and no reputation. It is a Christian that is willing to be forgotten as long as Jesus' name is remembered. A humble Christian is willing to do the jobs around the church that nobody wants to do then do them in such a way that nobody knows who took care of them. Most people follow Jesus, putting themselves and their reputations first. Only humble people follow Jesus, putting his name and his reputation first.

Humility considers it a privilege to serve others in gospel work, even when it is hard work.

But you know Timothy's proven worth, [how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel](#). Philippians 2:22 (ESV)

Paul talked about Timothy's proven worth. What does that mean? Timothy served with Paul for quite some time. Paul sent Timothy on many difficult missions and on numerous tough trips. No matter how hard the job, no matter how difficult the task, Timothy came through every time.

At the end of Acts 15, we read the story of Paul and Barnabas separating. It was because of a different young man named John Mark. He was Timothy's age. He joined Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. When things became difficult, and people became violent, young John Mark bailed and went home. Paul didn't want to take John Mark on their second missionary trip because he had not proven himself. Timothy was different. He had proven himself. No matter how difficult life became, he never bailed on Paul.

The reason he didn't bail was because of his humility. Timothy was more concerned about Jesus than he was about the health and safety of his own life. That is humility.

Paul also said Timothy served with him like a son serves his father. If you are involved in a father-son business, the idea of a father and son working together may not sound appealing. Sometimes fathers and sons have different ideas about the way a business should be run. It can lead to strong family conflict when a father and son do not see things eye-to-eye.

This is where it gets interesting. In Greek, there are different words for son. One is a general term for son and can refer to an adult-age son. Another Greek word is used to refer to a younger son. That is the word for son used in this verse. Timothy worked with Paul having all the excitement of a young boy joining his father for a day at work. If you are the father of a son, you can remember the excitement of your son going with you to the office. You can remember how eagerly he tried to do whatever you asked of him. You can remember how much your son wanted to please you as he helped you on the job.

That was Timothy's attitude around Paul. "I am so happy to be with my dad. It is such a privilege to be with dad. I just want my dad to be proud of me." Once again we see Timothy's humble attitude. We see real life humility worked out in Timothy's life. Instead of pridefully considering himself a peer of Paul, Timothy considered it a joy and a privilege to serve Paul. He served Paul with the

attitude and excitement of a son helping his father at work. That is humility in real life.

Humility is giving up life's pleasures for the gospel.

I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. Philippians 2:23–24 (ESV)

The point I will make from this verse is indirect but it is present. In all of the Bible, we never see Timothy serving his own agenda. He was always traveling with Paul or being sent on an errand by Paul. This must have been hard on him relationally. He was constantly severing relationships and making relationships. He lived on the road. Can you imagine what it was like for him to constantly pick up his stuff and leave at a moment's notice? Yet, we never hear Timothy grumbling about this. He was grateful to serve Paul by doing this.

When Timothy joined Paul, he left his home, his family, his friends, and his career behind. As far as we know, Timothy never fell in love. He never married. He never had kids. He gave up all those joys in life so he could serve Christ by serving Paul. We never hear of Timothy owning a home. He gave up many of life's pleasures to serve Christ by being serving others. That is humility. That is considering others better than yourself.

Just as Paul ended up in prison for his faith, according to Hebrews 13:23, Timothy also ended up in prison for sharing the gospel. That is humility.

The purpose of this section is to show us what spiritual maturity looks like in normal people as they pursue humility with an attitude of gratefulness, not grumbling, in everyday life. Timothy was a great model of humility in ordinary life.

He was a humble man that served Jesus by humbly serving others and putting their needs before his own. That is what humility looks like in the real world.

Epaphroditus — Humility is willing to risk my life for the sake of the gospel and the needs of others.

Paul was humble because he joyfully sacrificed his life for the spiritual good of others. Timothy was humble because he served Jesus by being serving others. That brings us to Epaphroditus.

If you watch cable TV, every once in a while you will see videos of extreme sports where people jump motorcycles over cars and flip them in the air. Sometimes extreme sports will involve BMX bicycles or skateboards. I am amazed by people who are willing to risk their lives that way for fame and fortune. You would never get me to do what they do. When we come to Epaphroditus, we have someone who fit in the world of extreme sports. He was a risk taker. He didn't risk his life for fame or fortune but for humility, because he considered other people better than himself.

Who was Epaphroditus? He was a mailman, a UPS driver of sorts. According to Philippians 4, he traveled 800 miles to bring financial help from the church in Philippi to Paul in the city of Rome. In Acts 28, we learn Paul was under house arrest. In order to stay in that house, instead of a dungeon, he needed to pay his rent and living expenses. What made that difficult was Paul couldn't work. He was chained 24 hours per day to a Roman guard. The financial gift Epaphroditus brought helped pay Paul's rent and living expenses. The Philippians' financial gift was an important gift. It allowed Paul to survive.

Epaphroditus was an ordinary guy. He was not an apostle, like Paul. He was not the hand-picked successor of an apostle, like Timothy. He was not an elder in the church of Philippi. He might have been a deacon, but that is only a guess. He was just an ordinary guy from the Philippian church. We don't know much about Epaphroditus, but we can make a few assumptions.

It is fair to assume he was a godly man. The Philippians wouldn't have sent him to assist Paul if he was a hot mess.

It is also fair to assume he was a trustworthy man. Remember Epaphroditus traveled with a lot of money. You don't give that kind of money to shady people.

Epaphroditus was courageous. He knew what he was walking into. If the Roman government executed Paul, it was reasonable to assume they might also execute or imprison the people staying with Paul. That would include Epaphroditus. By Epaphroditus coming to help Paul, and staying with Paul, he was risking his life by being closely associated with Paul. He knew it. Epaphroditus staying with Paul would be like one of us moving to a Muslim country to care for a friend in a Muslim prison. That is a high-risk move.

Epaphroditus' name was a common name. It means "favorite of Aphrodite." She was the Greek goddess of love and beauty. This means he came out of a pagan background before he became a Christian. He is the story of a life that was transformed.

Let's learn about him.

Humility is honoring ordinary Christians around us.

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...
Philippians 2:25 (ESV)

The first place we see humility in Epaphroditus' story is not in his life but in Paul's life. Remember that Epaphroditus is a very ordinary man. He held no position. He had no status. Yet in this verse, Paul constantly went out of his way to honor him.

Paul called Epaphroditus "my brother." Paul said Epaphroditus was someone Paul loved and cared about. He was Paul's friend.

Paul also said Epaphroditus was his "fellow worker." Paul emphasized that Epaphroditus was far more than a bell-hop to him. Epaphroditus was in the trenches, fighting for the gospel with Paul. Paul considered Epaphroditus a peer, not a nobody. Do you sense Paul's humility as he elevated Epaphroditus, this ordinary man? Remember that humility is considering others better than yourself.

Paul also called him "my fellow soldier." There is interesting background to this Greek term. It was a title of honor. It was usually used by a higher ranking officer in the army to compliment and elevate a lower ranking officer by considering him his equal. That is what Paul did for Epaphroditus. He said Epaphroditus was far more than an errand boy. He was an honored soldier willing to do battle on the front lines of the gospel in Rome. I love the way Paul humbly built up this ordinary man.

Paul also said he was "your messenger you sent to minister to my need." There is interesting background to the word Paul used in the Greek for "minister." This is the Greek word *leitourgeon*. At that time, in Greek city-states, those who

were well-off served as benefactors of the community. They funded community projects to benefit people in the city. We see that today. Our high school has a football stadium that was given by community benefactors. The high school also has a performing arts center given by community benefactors. The beautification of Arnolds Park is being done by community benefactors. At great personal expense, benefactors do great good for many people. That is how Paul described Epaphroditus. He was someone that made a huge sacrifice that benefited many people. Epaphroditus was willing to leave his home, his family, his friends, and his job to travel to Rome and put his life on the line to provide financial help for Paul, which enabled Paul to continue ministry while under house arrest. That benefited many people.

This was humility. Paul was going out of his way to build up an ordinary person in the church, not ignore or take for granted an ordinary person. Paul considered Epaphroditus better than himself.

The letter to the Philippians we are studying this morning was carried by Epaphroditus back to Philippi. Paul needed to provide some explanation for why Epaphroditus headed home if he was supposed to stay and help Paul.

Humility cares about the concerns of others, not just ourselves.

...for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. Philippians 2:26 (ESV)

Epaphroditus was not heading home because he was homesick. He learned the Philippians heard about his illness, and he was very concerned about it. The word distressed is only used one other time in the Bible. It is used to describe the kind of stress Jesus experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane

before heading to the cross. Epaphroditus was very concerned about other people worrying about him. He was concerned about his wife and children staying up nights wondering if he was OK. He kept thinking about the prayer meetings for his recovery they were holding for him at church. Nobody was there to tell them he recovered and was well.

Let's look at this illness Epaphroditus suffered.

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. Philippians 2:27 (ESV)

When did this sickness that almost killed him take place? While we don't know for certain, it appears Epaphroditus took sick while traveling the 800 miles from Philippi to Rome. During the trip, he was so sick he almost died. When we are that sick, the last thing we want to do is move. If anything, we want to go home. Epaphroditus didn't do that. He knew he had a mission. He needed to get the money to Paul in Rome or Paul wouldn't have money for food and rent. Epaphroditus was as a dog. He was dehydrated and his life hung in the balance but because he considered the needs of Paul as greater than his own he soldiered forward traveling to Rome with Paul's financial gift. Read verse 30.

...for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Philippians 2:30 (ESV)

Imagine this. Epaphroditus was sick, weak and vomiting but still traveling because Paul needed the money to survive. That is humility. That is considering others better than yourself. That is looking out for the interests of others, not just your own. Epaphroditus was willing to risk his life for the sake of someone else. That is humility in real life.

Humility does what is best for others, not what is best for me.

I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. Philippians 2:28 (ESV)

At this point, humility comes to a climax. We see it everywhere in this passage. Even though Epaphroditus was valuable to Paul — he was a fellow soldier — Paul wasn't reluctant to send him back. He considered the worries of the Philippians more important than his own need. Epaphroditus also considered the concern of the Philippians as more important than being on the front lines of ministry in Rome. The Philippians also considered Paul's needs as more important than their needs, which is why they sent an offering to help him in his time of need. We see practical humility, considering the needs of others before our own, all over the place in this passage.

Humility is risking my life for the sake of the gospel and the needs of people.

So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me. Philippians 2:29–30 (ESV)

What brought Epaphroditus close to death? It was a willingness to risk his life for the work of Christ.

In the early church, there was a group called the *paraballa*. That is the Greek word for gambling. They were known as the gamblers. They took Epaphroditus as their hero. Their mission in life was to risk their lives visiting those suffering with deadly sicknesses and those in prison. They were men and women who, in humility, considered the lives of others as more important than their own, just like Epaphroditus.

That is true humility. It is being willing to risk your life, not for fame and fortune, but in humility, to consider the needs of other people even before your own life. That is something many working in the medical field do today as they risk their lives working with COVID-19 patients.

Conclusion

This morning, we saw three examples of what humility looks like in real life. We saw Paul, who, in humility, was willing to gladly lose his life so other people would have spiritual life. We saw Timothy, who, in humility, served Jesus by serving other people. We saw Epaphroditus, who, in humility, was willing to risk his life to put the needs of other people in front of his own.

This week, it is our turn. We are next. We need to humbly work out our salvation by putting others in front of ourselves and looking out for their needs, not just our own. We need to do that with a grateful not a grumbling heart. After seeing the life of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, how will you humbly and gratefully work out your salvation in the world this week?



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