

Ministering Behind The Scenes

Philippians 2:19-30

PW Emerson – 03/03/2019 – Ten:27 Ministries

We are doing a series of great moments for God from the Bible ...

Different people doing great things, examples for us.

- Jacob / Israel – wrestled with God because he was really zealous for God
- Joshua – near the end of his life, pleaded with the people to stay true to God
- Isaiah – when called to serve God, was eager to do so
- Elijah – reminds us that in the most difficult times, we're not alone
- Josiah – regardless of the environment or circumstances, wanting to get on the people on track with God's word
- Daniel – used his opportunity in the Lion's Den, in captivity, to represent God to the king and the people

Today we see 2 more people, this time in the New Testament:

- Timothy
- Epaphroditus

Philippians 2:19-30

¹⁹I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. ²¹For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But 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. ²³I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

²⁵But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent

to take care of my needs. ²⁶For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. ²⁷Indeed 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. ²⁸Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. ²⁹So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, ³⁰because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Let me set the scene ...

- Paul is under arrest in Rome, waiting for his chance to appear before Caesar
- Depending on the outcome of Paul's appeal, he would return to Philippi

In the meantime, Paul had wanted to send Timothy to Philippi with this letter so that Timothy could return to Paul with news of the well-being of the congregation at Philippi.

- Paul was waiting to send Timothy until he knew the outcome of his appeal.
- But Paul decided not to wait to send the letter with Timothy, but rather to send Epaphroditus immediately with this letter to the Philippians.
- As Paul explained these plans, he commended the godly characteristics of these two men so that they might be an example for the Philippians.

Paul was holding up these two men as living examples of what he has been teaching the Philippians in this letter

We have seen that Paul had been challenging the people to

- To live a life worthy of the gospel
- To face hardships and
- To be humble servants who put the needs of others ahead of their own

Paul probably met Timothy when he came to Lystra during his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6).

Timothy likely became a Christian at that time.

Timothy's mother and grandmother had been religious Jews, and they became Christians.

Timothy's father was a Gentile.

Several years later, when Paul returned to Lystra on his second missionary journey, he enlisted Timothy to join him as a co-worker on the missionary tour.

Timothy was young at this time but clearly showed great promise.

Timothy was likely a disciple of Paul.

Paul thought very highly of Timothy. Paul

- Taught Timothy
- Groomed him to be a servant for God
- Groomed him to be a leader in the Christian church

One of the most famous pieces of advice Paul gave Timothy is often quoted in youth ministry:

I Timothy 4:12

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.

When Timothy grew older, he eventually became the bishop at Ephesus.

When the Philippians heard that Paul was in prison in Rome, their hearts were moved to action.

They decided to send a financial gift to Paul by the hand of Epaphroditus.

In addition to being the bearer of the financial gift, the Philippians also intended for Epaphroditus to stay in Rome and serve Paul, helping Paul with the mission to spread the word of Jesus the Christ.

This makes a statement about Epaphroditus.

- He was a trustworthy person – someone who can be trusted to travel a long distance with someone else’s money – unlike Judas Iscariot, the treasurer among Jesus’ disciples who took what he wanted.
- It also says that Epaphroditus was brave
 - it took courage to travel anywhere back in that day
 - it took courage to be associated with someone in prison – what if Paul was condemned and Epaphroditus somehow got sucked into guilt by association? That almost happened to Jesus’ disciples

Timothy and Epaphroditus served Paul. They didn’t need to be

- Billy Graham
- Rick Warren
- Bill Hybels

Or some other great evangelist or minister.

But they still had God’s calling to

- GO
- Spread the word of Christ
- Make disciples of Christ

However they did it as a supporting behind the scenes.

They were content to be a number 2 or 3 person, someone behind the leader.

You don't need to be some great

- Evangelist
- Minister
- Missionary

To fulfill God' mission.

You just have to do what you can with what you have and who you are!

It's a reminder that

THE CHURCH SUCCEEDS OR FAILS AS A BODY

There is no congregation

- Either in biblical times
- Or today

That succeeds because of one person.

The pastor doesn't make the church.

GOD'S PEOPLE make up the church!

Sometimes, people don't get involved because they think it is someone else's responsibility.

They are like the four shipwrecked men in a leaky lifeboat.

From one end of the boat, two watched as those at the other end bailed frantically to keep the boat afloat.

Then one of the two said to the other, “I’m so thankful the hole is not in our end of the boat!”

Brothers and sisters, we are all in the same boat.

When and if there is a hole in our congregation it affects us all and its solution becomes the responsibility of us all.

When we get serving like Timothy and Epaphroditus, then we grow, and the church grows, and God gets the glory!

Verse 29 from today’s piece has a small part we should really pay attention to:

So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him
HONOR PEOPLE LIKE HIM

In most churches, **VISIBLE** people get the praise ...

- The pastor – you see him or her up front; you hear him or her
- The music team, whether choir or band – you see and hear them clearly

But who sees

- The guy on the telephone lining up the people to bring in their car for the oil change
- The person getting all the materials for the mechanics at the oil change
- The person who comes by and cleans the facility when no one else is around

Paul tells us to HONOR PEOPLE LIKE HIM because the

- Helpers

- Servants
- People behind the scenes

Do a great service for the mission.

Remember, THE CHURCH SUCCEEDS OR FAILS AS A BODY

We see from both Timothy and Epaphroditus that they
SHOW GENUINE CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Verses 25 & 26

²⁵But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. ²⁶For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill.

Like I said, he was trusted to bring their financial support.

And he stayed to help take care of Paul's needs.

But

He is distressed because you heard he was ill

The word Paul used to describe Epaphroditus' distress for the Philippians refers to great anxiety and the only other time the word is used in the New Testament is in reference to

Jesus' distress in the garden of Gethsemane before his arrest and crucifixion – that was distress.

When Paul said that Epaphroditus “risked his life,” he used a gambling term (a term that only occurs here in the entire New Testament) which means to stake everything on a single turn of a dice.

What Paul was trying to say was that Epaphroditus put his life on the line for the sake of Christ.

Epaphroditus served Paul in Paul's endeavor to live out God's mission to “make disciples of all nations.”

The believers at Philippi were worried about Paul and Epaphroditus in the work they were doing.

I've got boys in their 30s

- I don't stop loving them
- I don't stop caring about them
- I don't stop worrying about them.

And sometimes they worry about me because they know that I'm worrying about them!

How many times have you been distressed because others were worried about you?

We are good about reaching out to those outside – we do it

- Making sandwiches for the homeless

- Oil change for people in need
- Thanksgiving baskets for families in need

But we need to remember those in the body of Christ who need someone to care ...

- Why haven't I seen that couple in months, the couple that always sat there?
- What happened to the woman who was always quiet and kept to herself?

In the early years of the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln became so frustrated with the inactivity of the Union general, George McClellan, the president wrote the general a one sentence letter.

“Dear General McClellan, If you don't want to use the army, I should like to borrow it for a while. Respectfully, A. Lincoln.”

Isn't that amazing, here was the general of an army, with vast resources of men and ammunition, and he was doing nothing with his resources.

How often do we see the same thing in the church?

I asked people today to bring a big pot of homemade soup, and I said no, we're not having a potluck; it's not for us.

Rather I have a number of leftover containers to put it in.

And I have labels with the church verse & logo on it.

Everyone should give these out to

- The disabled person you haven't seen here in a while
- The couple getting over illness/injury
- The family with 8 kids that could use a break

- Even a well-off couple you haven't seen in a while because they moved an hour south.

Let's go be Timothy & Epaphroditus in the world today!