

A Good Example

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 March 2020

Preacher: Pastor Bart Leger

[0 : 00] So, are you a good example? An example of what, you ask? Well, an example of a follower of Jesus with the mind of Christ, the attitude of Jesus, the single mind, and the submissive mind.

Good to be with everyone here today. Good to be with everyone over the Internet as well. If you're following along at home or wherever you are, we trust that it'll be a blessing to you today.

Hopefully you're not driving and paying too much attention to the video, but we're glad to be together today. As we are in our text this morning, continuing the book of Philippians, study right now in chapter 2, ending chapter 2 this morning with verses 25 through verse number 30.

We have an example today of a man who was a good example. The Apostle Paul and Timothy had a colleague. His name was Epaphroditus.

Now, the Apostle Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Timothy was part Gentile and part Jew. Epaphroditus was a full Gentile and was a member of the church in Philippi.

[1 : 26] And he risked his very own health and his life to come to Rome to be with the Apostle Paul to carry the missionary offering to the Apostle Paul.

We see that in chapter 4, verse number 18. And by the way, Epaphroditus, his name, means charming. And what a charming follower of Christ he was.

And he was very, very special to the Apostle Paul. And I believe we're going to see that in the words the Apostle Paul chooses to talk about Epaphroditus and how he talks about Epaphroditus to the church in Philippi.

And you may ask, well, what makes Epaphroditus such a good example? Why is it that we would do well to follow the example of Epaphroditus?

And we saw Timothy's example last week, the Apostle Paul's example the week before. When here we go with the reasons why I believe that Epaphroditus was a good example.

[2 : 34] Three reasons this morning. The first is he was a balanced Christian. He was a Christian who had balance in his life as he followed Jesus.

And let's take a look at verse 25, where the Bible says, through the Apostle Paul, he says, Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus.

The church in Philippi very possibly thought that they would send Epaphroditus with the missionary offering for Paul to help support him. And possibly Epaphroditus would stay there and continue along in helping in the missionary endeavors with the Apostle Paul.

But Paul says, I feel it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to you. He says, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need.

And we see here that Paul couldn't say enough about this man. He was effusive in his praise. And he mentions three things about Epaphroditus that we see would lead us to believe that he was a very, very balanced Christian in the way that he served and in the way that he lived.

[3 : 56] Notice the way the Apostle Paul refers to him. He says, he refers to him as my brother, my fellow worker, or my companion in labor, and my fellow soldier.

These descriptions parallel, by the way, of the way Paul described the gospel here in Philippians.

As a matter of fact, in Philippians 1, 5, if you go back to chapter 1, he talked about the fellowship of the gospel, the thing that you and I as followers of Jesus Christ have in common.

That's why no matter where you travel, you might meet someone somewhere and there's something different about them. And you find out they're a follower of Jesus. And you can talk with them about things you have in common.

And it's almost as if you have an instant friendship, an instant relationship, because you have met a fellow brother or sister in Christ. So there's the fellowship.

There's the fellowship of the gospel that brings followers of Christ together. So that's in Philippians 1, 5. And he calls Epaphroditus his brother, his fellow believer.

[5 : 15] And then his companion in labor or his fellow worker in Philippians chapter 1, verse 12. He talks about the furtherance of the gospel.

And so he says, Epaphroditus has been working alongside me in the gospel. He is my fellow laborer. He is my companion in labor.

So not only has he been great in fellowship, but he's also been working to spread the gospel, my companion in labor and sharing the word of God.

But he also says, he's my fellow soldier. Epaphroditus was one who was not afraid of standing firm in his faith.

Epaphroditus was one that was not afraid to champion the cause of Christ, even in the midst of negative odds.

[6 : 11] And so he says, he is my brother. We have fellowship in the gospel. He is my fellow worker. He is assisting in the furtherance of the gospel. We see that Philippians chapter 1, verse 12.

But he says, he's my fellow soldier. And in Philippians 1, 27, the apostle Paul refers to the faith of the gospel, the faith that goes along with standing firm, standing true to the word of God.

Epaphroditus was all three of these. Epaphroditus wasn't just happy with fellowshiping and not furthering the gospel. He was not just happy with standing firm and being a champion for the faith at the expense of fellowship or at the expense of being an evangelist.

And so what we see here is we see that Epaphroditus was a balanced Christian. Balance is important in the Christian life. Because sometimes what we are prone to do and what churches are prone to do is focus on one thing.

We are great at fellowship, but we don't further the gospel outside the four walls. Or maybe we are strong in preserving the faith and the truth of God's word.

[7 : 40] And sometimes at the expense of fellowship. We say, you know what? It's, you know, fend for yourself, but we're going to champion the cause. Or maybe we are championing the, or we are preserving truth at the expense of going out and furthering the gospel.

But Epaphroditus was doing all three. We think of Nehemiah back in the Old Testament. You remember when he was getting opposition from without?

But God, he still had a job to do. So what, how was he working? A sword in one hand and a trowel in the other. You can't fight a battle with a trowel and you can't build a wall with a sword.

So he had both of them. He was balanced. You know, he had one eye over his shoulder while he was spreading the mortar and while he was building the wall.

Nehemiah was balanced. Dr. Harry Ironside, a pastor, a preacher many, many years ago, used to tell about a group of believers who thought only of fellowship.

[8 : 52] And what they did was they put a sign outside that said, Jesus only. Well, a storm came through and knocked down a few of the letters.

And the sign would say after that, us only. And he said, what a fitting description for that crowd.

And there are many churches that have the us only attitude. We care about ourselves. We love one another. We're going to stand firm in the faith. But yet, you know, we don't want to mix with that crowd or that crowd.

And so it's it's us only. Epaphroditus was a balanced Christian. So we need to engage in different areas in order to be well-rounded and not be focused on one thing to the detriment of others.

Fellowship. Love one another. Nurture one another. Build one another up. Encourage others to follow Jesus Christ. Share the gospel at work.

[9 : 57] Share the gospel wherever we go, wherever we have the opportunity and use whatever means we have at our disposal. Whether it's it's face to face sharing the word of God, sharing the gospel, whether it's through telephone, whether it's by sending a note of encouragement that you're praying for them or through social media or through online media that we're using this morning.

Whatever means, let's try to be as balanced as possible in our faith, doing everything God called us to do. Epaphroditus was a balanced Christian.

But also, I believe he was a burdened Christian. Epaphroditus was burdened for the needs of others, burdened and concerned about the needs of others.

Else, why would he risk his health and life to travel all the way to Rome to bring this missionary offering to the Apostle Paul? And why would Epaphroditus be concerned, along with the Apostle Paul, to go back to Philippi?

Because notice what Paul says in verse number 26. Since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

[11:19] Now, notice this. You have to catch the emotional language that the Apostle Paul uses. He says, when Epaphroditus heard that you all were concerned about him, he was longing for you guys.

He wanted to be with you. As a matter of fact, when he heard that you were concerned about his well-being, he was distressed. Because he wouldn't be happy until he knew that the believers in Philippi were taken care of and knew that he was well.

They cared for Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus was concerned about them. Like Timothy, Epaphroditus was concerned about others. To begin with, he was concerned about Paul.

Else why would Paul say that he was my fellow laborer, my companion in laborer, my brother? He was special to Paul. He cared enough about Paul.

When he heard in Philippi that Paul was a prisoner in Rome, he volunteered, most likely, to make that long and dangerous trip to Rome. To stand at Paul's side and to be with him.

[12:31] Not many people want to stand alongside someone who's in prison and having guilt by association. Now, yes, for sure, the Apostle Paul hadn't committed a crime.

But still, socially and publicly, there would have been at least some shadow of doubt on the Apostle Paul just simply because he was in prison.

Epaphroditus said, it doesn't matter. I'm going to go and be there for the Apostle Paul. He carried the church's love gift as well to the Apostle Paul.

See, our churches today need men and women who are burdened for others, who care about others, who are burdened for missions, for those around the world who've never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, to be burdened for those who can't take care of themselves, to be burdened for those who are homeless, to be burdened for those who have been victimized by human trafficking, those who cannot help themselves, the unborn and others, and the list goes on and on and on.

Are we burdened? Are we burdened for others? Does it hurt our heart when we hear of someone who's in pain? Epaphroditus longed for his brothers and sisters back home.

[13:51] And he was even distressed when they heard that they were concerned about him because his heart felt for them. The Apostle Paul, you know, we don't normally think of the Apostle Paul as being very emotional.

We don't think of the Apostle Paul as being this touchy-feely kind of guy. We think of him as being, you know, very strong-minded, very strong-willed. And from the way he speaks to the church, as a very matter of fact, you know, it's kind of one of these things where, like Paul would very likely, at least early in his ministry, would have been, you know what?

Just buck up. Just be strong. And like the Nike slogan, just do it. Where, as the Apostle Paul aged, you know, we see him mellow a little bit and be more concerned about the feelings of others, being more concerned about the emotional well-being as well here.

Paul uses this emotional language about Epaphroditus. This man was burdened as well for his home church. After arriving in Rome, he became ill.

We don't know what type of illness it was, but we know that it almost killed him. But we see the sovereign hand of God on Epaphroditus' life, and the people back home began to be concerned about him when they heard.

[15:18] We don't know how they got wind. There were apparently runners that would go back and forth between Rome and the different provinces, and that's how they got news. It's interesting that this guy, Epaphroditus, lived in Philippians 121, not Philippians 221.

And you say, what do you mean by that? Look them up, and you'll find out. He was not just concerned about himself. He was concerned about the things of the Lord.

So it was living in Philippians 121, not Philippians 221. And like Timothy, he had a concern for others.

The phrase, longing for you and was distressed, is the same as the description used of Jesus Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He was full of heaviness. And that's the same phraseology that the Apostle Paul uses of Epaphroditus.

[16:28] Epaphroditus knew the meaning of sacrifice and service. We see that in verse number 30.

Because for the work of Christ, he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me. The Apostle Paul said he risked his own life simply to take care of me.

He had a concern for others. So like Christ, Epaphroditus knew the meaning of sacrifice and service, which are two marks of the submissive mind.

And so far in the book of Philippians, we've seen the single mind that the Apostle Paul had. He wanted to get the gospel out around the world. And we've also seen through Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, through Timothy, and now through Epaphroditus, the submissive mind.

How do we receive joy as a follower of Jesus? Through humbling ourselves and serving others. We see joy all the way through. We see the submissive mind all the way through.

[17:35] Verse 27, For indeed, he was sick, almost unto death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but on me also. So Paul says, God showed mercy on me by healing Epaphroditus.

Because where would I have been without Epaphroditus? So he said, God not only showed mercy on Epaphroditus, but he showed mercy on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Interesting language that Paul uses. Sorrow added to sorrow. He said, I would have been grieved if Epaphroditus had died.

So he said, God had mercy on me. And then number three, he was a blessed Christian. He was a blessed Christian.

I believe we'll find ourselves, if we live that balanced life, if we don't focus on just one thing, but we focus on all the things that God has for us to accomplish.

[18:39] And when we're burdened for others as well, with a submissive mind serving others, we will be blessed by God.

So he was a blessed Christian. Verse 28, Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again, you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.

So the Apostle Paul again is talking about their emotions. He's referring to his own emotions, and he's referring to the emotions of the Philippian believers. He said, I sent him eagerly.

I sent him upon his way, so that when he gets to you, you guys can breathe a big sigh of relief, and say, welcome home, Epaphroditus.

How's Paul doing? And he said, Paul said, I will sorrow, I will be just a little bit less sad when I know that Epaphroditus makes it home.

[19:38] So what a tragedy it would be to go through life and not be a blessing to anyone. Think about it. Verse 29, Receive him, therefore, the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem.

What kind of men? Men like Epaphroditus, who are not afraid to serve others in the midst of danger, who are concerned about others, who are burdened for others, who is a blessing to me, a companion in labor.

So he says, hold him in high esteem. Hold him in high regard. Now we think, well, that's kind of prideful, right? No. I think that's part of the submissive mind, and that's part of the joy we have in Christ.

We are not to be prideful about what we do, but the Apostle Paul said, there's nothing wrong in holding people in high esteem for doing what they're supposed to do.

And then when we're regarded in high esteem, what do we do with it? We give all the glory to God. So there's nothing wrong in giving someone a compliment. There's nothing wrong in holding someone in high regard.

[20:52] And when we're humbly submissive to others and to God, we'll receive it with the right attitude, with the mind of Christ, and say, to God be the glory.

It's only through him and through his Holy Spirit that we're able to do what we're supposed to do.

Epaphroditus was a blessing to the Apostle Paul. He stood with him in Paul's prison experience and didn't permit his own sickness to hinder his service.

What times he and Paul must have had. I can imagine their prayer meetings they had. I can imagine their praise sessions they had. Maybe they sang together while Paul was there under

house arrest.

Maybe they sang whatever psalms or hymns they had available at their time. They had a good old time. And guess what? Guess who was a captive audience? The soldier that was there on his shift to guard Paul.

And so not only was Paul sharing the gospel, but they were double-teaming this guy. And so Paul and Epaphroditus were sharing the joy of the Lord with these Roman Praetorian guard who were actually an echelon above the average soldier because they were part of that palace guard.

[22 : 12] And so here they are hearing the gospel from these two men. But I believe Epaphroditus was also a blessing to his home church. Like Paul said, receive him with gladness because he is a man that should be held in high esteem because of what he has shown.

He's a balanced Christian. He's a burdened believer. So Paul admonishes the church to honor him because of his sacrifice and service. And as we said, Christ gets the glory, but there's nothing wrong with the servant receiving honor.

If you wonder about that, read 1 Thessalonians 5, 12 and 13. 1 Thessalonians 5, 12 and 13. And there's no contradiction between Philippians 2, 7 where Jesus made himself of no reputation and Philippians 2, 29 hold such in reputation or high regard.

Jesus didn't ask for it, but Jesus received it. And so the same with fellow believers. We can hold others in high regard. Those who teach children, those who lead others, those who shepherd others.

There's nothing wrong with holding them in high regard. As a matter of fact, the Bible even says that they're worthy of double honor, those who work in the gospel, those who work and serve others and depend on others.

[23 : 42] God exalted the apostle Paul. God exalted Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus sacrificed himself with no thought of reward.

So Paul encouraged the church to hold them in honor and give him the reward that he deserved in honor and to the glory of God. So he was a blessing to Paul.

He was a blessing to his own church. And I believe the Epaphroditus is also a blessing to us today. His name is included in scripture. There are many people who were not even named, who were not even included in the canon of scripture.

But Epaphroditus was a servant, was a companion of the apostle Paul. So he and Timothy encourage us to submit ourselves, love others, serve one another in the spirit of Christ.

Now Christ is a pattern that we follow. Paul shows us the power, Philippians chapter 4, verses 12 through 19. And Timothy and Epaphroditus are the proof that the submissive mind really works.

[24 : 52] Are you a good example this morning? When the world, when I say the world, I mean everybody outside. When everyone looks at you, what do they see?

Do they see someone who loves the brethren, loves fellow believers? The Bible says that's how the world will know that we're his, if we have love for one another.

Do they see you as a champion for the faith? One who says, this is what God's word says.

God is real. Jesus is our savior. And he loves you and he wants to have a relationship with you. And do they see us as a fellow soldier, one who is not afraid to share our faith in Christ?

Will we let the Holy Spirit reproduce the mind of Christ in us? Let's pray. Our Father, we're so thankful and so grateful for who you are and what you do in us.

[26 : 02] We pray, Father, that you would help us to be good examples, to be followers of Christ, and to be balanced in our approach to life, that we may be burdened for others.

And also, Father, we'll thank you for your blessings and that we might be a blessing to those around us. So, Father, bless us today and all who are here and all who are listening.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.