

What The Mind Of Christ Makes Of You

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: 08 December 2024

Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0 : 00] Well, we're going through the book of Philippians a few verses at a time, and this book has four chapters.

Today we come to the end of chapter 2, and it's really a wonderful place to pause as we'll take a couple weeks and prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ.

That's what Advent means. So we prepare for the second coming of Christ by celebrating His incarnation, His first coming. So for today, our sermon text is Philippians chapter 2, beginning at verse 25 through 30.

I'll read this trusting that it is God's inspired, inerrant, infallible, clear, trustworthy word.

It's God's authoritative word for us as people. Philippians chapter 2, starting at verse 25. Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need, since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

[1 : 38] For indeed, he was sick, almost unto death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in high esteem.

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. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever. Let's pray. Lord, we ask that by the power of your Holy Spirit, you will illumine your scripture to us, your people.

I pray that you will help me as I open up these verses and these words, that we can get the meaning of your Holy Spirit when you breathed out the scripture, Lord. And that that same Holy Spirit who gave us your word will minister it to your people.

[3 : 02] We pray, Lord, that you will make it clear, that you will apply it to our lives. We pray that you'll use your word, Lord, in this simple, ordinary means of grace to conform us more and more into the image of Jesus Christ.

We thank you, Lord, for his perfect righteousness. We thank you for how Christ gives us the mind of God through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And you cause us to think and to live according to the kingdom of heaven because of the finished work and the person of our Lord Jesus.

Please do this for your glory today, Lord, we ask. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, for some of you, you're catching up to where we are in this study of Philippians.

Paul is in prison in Rome, and he's sending a letter back referring two men. He's referred Timothy, which we saw last week. Now, this week he refers a second man, Epaphroditus.

This passage is describing to the Philippian church one of their own. It's describing a man who Paul wants them to honor. And he wants to give them context.

[4 : 11] Why is it that he's going back now? Why is it that this man was sent by them to Paul, and now he's returning? So he's answering some questions that they'll have when Epaphroditus returns to Philippi.

With that context in mind, I picture Paul hearing of some of the challenges and the struggles of the church in Philippi, and he wants them to not be so focused on their problems in their immediate setting right now.

There's some conflict. There are challenges and disunity, and there's increasing persecution across the Roman Empire with Nero now as the Caesar. And Paul, he wants to say, look, church, your minds need to be lifted up.

Don't be stuck so much in the problems of the world. Lift your minds. There's a higher kingdom. And the way he does this is by affirming in one of their own what it is that a Christian can have, even in this life, in the middle of all that struggle.

And as sending Epaphroditus back with this letter, he's calling the whole church to remember who you are in Christ. Isn't it so true that we can be caught up in our problems and our own immature pet peeves and problems that they really distract us and take over our mind?

[5 : 36] That reminds me of a soccer team I was on. We were so immature, annoying each other, not playing as a team. And our coach brought everybody into a classroom, and he put on a short five-minute session of a professional soccer team in England.

Just watch how these guys train. And I remember still now what it was like to go from watching five minutes of Liverpool, doing the training session with the cones, a very simple, basic drill, and then a bunch of us immature guys going back out onto the field.

But you know what? We practice at such a higher level, just having watched a really strong example of what's possible. And this is what Paul, I believe, is doing for the church in Philippi.

So my encouragement for us is this. The mind of Christ in the believer, it makes you into something more than you are. That's what I want to walk through.

Six effects of the mind of Christ. What the mind of Christ makes of you. Number one, the mind of Christ makes enemies into brothers.

[6 : 46] The mind of Christ makes enemies into brothers. I want to point this out with two things. First is the meaning of the name Epaphroditus. The second is the mission of this man called Epaphroditus.

This is the only place in all the Bible where this name is used. So we can't really get any other clues from somewhere else. We know that Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of fertility, beauty, sensuality.

And the Roman version of the Greek goddess Aphrodite was Venus. And do you remember how Timothy and Paul, they got beat up and humiliated in Corinth more than anywhere else?

Well, you know what goddess was the protector of the city of Corinth? It was Aphrodite. And it was the temple and the worship, prostitution in the temple of Aphrodite that they were preaching against, calling people to believe in the true God.

And they were beat up. And they were humiliated. And they were made to be extremely weak. And the church in Corinth is tangled up in that. Well, that's just one example because all of these Roman cities with this very strong Greek heritage, they held Aphrodite up as their primary goddess.

[8 : 01] And so the name Epaphroditus, it comes from the Aphrodite. The prefix epa or epi, it means before Aphrodite, devoted to Aphrodite, or of like charm as Aphrodite.

It's possible that Epaphroditus' parents were not pagan worshipers of Aphrodite, but it's very likely that they were. These were Greek worshipers of an awful goddess.

And they were wanting her blessings on their son. That's who Epaphroditus was from his name. Now remember who Paul was before he got saved. His name was Saul.

He was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He was at the top of keeping all of the exterior laws. No one could be more of a legalist than Saul.

So for Saul, someone who is a Gentile, not just a Gentile, but a worshiper and from a family who loves Aphrodite, this was extremely offensive. Saul, before he knew the Lord Jesus Christ and had the mind of Christ, would have seen this man and said, you are a Gentile dog.

[9 : 18] This is the type of man Saul would have wanted to spit on the ground, just at the thought of this man. Well, notice in verse 25 how Paul has the mind of Christ, and it makes him view this former enemy into something else.

He calls him my brother. Isn't that beautiful? The gospel of Jesus Christ transforms Saul into Paul, and Epaphroditus into the brother in Christ.

To be a brother means you have the same family. We share a same family name. We're baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And all those other points of difference, they fade away.

We are brothers. We are united in Christ. Philippians 4.16 gives us an insight into this man's mission.

We saw his name, the meaning of his name, but what was his mission? Why had he gone to Rome? Could you turn there with me? Philippians 4.16. Philippians 4.16.

[10 : 22] Flip it a page back. Paul is writing to the church in Philippi and reminding them, even when Paul was in Thessalonica, another Greek city, the Philippian church sent aid again for Paul's necessities.

He says in verse 18, So his mission was to carry from Philippi six to nine months of travel by road all the way to Rome a financial gift to provide for Paul's provisions.

And Paul says his mission was successful. I received this gift. I have all that I need and I abound. Epaphroditus brought to me what you sent. That was his mission.

We also get an insight into how these support, you know, these gifts within the church, the broader church were shared among congregations. Could you turn to Acts chapter 11 next to get this insight?

Right. So picture this ancient world, Asia Minor, Europe, all the way back to Jerusalem. And in Acts 11, we read how gifts were generated by an individual congregation.

[11 : 55] So in the New Testament, a gathering of God's people like what we have here, this is a congregation. And even in Revelation, Jesus writes to the seven churches. They're each an individual church. In Acts 11, verse 29, we see how it's the congregation that generated a gift.

That gift was then carried to its recipient by a company of travelers. And when that financial gift arrived at a different congregation, it was received by the elders on behalf of that congregation.

So look at Acts 11, in verse 29. We read the disciples of Jesus in this city called Antioch. They determined everyone according to his ability.

So the congregation determined to give a gift. How much? Well, each one according to their ability. So there's a liberty among the believers in a congregation. But they were the ones who determined to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

So from Asia Minor all the way over to Israel, to Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders of this church in Judea by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

[13 : 07] So they were the ones to collect it, receive it, travel together, transport it all the way. Then the elders of the other congregation received it on behalf of that church. And that was the mission of Epaphroditus.

He was the one, in this case, receiving the gift to carry it all the way to meet Paul's needs in prison. So Epaphroditus was one of their own. He was from Philippi.

We don't know this, but it's possible. You think, who is it that would be freed from a congregation to make a long journey like that, and then to not only deliver it, but to stay there and continue serving that person?

Some scholars have said a likely candidate is someone like a retired Roman soldier who would be able to protect the money, who would have a little bit more availability and the financial freedom to make such a mission.

We don't know that for sure, but we do know that Epaphroditus was sent under the authority of this congregation of Philippi as their ambassador, as the one who has an important mission to fulfill on their behalf.

[14 : 08] Some of you might be thinking, how can God use someone like me? In Epaphroditus, without having any more insights into his background, I hope you'll be encouraged by his example because your parents maybe didn't know the Lord, or maybe there's things from your background that you feel like you are coming out of extreme darkness, and there's no way God could use you for a significant mission.

In Epaphroditus, we know that the Lord used him and was honoring him in this act of service on behalf of the church. The Lord Jesus Christ made both Epaphroditus and Paul dedicated disciples and brothers, no longer enemies, but brothers.

If you belong to Jesus Christ, you're a brother of Christ. Those who belong to him are your brothers and sisters, and that's how we view one another. Well, number two, the mind of Christ makes the church need one another.

The mind of Christ makes the church need one another. This goes against everything in our individualistic culture today, doesn't it?

Where it's all about self-reliance, self-sustaining. But if you're a Christian, you belong to a church that needs one another. Look at verse 25 again.

[15 : 31] Paul said, I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus. Paul considered this necessary. He says, Epaphroditus was your messenger, the one who ministered to my need.

Paul is setting this tone of, I have needs, and you sent him to meet my needs, but I'm sending him back because it's necessary now for your need as well. In verse 26, Paul says, he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

So there's some information that the church in Philippi has that Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus have. And Paul's trying to clear up all the waters here. Some have said it's a really far way away.

How could all this knowledge be shared? You know, how could the church in Philippi know that Epaphroditus was so sick and then be so worried? How could Epaphroditus and Paul and Timothy know that they were that worried?

Well, at the end of Romans, Paul addresses Jews that were in Rome but traveling back all the way to Jerusalem. And we know that the Romans built this paved road called the Via Ignatia.

[16 : 40] And this is the road that you could travel on a horse, most likely, or even by foot, or really like breaking it up into sections. Six to nine months of travel. But we know that there were Romans who did business with Asia Minor all the way into Jerusalem as well.

So this Roman Empire was united. And there were Christians traveling all along this road, making stops at the congregations as they went. So when we realized the geographic setting, it would not be difficult to understand that these believers that are traveling for business or otherwise, they're able to pass messages on from one congregation to the other.

Another scholar pointed out how the fact that Epaphroditus was carrying money from Philippi to Rome, it can lead us to understand that most likely he would not have done that alone. You're going to have at least one other person with you to help keep those funds secure.

So to get the timeline in our minds, Epaphroditus is on this mission from Philippi to Rome, gets very sick. And Paul says he's at the point of death, but he pressed on and he did fulfill the mission.

He brought all that was needed for Paul on behalf of the Philippians. Paul wants now the church to know that he did fulfill his mission and you need him. But because he was so sick, Paul says, I'm going to have sorrow upon sorrow if I lose Epaphroditus because he was making this dangerous journey at his own cost of his own health to bring this to me and take care of me.

[18 : 11] So you get the picture of the church here. The church in Philippi, they need encouragement. They need a man like Epaphroditus back in their ranks. Paul, he needs their support.

He needs company. He needs friendship and he needs partners in the ministry as well. Paul is very happy to admit his needs. And he wants the Philippian church to know Epaphroditus is worried about your needs.

There's a parallel with a letter that was found in the ancient Roman world. It was from a soldier to his mother. And it's almost the same Greek language. The soldier was sick and word got to his mother that he was very sick on the battlefield.

So this soldier writes a letter and he says, Mother, don't grieve my illness. Because when I found out that you were grieving my illness and I got better, I was grieving for you.

I was so worried that you were worried about me. That's the language among the church. They're so in tune and they're caring so much for one another's needs. In verse 25, we have another title for Epaphroditus.

[19 : 16] Not only was he Paul's brother, the next one I want to point out is that Paul refers to Epaphroditus as your messenger. Your messenger. That word is referring to a person who was sent on a naval or military expedition to plant the flag of the empire.

The word is actually apostle with a lowercase a. So Epaphroditus was an apostle of the church in Philippi. What this means is he was under their authority.

Their congregation had prayed. They had tested him. They had determined and then delegated, you will be the one on behalf of this congregation that we will send. And he was sent to minister to Paul's need.

We know from scripture that a prisoner, if left on their own, would die very quickly. We get an insight in Acts 24 verse 23. A centurion was told that he should, that Paul should be kept in custody, but have some liberty that none of his friends should be prevented from attending to his needs.

That was a different imprisonment, but it gives you the insight. The Roman centurion says we need to let his friends come care for his need or else a prisoner would die. Well, church, I hope one reason that you are part of this congregation is because you have needs that only this congregation or a biblical congregation can minister to, and because this congregation has needs.

[20 : 50] This church needs you, each one of you. When you're not with God's people, I hope you know we miss you. We care for you.

We worry about you. We will keep bugging you, checking in on you, reaching out to you, because to have the mind of Christ is to accept and welcome this truth that the church needs one another.

Amen? Some of you have shared how during the pandemic, and in one case, without any relatives nearby and sickness in the family, how lonely it was to not be part of a congregation, to not be part of a church.

What a great reminder. We need that reminder that the church needs you and you need the church, and no one here should ever feel alone. And even though imprisonment is different, you know, than this ancient world, man, when someone in the church is in need or is lonely or is sick or is in the hospital, or there might be another pandemic or something like that, let us remember this.

The church needs one another. We need to show this love and this care within the church. Paul encouraged the church in Thessalonica. He said in 1 Thessalonians 4, 9 and 10, Concerning brotherly love, you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.

[22 : 16] If you're a Christian, you're taught that by God himself. And indeed, you do so toward all the brethren. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.

See, God teaches you to love one another, and we urge each other, let's grow in that more and more and more. The mind of Christ makes the church need one another. The third evidence is this.

The mind of Christ matures you into a self-sacrificing soldier. The mind of Christ matures you into a self-sacrificing soldier.

Do you want to see a mature Christian? What you're seeing is a self-sacrificing spiritual soldier. Epaphroditus, on this mission, it turned out to be life or death.

Look at verse 27. Paul says he was sick almost unto death. And then look at verse 30. For the work of Christ, he came close to death, risking his life.

[23 : 21] Three times this life or death self-sacrificial mission is highlighted. Paul wants this church in Philippi to see Epaphroditus that way.

This man put his life on the line for Christ and his mission. One commentator thought perhaps the church in Philippi would feel like this mission had failed.

It was our desire as a church to leave Epaphroditus there caring for Paul's needs. And now he had to send him back. We failed. So he asked the question, Moises Silva, did the mission fail?

The answer is absolutely not. We can infer that Epaphroditus got very sick while traveling with the gift for Paul. But he did press on. He could have stopped, turned around, cut it short.

He did press on. And he risked his own life and he fulfilled the mission. And Paul wants to honor him in return and give this commendation letter back to them.

[24 : 20] You're receiving a hero. It would be the equivalent in our military of sending someone back with a purple heart. This is a soldier who earned it.

And you need to honor them as such. Receive him back as a hero because that's what he is. The way Paul honors him is because he uses five titles.

We've already seen the title brother and messenger. In verse 25, he's also called my minister, co-worker, and fellow soldier.

Paul knew that this church, this audience in Philippi, had this Greco-Roman background. And they valued titles of soldiers who had earned something on a military or a civil campaign.

And to honor those who achieved something great for the kingdom, they would publicly celebrate the titles of the person by putting them on inscriptions that would then be displayed throughout Roman colonies.

[25 : 26] So you can almost picture Epaphroditus' big announcement back to the church. Here he is, church, receive this man. Epaphroditus, your messenger. The crowd goes wild.

My minister. My minister. The brother. Co-worker. Fellow soldier. Order. See, for Christians, it's saying this is what the world values.

Here's the reality. Here's the greater kingdom. We belong to the kingdom of King Jesus. Someone pointed out those last three, the brother, co-worker, fellow soldier.

The order is not accidental. This is an ascending order. In other words, one builds on the next. By referring him first to brother, it's a strong sibling bond forged in the shared work and over conflict for the gospel.

And because of that strong partnership, being a brother in Christ, the other titles follow. Effective team ministry requires this brotherly family foundation.

[26 : 39] It's out of a deep personal bond. That has to come first before there can be effective co-laboring. That is the next title, which is fellow worker.

And Paul calls 16 different individuals my fellow workers in the New Testament. This is unprecedented in the use of Greek until Paul. But by using this title, fellow worker, it literally means we are side-by-side laboring toward a common purpose.

It's a perfect description of that ministry that they share. And we don't know whether Epaphroditus was a retired soldier, but we do know that at this prison in Rome, Paul's ministry was in a large part to the Praetorian guard and to the house of Caesar.

And to be a co-laborer in this important mission, in this opportunity that God has brought him, Epaphroditus was the perfect man. He was very sick, but the Lord spared his life, showed him mercy, and now he got to labor with Paul, sharing the gospel to these guards, these Romans in Caesar's household, along with Timothy.

What a wonderful opportunity. So brother, co-worker, and the last title is fellow soldier. Literally, that is my together warrior.

[28 : 02] My together warrior. It's a term that was not original to Paul, but it's what Roman foot soldiers were called by their commanding officer to show them honor.

My together warrior. It meant that a simple foot soldier was on equal ground with the commanding officer. Here's one who served on the front line with me.

He had my back. He's my together warrior. And that's what Paul calls Epaphroditus. What a great honor. Well, we know that as soldiers in the battle with King Jesus as the commander of the Lord's army, our battle is not against flesh and blood, but our battle is against the principalities of darkness.

In 2 Corinthians 10.4, Paul wrote that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds. Isn't that a great picture?

Paul and Rome under house arrest with Epaphroditus and Timothy, side by side on their knees, praying mightily for the kingdom of God to advance, praying for the needs of the church in Philippi, praying for the Praetorian Guard, for all Caesar's household, for the church in Rome with all of its problems, battling on their knees in prayer together.

[29 : 26] Because the mind of Christ matures you into a self-sacrificing soldier. The fourth evidence is that the mind of Christ makes your life intertwined with the condition of the church.

The mind of Christ in you makes your very life intertwined with the condition of the church. In verse 26, Epaphroditus was longing for you all.

And he was distressed because he knew the Philippians were worried about him. He's worried about the church. The church is worried about his condition.

It's so intertwined. It's like one in the same. Isn't that true that the body is only as well as each member? You've heard it said that a mother is only as happy as her saddest child, right?

Well, a good shepherd is only at rest as his most troubled lamb. You know, Jesus said, I'm going to go find that one lost lamb that's straying.

[30 : 37] I'm going to bring him back. So here's a church, a congregation in Philippi, but Epaphroditus is not well. And their well-being is intertwined with his condition. And then he's distressed for them, longing for them.

That word distressed is a very unique verb. The only other time it's used in the Bible is in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus himself was distressed because he's taking on the sin of his church.

To go pay the price that the church could never pay on its own. Jesus was described as sorrowful and very heavy.

And it can't be an accident that Paul's using that same word distressed to describe the soul of a Christian so intertwined with the well-being of their home church. full of heaviness.

How do we share that type of heart and mind for God's people? It's not natural. How do we grow to be more like Christ and loving his church so much?

[31 : 46] Well, we learn to pray from Christ from the word. John 17 verse 24. Remember how Jesus prayed, Father, I desire, I desire that they, the church, whom you gave to me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which you have given me.

So there's Jesus in Gethsemane, distressed, and he's praying, longing for the church to be with Christ in heaven and to enjoy the glory of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

So we can pray the same. Maybe this is how Epaphroditus, Paul, and Timothy prayed. Father, I long to be with your people. We long to behold your glory in Jesus Christ together.

And the more we pray for God's glory to be shared among his people, the more his love for one another will grow. In verse 27, we read that Epaphroditus was sick almost unto death, but God had mercy on him, not only on him, Paul wrote, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

In other words, if God would have allowed Epaphroditus to die, Paul, who was already having sorrow over the problems of the church in Rome and his own imminent death and the afflictions he was at in the last part of his life, to lose Epaphroditus, a brother, a fellow soldier, would have been an even worse sorrow.

[33 : 17] But the Lord had mercy on him. It's interesting that God had used Paul to heal the sick and to perform these mighty signs. That was as he was planting the church in places that were dark and had no church presence.

Well, now there's a church in Philippi. There's a church in Rome. God in his providence didn't pour out these healing gifts, though God could do that at any time. But it was God's mercy, either through miracle or medicine or just the natural course of God's order, that Epaphroditus did not die.

He got better. It wasn't through a miraculous sign that God did through Paul in this case. So anytime one of us gets better or we get healed, it's a sign of God's mercy.

And we need to give him all the credit. Isn't it amazing that our bodies heal at all? We do need to feel that. And just as Paul was concerned and having sorrow at the thought of losing Epaphroditus, it's right for us to feel those emotions, but to trust the Lord.

And when he does spare our lives a little bit longer to give him the glory, it's his mercy to spare us. The Lord willed that Epaphroditus should live on.

[34 : 34] In verse 28, Paul said, therefore I sent him. He's using a aorist or like past tense because they're going to be reading the letter. So when Epaphroditus gets there with the letter, they can read Paul sent him in the past tense.

Verse 28, I sent him the more eagerly that when you see him again, you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful. Well, just as they were worried, now if Epaphroditus does come back, they will be able to rejoice.

And Paul, knowing that they will be rejoicing, he will be even less sorrowful or share in part of their rejoicing. So the church and the individuals are so intertwined, whether we're up or we're down, your life is so closely knit to the condition of the church when you share the mind of Christ.

How the church is doing is how the Christian should be doing. Have you thought about that? Like someone asks you, how are you doing?

My answer should be, well, how is the church doing? That's how I'm doing to an extent. And the other way is true. Well, how is the church doing? Well, we think of individuals. You know, how is this individual doing?

[35 : 51] That's the church. That's how we're all doing. That's how intertwined it is to be part of God's church. I think for this reason, we also realize what a blessing it is.

And in our lives, we've experienced a little bit of everything, I'm sure, but what a blessing it is to be in a church and how important it is. A church that desires first, the mind of Christ.

Second, a genuine care for one another because how we're doing is how I'm doing and a church that is joyful. What a blessing that is. The more joyful of a church you can be part of, and this is Christian joy through suffering, not dodging the suffering, but the more joyful the church is, the more joyful you will be.

What a blessing that is. The mind of Christ makes your life intertwined with the condition of the church. The fifth evidence is this, that the mind of Christ makes you joyfully embrace Christ-like soldiers.

The mind of Christ makes you joyfully embrace Christ-like soldiers. In verse 28, Paul wrote, that I sent him more eagerly, that when you see him again, you may rejoice.

[37 : 01] Verse 29, receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in esteem.

Receive him, in verse 29, allow him back in. Take him back as one of your own. Accept him as this honorable soldier that I've given to you.

You sent him to be a blessing and a gift to me, I'm sending Epaphroditus back to be a blessing and a gift to you. Embrace this gift.

Don't reject this brother. He's saying, what I'm saying of Epaphroditus is true of every other brother and sister who shares the mind of Christ, who grows to be a Christ-like soldier.

Don't reject such brothers and sisters in the ministry. Don't push away a co-laborer who God intends to be a partner and a gift.

[38 : 00] Don't be cold or distant toward a Christ-like soldier, but do, verse 29, receive him. Embrace him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness.

It's so simple, but it's also so rare in the church, isn't it? We so quickly want to create our own little silos and the kingdom of Christ can easily become a bunch of fiefdoms of man, but we get a taste of this, what it's like to share a joy and a good report.

When we had our missionary come from North Africa, I won't say more details because it's for their protection, but you know, that's a Christ-like soldier.

And what a joy for us to be able to share a meal or have them in your home or hear their stories, how they're doing, to embrace a Christ-like soldier warmly, receiving them with joy.

We get a taste of this as well. Could you turn to Philippians 4, verse 10? Can you turn to Philippians 4, verse 10? Paul says, receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness.

[39 : 17] We see in Philippians 4, verse 10, Paul's own example. He said, I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me.

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. And then you said, Epaphroditus and the financial gift, that's great, but you showed by sending this man your love for me.

So, I rejoiced when Epaphroditus got here. I want you to do the exact same thing. I'm sending him back and I want you to embrace him and rejoice in the Lord at this gift.

Take him as a token of my love for you. And we're told to hold not only Epaphroditus, but all such men in esteem.

We are to hold Christ-like soldiers as ones who are dear to us. These are honor, worthy, noble, valued, prized, precious, saints.

[40 : 22] Isn't that so different? The culture of a church that has the mind of Christ compared to the world? The world takes glory for self, pushes teammates down, self-promotes.

I just described this past week at work for many of you. The church is not the world. The church has the mind of Christ being worked into us. Romans 12, 10, we're told, be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love in honor, giving preference to one another.

As another translation put it, outdo one another in showing honor. That's how the church is. Because the mind of Christ makes you joyfully embrace Christ-like soldiers.

Well, the sixth and final evidence for today from this passage is that the mind of Christ, it makes you give your life for the work of Christ. To put it another way, the mind of Christ makes you minister like Christ.

We read in verse 29 that Epaphroditus came close to death, risking or not regarding his life. Why was it? Last part of verse 29, for the work of Christ.

[41 : 42] By taking this gift and being there, a presence of ministry, accompanying Paul, this is the work of Christ himself. Whatever you do for the least of these, you did it for me, Jesus said.

This is the work of Christ. And in verse 30, he did this to supply what was lacking in your service toward me. In other words, it was impossible for the whole church at Philippi to be present and minister to Paul.

But they want to. They know that's the work of Christ. So what they couldn't do, what was lacking on their part, one man got to stand and do it as a service in their place.

That word service in verse 30, it might be translated ministry. When Plato uses this Greek word, he describes a service that a citizen undertakes to administer at his own expense.

This word service or ministry is also used to describe the work of priests in the Old Testament. So when the New Testament is describing the Levites and the priests working and moving all around the temple, getting everything ready so that the people of God can be in his presence and know that their sins are pardoned, they can glorify and worship their God, that's a liturgy.

[42 : 59] The word for ministry is where we get the term liturgy. So what he's saying is this, that Epaphroditus was doing the work of Christ and he was providing a service, a ministry, a liturgy for me as a priest that you have sent.

He was doing priestly work. So what this teaches us is that all ministry in Christ's name, the ministry of Christ, it's priestly work.

To be very specific, when each of you helps to put these chairs back off to the side, you are doing priestly work. It's a ministry.

It's part of our liturgy. It's the same Greek word. When we're practicing for music, when we're praying for one another, when we're praying for this church or for the Holy Spirit's work, praying for the lost, setting up, tearing down, buying groceries for our fellowship meal or buying groceries and cooking a meal to host someone else at your home, when you're cleaning, when you're dishing out the food, serving one another, all of this is priestly work, one to another.

So the mind of Christ that makes you give your life, risking your own very life, serving in the simple, ordinary ways for the glory of God in His church. The image here is of a tabernacle full of priests performing what God has ordained them to do so that God will bless His people and dwell among them like He promised to do.

[44 : 36] In London, Charles Spurgeon and their Reformed Baptist congregation, as they built up this church where they got to worship in, it's still a faithful, biblical, confessional church today.

The name was given to this building, Metropolitan Tabernacle. Big city, but it's a tabernacle. It's that image of here are ones who are fellow workers, co-laborers, ministering together like a nation of priests for the glory of God.

These are Christ-like soldiers serving one another. They're on their knees doing battle and praying. And I'll tell you, these days, I've complained to several of you I think is probably my own flesh and tiredness maybe, but I was just having trouble not envying the world, you know, basically, and not wanting things to come, you know, so hard.

But the more I prayed and the more I trusted in God, He reminded me of this truth that to be a Christ-like soldier, it means that you're surrounded with God's elite.

You know, these are the ones who have the mind of Christ. They're getting trained by Christ Himself. These are the soldiers you want to be with. And lean and mean is the army. Remember, Gideon soldiers, here's the thousands coming out to volunteer, but you look out and these are not true soldiers.

[46 : 07] These don't have that mindset of a soldier at all times. And what does God do is he removes hundreds of them. He narrows it down to just about 300. But these are the ones that at all times they know who they are.

They're a self-sacrificing soldier. And you wouldn't trade that for anything. Gideon would much rather have the Lord with a small band of spiritual soldiers and do battle than to have the numbers and go the way of might and power of the world.

What a blessing that we get to have a church full of priests and Christ-like soldiers. Well, you might be wondering, did Epaphroditus make it safely back from Rome all the way to Philippi?

And you know the answer, right? He did because the proof is in your hands. The Philippians received this letter. God used Epaphroditus to preserve Scripture. The Holy Spirit breathed out this letter through Paul and Timothy.

Can you imagine if you're in Philippi, and it probably wasn't this like picturesque, but so to speak, there's the Via Ignatia. There's this road coming from the west and there's the silhouette of Epaphroditus.

[47 : 22] He's returning. Will the church receive him with joy? And in his pouch is this letter. It's the Scripture that God Himself breathed out that would be preserved and circulated among all of the churches.

from Paul and Timothy to all the saints at Philippi with elders and deacons. Grace to you and peace. Philippians 2.5, we're told, let the mind which also was in Christ Jesus, and now we've seen in these three examples, that mind of Christ was in Paul being poured out.

It was in Timothy and having a love for the church and it was in Epaphroditus. Here's another illustration of what Paul has been preaching and it's the life of this man, Epaphroditus.

And the church could celebrate what Paul wrote in Romans 10.15, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace to be reconciled with God and who bring glad tidings of good things.

So church, I say to you, the same encouragement. Let each one of you have the mind of Christ, urging you more and more and more to not look out for our own interests but also the interests of others in lowliness of mind.

[48 : 45] Let us each esteem others better than ourselves and let us fulfill Christ's joy by being like-minded, having His love, being of one accord and of one mind.

Let's pray. Father, we thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You for how Your Holy Spirit applies what Jesus Christ accomplished, how You put the mind of Christ Himself, God in the flesh, into the lives of Your people.

Please make us more and more and more like Your Son. Thank You that we do this together, that You do this through Your church, through one another. Amen.