

PHILIPPIANS – 4th CD

IV. PAUL, HIS TEAM AND THEIR ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST'S EXAMPLE. (2:19-30)

Following the majestic description of Christ and Paul's appeal to the Philippians to live appropriately, we have an insight into Paul's apostolic team and the values that motivate them.

They live under the shadow of the Cross which had captivated and revolutionised them, yet with personal love and mutual delight, human friendship and vulnerability.

A. PAUL AND TIMOTHY: FATHER AND SON IN CHRIST.

(1) PAUL'S SUBMISSION TO THE LORD JESUS FOR THE ORDERING OF HIS AFFAIRS.

v19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy.

Everything was subject to Christ's overruling.

(cf v24 - I trust in the Lord that I myself shall be coming)

- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones
"Paul is incapable of thinking apart from Christ; he does not arrive at any decision except in terms of Christ. It was Christ who controlled the whole of his life and it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is going to decide whether or not he should send Timothy."
- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones
"While commonsense has its place, it must be a commonsense which is ultimately subject to the will of the Lord Jesus Christ himself. Our every action and move must have a relationship to our central relationship to him, dominated by him, and recognising that he is actually in control."

We must be very conscious of God's guidance as we consider Malawi, Zambia, New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Philippines etc.

(2) PAUL'S SUBMISSION TO THE LORD WHEN PERSONALLY COSTLY.

Sending Timothy and Epaphroditus was costly to Paul.

He released to them Epaphroditus the 'minister to his need' (v25) to be followed by Timothy his special child in the Lord.

- Motyer "Paul saw his Christian friends at Philippi as worthy of the best he had to give. He gave them Timothy, the man who was in a class by himself (v20) and who seems to have occupied the central ground in Paul's affections in a way no other did...The same point comes out in Paul's willingness to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi. His own love and need for Epaphroditus is plain in verse 27, but the happiness of Epaphroditus himself (verse 26) and of the Philippians (verse 28) were overriding considerations."

(3) TIMOTHY'S GENUINE CARE.

v20 No one like Timothy.

Nothing artificial about Timothy's care.

"interest" NIV- "concerned" NAS.

Same word as Paul in 2 Cor 11:28 - "care for all the churches" that came on him daily.

Also word used for Martha (Luke 10:41) - "careful" about many things.

v21 Sadly, in contrast with others who were self-centred.

- Vincent "It is possible to speculate unceasingly about the meaning of Paul's startling statement here, but without more information a satisfactory explanation seems impossible."

(4) TIMOTHY'S LIFE, SERVING AS A SON WITH A FATHER.

He had "proven" worth (7 times in NT always by Paul), developed in the closest possible relationship with Paul like father and son, as they served Jesus together.

B. PAUL AND EPAPHRODITUS - BROTHERS IN CHRIST.

(1) MY BROTHER.

Paul (the ex pharisee) sees Epaphroditus (a gentile 'dog') as his brother.

One he dearly loves.

It is important to notice that although we are to be confident in God's sovereignty in all things and to be anxious for nothing, this does not turn us into unfeeling, cold people.

Paul proclaimed that 'to die is gain' and his preference would be to depart, but when his dear brother Epaphroditus was raised up, Paul sees this as (v27) God having mercy on him, lest Paul should have 'sorrow upon sorrow'.

Though we hold great truths about life and death, it does not rob us of feeling.

Jesus wept at Lazarus's grave even when he was going to raise him.

- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones

"Here is a man who says, 'to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain', a man who was ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of Christ, yet who says, This dear brother of mine was desperately ill, I thought he was going to die, but God not only had mercy upon him, he had mercy on me, too, to spare me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. He would have felt it grievously, it would have hurt him, he would have known what it was to feel a temporary sense of desolation. Oh, let me emphasise this doctrine once more, the Christian is never meant to be unnatural."

A funeral at Christ the King. Everyone was in tears.

Beware the danger of cold automatic Christianity. There are many enigmas. Paul was used mightily in healing but his brother Epaphroditus 'was sick to the point of death'. God had mercy on him (maybe through Paul's prayers) but it would appear to be a difficult season of emotional turmoil where death was a possibility.

(2) MY FELLOW WORKER.

He was a worker who 'came close to death for the work of Christ'. This was no holiday.

Notice that Paul doesn't 'pull rank'. Epaphroditus was a *fellow*-worker - as were, for example, Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3), Urbanus (Ro 16:9), Timothy (Ro 16:21), Clement etc (Phil 4:3), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke (Philemon 24)

Paul, when necessary, argues for his unique apostolic authority, but normally happy to be a co-worker.

Epaphroditus (and all similar co-workers) are to be held in high regard (v29).

(3) MY FELLOW SOLDIER.

- A reminder that we don't just work, we also fight an enemy.
- In Epaphroditus Paul has an excellent example of one fulfilling the exhortation he has given the Philippians in 1:27 'striving together for the faith...'

(4) YOUR MESSENGER AND MINISTER TO MY NEED.

One from the church at Philippi, bringing their gift to Paul, had the privilege of fighting alongside the great apostle for a season.

- Such flexibility and mobility in church life, with its wonderful implications for the 'messenger', must be noted and emulated.
- Epaphroditus was a man with his heart torn in two directions. Honoured to serve Paul, he heard that his home church had learned of his sickness and was distressed as a result (v26) and longing for them all.
- Paul was motivated by these mutual anxieties and therefore sent him eagerly, 'so that when you see him again you can rejoice' (v28).

This whole passage gives us a beautiful insight into Paul's world. He and his dear friends together on world mission! This passage, it should be noted, follows straight after the breathtaking theology of 2:6-11, which often stands alone in theological tomes, being dissected and argued about.

Paul had friends, fellow labourers, sons-in-the-Lord, and brothers who risked their lives in direct response to the Christ who laid down everything for them.

- Fee "A passage like this ought to serve as a constant reminder to all of us (scholar, pastor, student of the Bible) that the N.T. was written in the context of real people in a very real world. Biblical texts are too often the scholar's playground and the believer's rule book, without adequate appreciation for the truly human nature of these texts - texts written by one whose speech was ever informed by his theology, but who expressed that theology at a very personal and practical level...Paul lived as a believer in a world surrounded by friends, that those friends brought him joy, and that the untimely death of such friends would have been for him immeasurable grief."