

# christian

## WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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### FULFILL YE MY JOY!

John W. Moore

**W**alking recently through the streets of Jerusalem, I was again reminded of the enormous task that lies before the church—reaching the world with the gospel. The world is terribly divided. A war continues over competing religious views. Islam, Judaism, and the religions of the Far East continue to be pervasive, and even among the many religious groups who profess to follow Jesus, there is a rancorous spirit of division and sectarian doctrine rooted in human philosophy and shades of paganism. Both at home and abroad, the word of life and the precious good news of Jesus and His love are often thwarted by enemies of the cross and the ever-present problem of a perverse and crooked people laden by sin. Idolatry in various forms is marring the image of the invisible God, and we are living in a time where the creature is served instead of the Creator (Rom. 1:25). All of this is both disturbing and sad, but what robs me of my joy even more is when members of the Lord's body are divided, suspicious of one another, and fail to strive together for the faith of the gospel (Phil. 1:27), all while the world is destroying itself in a maelstrom of sin and controversy.

Few things are as disturbing to me as those who profess to follow Jesus, but yet are factious, censorious, and seemingly so callous in condemning a brother in Christ with whom they disagree, especially in condemning a man who has spent his life preaching the gospel of the Kingdom. The church must defend the faith (Jude 3) and confront a brother who is in error (Gal. 6:1-2), but the church must also strive to be a place of harmony and peace. Our world is filled with hatred and anger, but the church must abound in love (Phil. 1:9), preach Christ in love (Phil 1:17), and work

together in love (Phil 2:2; 1 Cor. 13). It truly is a pleasant and wonderful thing when brethren dwell together in unity, working together in harmony, as did Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and the Philippian brethren.

When Paul wrote the book of Philippians, his world was not unlike ours. All of the issues mentioned in my opening paragraph were in many ways faced by the early church. Thus, Paul wanted brethren to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (1:27) because souls were at stake. The church then and today was to be a light to a dark world, leading sinners to confess Jesus as Lord (2:11), but when division and discord are present among brethren, this task becomes all the more difficult.

To help the church in Philippi to fulfill her mission, Paul stressed in his letter what some of us seem to have forgotten—that the preaching of the cross not only

*continued on page 7*

#### Philippians Chapter 2

##### *Fulfill Ye My Joy!*

John W. Moore..... 1

##### *The Example of Jesus*

Cody Westbrook ..... 2

##### *The Example of Paul*

Carl McCann ..... 3

##### *The Example of Timothy*

Ross Hafner..... 4

##### *The Example of Epaphroditus*

Troy Spradlin ..... 5

# Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

## THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS

Cody Westbrook

The church at Philippi was not unlike so many congregations of God's people today. They were faithful to the Lord and His work, which is so clearly evident through their support of Paul's missionary endeavors. They were not perfect, however, and so there were improvements to be made. Their greatest need was harmony as Paul set forth clearly in Philippians 1:27-2:4. Their greatest motivation to cultivating it was Christ as Paul set forth in Philippians 2:5-11. This great context stands out as one of the most awe-inspiring contexts in scripture. It exalts Jesus as the pinnacle example of humble service. We will examine it in three sections.

**The Imperative (v. 5).** Having established his purpose for writing—that the Philippian saints aid the gospel's progress through right living and unity (1:27-30)—and commanding harmony through self-sacrifice on the basis of the blessings found in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:1-4), Paul then issued a lofty imperative—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). The "mind" to which Paul referred points back to verses 3-4 where he described a humble and self-emptying attitude. So, Paul's command was that the disposition described in verses 3-4 be found in the Christians at Philippi. But he would not leave them with only a command; instead he set before them the ultimate and perfect illustration—Jesus. The one who "came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45) was, and still is, the perfect example (1 Pet. 2:21) of the humility and selflessness that is required in order to create an atmosphere of harmony among God's people, which is essential to the progress of the gospel. In the verses that follow, Paul fleshed out in detail the humility and exaltation of Jesus.

**His Humility (vv. 6-8).** To illustrate the humility

of Christ, Paul first identified His eternal nature (c.f. Col. 1:15). Jesus, "being in the form of God" pinpoints His eternal and unalterable existence as deity. But He "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." The ASV translates the statement as, "...counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped." It is translated from a rare and somewhat difficult Greek term that is only found here in the New Testament and has been defined in a variety of ways. The essence of it is that Jesus did not selfishly hold on to the rights and privileges He had in His pre-incarnate state (c.f. John 17:5). Instead He voluntarily emptied Himself, but of what? Not His deity, for Christ is and always has been God, without question (c.f. John 1:1-18; Col. 1:15-20). Rather, Christ emptied Himself of rank. He did not divest Himself of His deity but did surrender His equality and submitted Himself completely to the will of the Father (c.f. 1 Cor. 15:24-28). Being "found in fashion as a man" the Savior became a servant. "He was made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) and was like His brethren in all things (Heb. 2:14) except that He never sinned."<sup>1</sup> In the most remarkable action of selfless love, Jesus' humility and obedience extended even unto the most gruesome and undeserved death imaginable—the cross. This selfless action stands as an ornate display of His love for us, and a remarkable example for us to follow.

**His Exaltation (9-11).** The tenor of the text changes greatly in this section. The Suffering Servant of verses 6-8 is now the exalted Lord. Jesus suffered and died because He willingly submitted Himself to the Father's

<sup>1</sup> Wayne Jackson, *Rejoice With Me: Paul's Letter to the Philippians* (Stockton: Christian Courier Publications, 2007), 77.

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will. In turn, the Father has “highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.” The Father raised Him from the dead, placed Him at His right hand, and gave Him authority over everything (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:20-22). In this life or the next, every created being will bow before the magnificent Lordship and Authority of Christ the King. How remarkably reminiscent this passage is of Jesus’ statement in Matthew 23:12–“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.” Jesus’ action on our behalf perfectly epitomizes the attitude of service He taught His disciples and Paul commanded in the Christians at Philippi.

The example of Jesus was sorely needed in Philippi and remains so today. Though we are citizens of the kingdom of Heaven (Phil. 3:20), we sojourn in a strange country that is hostile to who we are and Whose we are. Yet the gospel must go forth and that can only be accomplished through a unified effort. Paul knew that harmony was needed in Philippi and so he commanded them to pursue it. In fact, the goodness of God seen in how He had blessed them in Christ compelled them to do so (Phil. 2:1-4). The same must be said for the church today. God’s people still have the same marching orders (Phil. 1:27-30) and the same blessings (Phil. 2:1-2) that should prompt us to the same kind of action (Phil. 2:3-4). Harmony comes not through self-exaltation but through humility—through putting the needs and interests of others and of the church ahead of our own. That is the command; that is the challenge. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

CW

## THE EXAMPLE OF OUR PAUL

Carl McCann

Serious consideration of the Apostle Paul’s life is humbling and encouraging. From the time of his conversion (Acts 9) Paul was totally devoted to his Lord’s service (Phil. 1:21-22), and while this is every Christian’s aim often our efforts seem so meager. However, when one reflects upon the havoc Paul had unleashed upon the church (Gal. 1:13) and that God still saved him and used him, we should find great encouragement. In this brief article I hope to set forth from Philippians chapter 2 some things Paul said about himself so we might follow his example and be encouraged to walk as he walked (1 Cor. 11:1; 1Tim. 1:15-16).

Paul Trusted in Jesus. Twice in chapter 2 the word “trust” appears (per the NKJV), however, in the ASV and the KJV verse 19 has the word “hope.” Both words convey the idea of confidence, thus Paul was confident that he would be able to send Timothy to the Philippians and that he would ultimately be able to see them himself. Paul’s confidence was well founded. It was rooted “in the Lord Jesus” or according to the plans of God. In all things Paul was aware that plans must be made with God in mind. James continues to remind us to keep God in our plans, “...If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that” (Jas. 4:15). The sagacious words of Solomon still find application—wholehearted trust and proper acknowledgement lead to proper direction in life (Prov. 3:5-6). Further, he was confident that when Timothy arrived, he would find things well with the Philippian brethren and he would be encouraged. Paul not only wrote inspired words of encouragement for us to read but he lived those words daily. Paul understood the importance of doing all things by the authority of Jesus (Col. 3:17), and he was aware that God could work all things to the good of his people if that was His will (Rom. 8:28).

Paul Rejoiced in the Faithfulness of Others. Chapter 2 is highlighted with joy from the beginning. Paul rejoiced in their unity and urged humility (vv. 2-4); he encouraged their work, gracious treatment of each other, and their steadfastness in holding forth the word of life (vv. 12-16). Without question he praised the work of Timothy and Epaphroditus, and rejoiced in their devotion to God and to the children of God (vv. 19-30). At this point let’s focus upon a verse which

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## THE EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY

Ross Haffner

this writer finds interesting. “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all” (v. 17). The metaphor goes back to the Old Testament practice of sacrificial offerings (Num. 15:3-5), or perhaps reference is made to the pagan offerings which would have been nearer to the Philippian’s background. In either case Paul rejoiced that the faithfulness of the Philippians could lead to himself being offered (poured out alongside) upon their sacrifice of faith and service. What a beautiful picture - Paul said if those events occurred it would bring him “joy on top of joy.” What great joy Paul possessed because of the faithfulness of the church at Philippi. May God help us to rejoice in the faithfulness of others as well.

Paul was Concerned about the Well-Being of Others. Paul was confident that Timothy, his “true child in the faith” (1 Tim. 1:2), would soon be able to go to Philippi. Paul needed to “know” how the church was handling the pressures faithful Christianity was bringing upon them. Since Paul was unable to go himself, he would dispatch Timothy. Timothy possessed the same concern and worry that Paul held for the church at Philippi, and Paul would have no peace of mind until he received the expected favorable report. Furthermore, Paul thought it only right to send Epaphroditus to Philippi so that his presence might ease their troubled minds, since they had heard of his serious, life threatening illness. Paul was willing to give honor where such was due (Rom. 13:7) and Epaphroditus was certainly worthy. Utilizing three marvelous descriptive terms (2:25) Paul set the worthy Epaphroditus apart from those mentioned in verse 21. His arrival would allow the brethren to rejoice and Paul would be free from some of the grief he was feeling as well.

The great apostle Paul was God’s chosen vessel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15), and no church endeared themselves to the great apostle more than the church at Philippi. They have been called Paul’s “sweetheart church,” because of the mutual love and devotion they shared. How the church needs to grasp that type of sacrificial love and concern for brethren today (1 Peter 1:22).

**CW**

Some in Indonesia have considered using crocodiles to replace prison guards. The country’s anti-drug czar Budi Waseso told local reporters that he wants to house death row drug convicts on a croc-filled island because, “You can’t bribe crocodiles.”<sup>1</sup> It seems that Mr. Waseso finds it easier to employ ferocious crocodiles than trustworthy men.

Throughout scripture Timothy is described as a trustworthy servant of God but he is specifically highlighted in the book of Philippians. Timothy was no stranger to the church at Philippi. During the second missionary journey he joined Paul and Silas at Lystra where he was “well spoken of by the brethren” and continued with them on to Philippi (Acts 16:1-12). Perhaps several were converted during the “many days” they spent there (Acts 16:18).

Years later Paul wrote a letter to those brethren from a Roman prison. It was difficult for Paul to be away from the saints at Philippi because he loved them dearly. They were in every prayer of the apostle (Phil. 1:4). He had confidence in them and they were in his heart (Phil. 1:6-7). He longed after his brethren so deeply that he struggled with conflicting desires to depart to be with Christ or to stay and help them further (Phil. 1:8; 21-25).

Paul wrote to encourage the Christians at Philippi to be humble servants after the likeness of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11). He expected them to obey this command even though he was not presently with them in the flesh (Phil. 2:12). He knew there existed dangers that could derail their faithfulness such as false teachers or a disruption of their unity (Phil. 3:2-3; 17; 4:2). One can imagine that it was nearly unbearable for Paul to not know how they fared against these obstacles. Paul decided to send Timothy to find out (Phil. 2:19-23).

The Philippians were informed that Timothy was being sent so that Paul could, “be of good comfort” when he found out about their status (Phil. 2:19-20). Timothy was a trustworthy man upon whom Paul could rely. He explained the reasons in his letter saying:

For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him,

<sup>1</sup>“Indonesia Drugs: Crocodiles ‘to Guard Death Row Prisons.’” *BBC News*. BBC, 09 Nov. 2015. Web. 31 May 2017.

that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. (Phil. 2:20–23)

Timothy Was Sent Because Paul trusted him. Timothy was “likeminded” with Paul when it came to caring about the brethren at Philippi. The relationships were likely forged when Timothy helped establish the congregation there. He knew these people and wanted, just as much as Paul, for things to go well for them. Unlike others, Paul and Timothy cared about the gospel and the church of Christ more than their own affairs as Paul had stated earlier in the letter concerning himself (Phil. 1:12-18). In our current text Paul mentioned that Timothy would be sent because he felt the same way (Phil. 2:20-21). If I am not a trustworthy and reliable fellow-laborer with the local congregation it may be because I have not developed the caring relationships with my brethren scripture enjoins (Rom. 12:10-21). I must care more about the work of the gospel and my brethren than I do my own needs or desires. This will be proven by my actions so that my fellow Christians can safely rely on me.

Timothy was sent because the brethren trusted him. Timothy had also proven himself to Paul because of their work together in the gospel (Phil. 2:22). Paul specifically reminded the Philippians that they knew Timothy was trustworthy. Timothy’s care for his brethren proved to Paul that Timothy was worthy to be sent so that he could appropriately inform Paul. But he was also sent because he knew the brethren and they knew him. Perhaps it was on Paul’s mind that the Philippians would be more likely to open up to Timothy than another helper. Another benefit would be that if they attempted to hide sin Timothy would know them well enough to potentially see through the deception. When we must stand up to brethren in sin it will help to have an existing relationship proven by love (Gal. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:15).

Timothy was sent because God trusted him. Paul trusted in the Lord to send Timothy, likely meaning Timothy would be sent if it was God’s will (Jas. 4:15). This trust had rubbed off on Timothy because he had served “as a son with the father” (Phil. 2:22). Since Paul and Timothy trusted in God, God could trust them to do His work “for it is God which worketh” in us to do His good pleasure (Phil. 2:13). Sanctified by the truth we are set apart to do His will as earthen vessels entrusted to carry a precious treasure (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 4:7).

All faithful Christians can be trusted to “do the work of an evangelist” if they will follow Timothy’s good example (2 Tim. 4:5). We must simply and honestly ask ourselves if we are proving that faithfulness.

Timothy’s trustworthiness had him ready to serve when called upon. Far too many elderships, congregations, preachers, and Christians are forced to look far and wide for trustworthy men and women to assist in the work of the church. When asked to help will you be proven trustworthy?

CW



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## THE EXAMPLE OF EPAPHRODITUS

Troy Spradlin

One of the remarkable attributes of the Bible is its abundance of colorful, memorable characters. Making it truly unique is that the various personalities are not some fictional invention of the imagination, but rather, true-to-life individuals who once treaded the face of this earth, encountering the same perils and triumphs of life as we do today. In many accounts, the Bible gives us a prodigious amount of information regarding a certain

personality (e.g. David, Moses), but at other times the biography is rather brief (e.g. Shamgar, Matthias). In any case, it is a marvelous blessing to have one's name registered within the pages of the Holy Scriptures!

One such blessed personality is Epaphroditus. We find his name mentioned in only a few short verses of Paul's epistle to the Philippians where he stated, "Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need" (Phil. 2:25). He went on to add that Epaphroditus had become sick "almost unto death" (v. 27), yet he was aware of their concern regarding his health so Paul sent him back as soon as possible so they "may rejoice" in his return (vv. 26-30). Later in the epistle, Paul mentioned Epaphroditus once again in reference to the gifts sent to him by the church in Philippi as "a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18). Considering that the details penned about the man are rather abbreviated, what little we do have conveys a wealth of useful information for Christians today!

Observe the terms Paul used to describe Epaphroditus. First, he is portrayed as a "brother." This word is found approximately 380 times throughout the New Testament in its various forms. It denotes someone who is either born of the same parents, of the same nationality, or of the same system of belief. In this particular case, Paul certainly implied the latter as any obedient disciple of Christ is considered to be not only a brother in the spiritual sense (Acts 15:22, Heb. 2:11), but also a brother to Christ Himself (Matt. 12:49; Heb. 2:17). In addition, the familial kinship of a baptized believer within the body of Christ also connotes a national citizenship within the kingdom of heaven (Phil. 3:20; Rev. 1:9). This designation is essential in recognizing that Christians are part of "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Pet. 2:9).

Epaphroditus is also described as a "fellow worker." This is a specific word formed from the two words "work" and "with." It is an appropriate description if we recall that Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs (Luke 10:1) and those who labor in the kingdom must certainly be the kind of people who work well with others (Matt. 5:9). Paul then described him as a "soldier" which is again, a single, specific compound word composed of the words "soldier" and "with." It refers to a common soldier but is also understood

"metaphorically, as someone who champions the cause of Christ" (see Thayer). In this case it is one who battles alongside other soldiers within the Lord's army. As Christians, we are indeed engaged in a spiritual warfare (Rev. 12:17) and we must protect ourselves with the "armor of God" as Paul explained in Ephesians 6:10-20, in describing Epaphroditus, Paul went on to employ the term "minister," which is another compound word composed from the words "work" and "people." Considering that Jesus taught, "whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister" (Matt. 20:26), it is enlightening that Epaphroditus is identified by this term.

Noteworthy also is Paul's use of several compound words, each associated with work, labor, or toiling, which are applicable to all faithful Christians because Jesus declared "I must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4), and by the fact that we will ultimately be judged by our works (Rev. 20:12). A disciple of the Lord should also consider Paul's statements regarding work in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 as well as James' admonition to, "be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (Jas. 1:22).

Finally, it is rather interesting that the word translated "messenger" in this passage is actually the word "apostle" in the source language. The inspired writers of the Bible used this term in two explicit formats. One is a manner of description, as in simply "a delegate, messenger, or one sent forth with orders" (e.g. Barnabas in Acts 14:14), and the other is in reference to an office, exclusively applied to the twelve apostles of Christ (Luke 6:13), which has its specific requirements (Acts 1:21,22). In this particular case, the word engaged here perfectly harmonizes with the fact that Paul mentions Epaphroditus was "sent" (2:25) and "received" (4:18). Again, openly demonstrating the obedient, servant's heart of Epaphroditus. It is a heart that all Christians should strive to possess (Phil. 2:4-5).

Paul's description of Epaphroditus' ministry certainly presents him as a model Christian worker. Upon further examination of the descriptive words he employed, what better terms could be used to describe such a faithful disciple? We must remember that God decided to mention certain people in His Holy Writ because "whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). If we are to learn from the examples given, then the good example of Epaphroditus

should unquestionably provide a strong incentive to which we all should aspire today. May we all seek to emulate Epaphroditus inasmuch that our character can be so briefly described, and every word used vividly emanates our desire to serve in our Lord's kingdom in order to glorify our God and Father in heaven!

CW

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*continued from page 1*

conveys God's love for sinful man, but also reveals a message of humility, service, sacrifice, and an attitude of deference to our brethren. If Jesus emptied Himself, came to wash the feet of sinful men, and suffered and died on their behalf (2:5-8), how much more should we - as servants to our Master - seek to care for and love the church (His people) for whom He died? Shouldn't we seek to exhibit the blessings of the gospel as revealed in Philippians 2:1, namely "comfort in Christ", "encouragement of love", "fellowship of the Spirit", and

"compassion and pity"? Indeed we should and must, but also it must be remembered that our brethren might not always share the desire for unity and fellowship.

In 2 Timothy 4, it appears as though Paul was struggling internally over those who had not listened to his admonitions about "striving together." As he neared the end of his life, Paul found himself suffering because of his brethren. He was for the most part alone and forsaken by many, and yet Paul continued to practice what he had preached. Even though others were contentious and "seeking to add afflictions to his bonds" he meant them no harm (1:15-18). When thinking of those who had forsaken him, he prayed that God would not "lay this their charge" (2 Tim. 4:16). When speaking of the enemies of the cross, Paul's reaction was tearful, not hateful (Phil. 3:18). Paul truly possessed a magnanimous spirit. A spirit devoid of rivalry and selfishness, and yet filled with humility, love, and a desire to work in one accord and with one mind among his brethren.

Today, we can likewise become discouraged and be robbed of our joy when others or we become prideful and contentious. The remedy for such discouragement and the way to happiness is revealed within the context of Philippians, but especially in chapter two. By rejecting a selfish attitude and a contentious spirit, we will find room for the God-honored traits of humility and service (2:2-3). In other words, we must busy ourselves in the work of the Lord, as did Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. Looking every man on the things of others (as opposed to focusing on self) will not only bring us closer to the heart of God as revealed in the example of Jesus (2:5-9), but it will also bring about joy in others. If we stay focused on seeking the Lord's will and not our own (2:21), and if we regard not our own life but seek rather to serve and assist others (2:25-30), then we will be on the path toward exalting Jesus and be reminded of the central theme of His work—to seek and save those who are lost (Luke 19:10).

The world is a big place and there are many enemies of the cross. We are truly in a battle over world views both in the United States and abroad. Like never before in my lifetime, Christians are being persecuted and marginalized. The Bible is viewed by many as mythological and irrelevant. So let us fight the good fight of faith rather than fighting one another. Let us strive *together* for the faith of the gospel as we seek to bring glory and praise to God.

CW



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