

Good Friends Making a Difference - Life with Christ Part 4

Philippians 2:19-30

Introduction

The Cambridge Seven made a huge difference to their world.

You have heard of “secret women’s business” – this looks like “secret men’s business”

Philippians 2:19-30 is sandwiched between the heights of “shining like stars” and the deep theological truth of “no confidence in the flesh” – it is about real everyday matters – friends and connections.

Although it’s about the relationships of three men going about Kingdom business it applies to key values for Good Friends Making a Difference.

God doesn’t build walls but bridges. God wants His people to be a community living together in a world falling apart.

Compassion – vv20-21, *I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.*

The story is all about compassion:

- Paul is concerned about the Philippians;
- the Philippians are concerned about Paul;
- Timothy is concerned – willing to be sent to the Philippians;
- Epaphroditus is concerned once he recovered from an almost fatal illness.

They put people before profit – in the long run, it’s all about relationships.

Compassion makes humans become God’s ministering angels.

Gandhi: *"The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still small voice within me."*

The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-36) did not worry about his schedule. He stopped and had compassion on the naked half dead man. The Bible said he had God's compassion – as he stopped. God gave him divine compassion to reach out.

Who is your neighbour?

A Muslim, a Hindu, a Buddhist etc...

Testimony – v22, *But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.*

It is people who have allowed the Word of God to form and to transform them – the word became flesh.

Timothy is proven. He is tested in character and integrity.

Haifa says that this person is a good teacher because he has a good testimony.

Nice personality and eloquent speech make a good first impression but success over a long haul is based on proven character, not pasted image.

We need friends who are consistent – *the same under all weather conditions.*

Cooperation – v25a, *But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier.*

Paul called Epaphroditus my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier. Here we see cooperation in three areas

- Family – my brother. *Same Heavenly Father*
- Fellowship – co-worker. *Same Assignment*
- Fight – fellow soldier. *Same Enemy*

In the West – treasure our “private life” yet longing for “community”.

In the East – the emphasis is on “community” yet longing for “independence.”

In both cases – there is a competitive spirit.

Paul is a superstar, yet he realised that more can be accomplished working with other people.

Know your strengths and weaknesses.

Judges 20:11, *“so all the men of Israel got together and united as one man against the city...”*

Jesus says, “I will build my church...”

Cooperation is based on humility – know yourself.

Persistence – vv25-27, *who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow....*

Paul was in prison in Rome – pretty primitive. The church in Philippi took up an offering for Paul – 800 miles, a six week journey over rough terrain.

Epaphroditus *“almost died”* – word used for Dorcas and Lazarus who died and God raised them up.

God intervened and healed him.

It is finishing what he said. James – *faith with action*

Professor E M Blaidlock, *“Faith grows in an environment of doubt”*

Courage – vv29-30, *So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

Risked – in Greek – a gambling term – staking everything you have. Epaphroditus was so confident on God coming through he was prepared to risk his life.

Today we do everything to be secure, independent and comfortable!

David Pawson calls it *“bibles, boats and batches.”*

Romans 12:1-2, *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- *“living sacrifice”* moves
- so offer it daily
- move from idealism of youth to realism of age

Who are my good friends that together we can make a difference in this world?