

Wil Owens

Flesh and Blood Examples of Godliness; Phil 2:19-30

GPBC

3.5.23

Introduction – Paul has been emphasizing the need for unity in the church. If you want the gospel to really take off, be of the same mind. Unity across the whole congregation will require humility of each individual member. Paul says, “in humility count others as more significant than yourselves.” All of us then have work to do. We all have to work out on our own salvation, which at least includes cutting grumbling and arguing out of our spiritual diet and replacing it with holding fast to the word of life. If we all work at it, we can grow exponentially in our humility. And if we grow in our humility, we can have unity, even in the most divisive of situations. Now remember we learn in ch4 that the church in Philippi is in the middle of a very divisive situation.

All of that sounds good Paul. And we would all agree what Paul has prescribed for us is what we need. Sometimes theological truth becomes theological theory unless we see how it works out in real life. So first Paul sets before the greatest example of humility – Christ. If we need more humility, and we all do, Paul says, have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. Keep your eyes on Christ and follow His example on the path of humility. And by the way – it’s yours in Christ Jesus. He lives in you. He will be not only your guide but also your strength and grace. No greater example and no greater truth.

However, even though we have Jesus and He is all we really need, it really does help to see other believers living this way, real life flesh and blood examples of godliness around us to help motivate and inspire and encourage our walk of faith. My hero calls this Jesus with skin on. Sometimes we need to see it in real life, in real people. Paul knew this, and so he tells the church in Philippi, I’m going to send you Timothy. I’m going to send you Epaphroditus, so you can see that what I am describing as working out your own salvation is not impossible!

I was so fortunate in my young days as a believer to have several men in my life that were Jesus with skin on for me. One was my SS teacher. His name is Glen Stoddard. He taught the HS SS. You didn’t have to be around him long to know this man loved Jesus and walked with God. He is a man of prayer and the Word.

He lived by faith and trusted in God. I don't remember a single lesson he taught, but I will never forget how he lived – Jesus with skin on.

I. Be a Timothy

- a. Notice that Paul admits this kind of believer is all too rare. They are few and far between. There should be more like him. Vv19-20a – for I have no one like him. Timothy stood out as a shining example of what a believer looks like in flesh and blood. Timothy was all in with Jesus. He was all about the gospel. Paul says if you want to see what I've been talking about – look at Timothy. Why?
- b. First, Timothy oozes with humility. Vv20b-21. Notice that's exactly what Paul says we need – cf vv3-4. That's Timothy. He's Jesus with skin on for you. You can live this way – Timothy is a prime example. He was always putting others ahead of himself. Humility. Working out his own salvation.
- c. Second, Timothy loved the gospel and the cause of the gospel. V22. When Christ saved Timothy, forgave his sins, made him a new creation, and adopted him into His eternal kingdom – he never got over it. He never moved past it, and he spent his life to spread it to others. Observe with me some key distinctives of Timothy's gospel-centered life.
 - i. He was disciplined by Paul. Paul became a spiritual father to Timothy. He learned from Paul. A humble spirit helped Timothy realize he needed to be instructed in the faith. Some things he learned by being taught by Paul and some things he caught from Paul. And by the time Paul writes I and II Timothy, Timothy, the spiritual son of Paul is now the spiritual father to the church at Ephesus. He was disciplined.
 1. We will always need to be disciplined because we will always need to be growing, and at some point when our faith is grounded and established, we need to disciple others. Invest in others.
 - ii. He was consistent. He wasn't perfect, but he was growing in the faith and therefore his witness grew among the saints. Paul writes – you know his proven worth. He had a track record. He wasn't a quitter. He wasn't living for the Lord and few months

and then disappeared for a few months. He was consistent in his faith.

1. We need consistency in our walk with the Lord. Listen, a physical work out plan won't work if you're not consistent. One month on and two months off. It won't work if you don't work it. And neither will our salvation work out plan. We won't grow if we just spend a few days with Jesus here and there, worship with believers every now and then, resist temptation every once and a while. If we only pray when things go wrong. It won't work. We'll always be defeated. We'll always be stuck in a spiritual rut. We won't know the joy of abundant life in Christ if half of the time we leave Christ behind and go our own way. Proven worth = consistent witness.
 - iii. He served gospel causes. When Paul would say I need a volunteer to – Timothy would shoot up his hand before he knew what Paul was going to say – I'll do it. I'll go. He loved gospel causes.
 - d. Don't you love Timothy. He was young when he came to Christ – and he was so in love with Jesus and so sold out to Jesus that when other believers needed an example to follow, Paul said, I'm going to send you Timothy as soon as I can. Be a Timothy. Students – be a Timothy. Men – be a Timothy. Church – let's be a Timothy.
- II. Be an Epaphroditus
- a. What were his credentials? What qualified Epaphroditus to be a flesh and blood example, a Jesus with skin on, for the Philippians?
 - b. My brother – not biological, spiritual. He was united with Paul in Christ and the bond of fellowship and love between them had grown so tight, the first word that comes to Paul's mind when describing him is brother. Timothy was a son in the faith. Epaphroditus was a brother. You teach a son, you walk through life with a brother.
 - i. We need those bonds in the church – brotherhood and sisterhood – walking together through life with Jesus. Eccl 4:12 says a threefold cord is not easily broken.
 - c. Fellow worker and soldier – when there was work to be done or a stand to take and Epaphroditus was around, Paul was never alone.

Some burdens are too heavy to lift, some tasks are too large to manage on your own. We need fellow workers to help lift the load.

- i. Ex 17:8-13
- d. Your messenger and my minister – he was constantly serving others. He served them by being Paul’s courier. When Paul sent a letter to Philippi, Epaphroditus was the mail man. He made sure they received the word they needed no matter what it cost him, and he did every thing he could to meet Paul’s need.
- e. What made him that kind of man, that kind of believer? 2 things.
 - i. He selflessly loved others – vv26-27. He longed for them to be encouraged. That’s the same as Timothy – cf vv3-4.
 - ii. He selflessly sacrificed and suffered for the cause of Christ. Vv28-30. Epaphroditus came to Philippi with news of Paul’s imprisonment, the Philippians sent Paul a love offering to meet his needs through Epaphroditus, and somewhere along the way, it almost cost him his life to get that money to Paul. But he wasn’t concerned about his life, he was concerned about Paul, he was concerned about the advance of the gospel, he was concerned about the work of Christ. That sounds like Jesus doesn’t it? V8. When people are Jesus with skin on – eventually our eyes move off of them and on to Jesus! It wasn’t Timothy I needed. It was Jesus. But Timothy helped me see Jesus.
- f. Be an Epaphroditus.

Conclusion – we need people around us who are Jesus with skin on. People we can see, real flesh and blood examples of godliness. People who in the faith have been there and done that – whatever we are going through. They walked through that valley and made it to the mountain. They were trapped in that sin and have been delivered. They struggled in that fog and are now in the light. They exemplify the fruit of the Spirit. We need to see it. And we need to be Jesus with skin on for those around us. Parents, are we Jesus with skin on? Or is our faith nothing more than a Sunday schedule? Students, are you Jesus with skin on? Can it be said of you, if you want to know what it looks like to love Jesus, look at him? Look at her? Church – are we flesh and blood examples of godliness or are we examples of selfish ambition, grumbling, and disputing? Be a Timothy. Be an Epaphroditus. Be Jesus with skin on!