

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GOSPEL

(Part Five)

TEXT: Philippians 2:17-30

INTRODUCTION: The theme and key word in Paul's letter to the Philippians is **joy**.

Even though he was a prisoner under house arrest, Paul was filled with joy and thanksgiving every time he thought about the Philippians (1:3). This joy was based upon their "*fellowship in the gospel*" (1:5). In chapter one Paul acknowledges their partnership in **suffering** and **sacrifice**.

In chapter two, Paul moved on to the virtue of **servanthood**, citing Christ Himself as the supreme example. He mentions two other notable examples – Timothy (vv. 19-24) and Epaphroditus (vv. 25-30). Timothy and Paul were kindred spirits, serving Christ together "*as a son with a father*" for the sake of the gospel. How dearly Paul loved his son in the faith! Yet he was willing to part with him to let him report back to the Philippians.

Epaphroditus was a layman from Philippi virtually unknown to us. He was willing to stay with Paul in Rome and minister to him in the stead of the Philippians. He is one of those "unsung heroes" who will shine brightly in Heaven because of his sacrificial service and selfless servanthood.

OUTLINE: What can we learn from this humble layman that will enable us to be more greatly used to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ?

I. In Christ – Humility and Unselfishness

(vv. 5-11)

A. Christ's humility in His **incarnation** ("*was made in the likeness of men*")

B. Christ's humiliation in His **life** ("*and being found in fashion as a man...*")

C. Christ's obedience unto **death** (v. 8b)

II. In Timothy – Dedicated Servanthood

(vv. 19-24)

A. A **kindred spirit** with Paul ("*For I have no man likeminded...*")

B. **Dutiful service** with Paul (v. 22)

III. In Epaphroditus – Sacrificial Service

(vv. 25-30)

A. A true **brother**

B. A **fellow-laborer**

1. From a working church

2. Toiling with Paul to the point of sickness (v. 27)

C. A fellow-soldier

1. The intensity of spiritual warfare
2. The indispensability of fellow-soldiers

D. The Philippians' messenger and minister

CONCLUSION: It is the voice of Satan speaking through others when they tell us, "Spare thyself" (Matt. 16:22, 23). The "*fellowship of the gospel*" will cost us something. It may well cost us everything! We must surrender all our **rights** to the One Who died for our **wrongs**. We are slaves of Christ, and we are not above our Master. Will we risk all for Christ's sake and the Gospel's? Or will we "play it safe" and lose our lives (Mk. 8:35)?