

Models Of Servanthood

Introduction. In Philippians 2, the apostle Paul presents us with several models which we can in turn use to imitate in our lives. A model is something worthy of imitation. We learn of the ideal from the model. Paul exhorts the Philippians to be unified and humble in vss. 1-4 and from that point gives us five different models of servanthood.

Paul began by rhetorically asking if their experiences in Christ appeal to them with any force, if love exerts any persuasive power upon them, if their fellowship in the Spirit is a living reality, if they have any affectionate yearnings of heart, any tender feelings of compassion, they will listen and obey. He then encouraged them to be united in one mind, one love, one spirit, and intent on one purpose. He then solemnly charged them to put away selfishness and pride so that they may serve one another.

The future of this congregation and all others depends upon how well we will be able to fulfill this wish of the apostle. Any congregation who is willing to follow the formula of Paul in Philippians 2:2-4 can be the kind of congregation God wants. As the new year approaches, I believe we can gain greatly from the different models in Philippians 2 to make this congregation and the people who comprise it what they should be.

I. ***The Model Of Personal Humility -- Jesus (2:5-11)***

- A. The Lord demonstrated interest in others over interest in Himself. He certified that humility is a primary trait of children of God.
- B. Although Christ was deity and was equal with God, He did not hold on to that equality, but emptied Himself temporarily of that glory (John 17:4-5). But He did not empty Himself of deity (John 14:9). He humbled Himself to the point of obedience (Hebrews 5:8-9). Only a divine being can accept death as obedience; for men it is a necessity.
- C. The Lord took on the form of a bond-servant and was made in the likeness of men. He emptied Himself of the display of His deity for personal gain. The word is a graphic expression of the completeness of His self-renunciation and His refusal to use what He had for His advantage. He sought to do the will of His Father, even death on a cross.
- D. Just as the Lord's sacrifice was rewarded with an exalted state, so will ours (Luke 14:11; 1 Peter 5:6). If we sacrifice what we have for the kingdom of God, Jesus assures us that we will receive many times what we have given up (Matthew 19:29; Romans 2:9-10). Are we ready to forfeit something which we hold so dear (our lives) for service in the kingdom of God (Matthew 16:24; Galatians 2:20)?

II. ***The Model Of Personal Integrity -- The Philippians (2:12-16)***

- A. The Philippians demonstrated interest in the salvation of others. Paul challenged them to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. The words mean that they were to work toward the finish with a serious anxiety to do what was right.
- B. Paul also assured the Philippians that God was at work in them. That is, as we "work out" our own salvation, God "works in" us. The word "work" there means to energize. We do not have to depend on our own strength, but God will help us to do right.
- C. Paul commanded them to do their work without grumbling (dissatisfaction) or disputing (skepticism or criticism). They were to work without moral rebellion (grumbling) and without intellectual rebellion (disputing). There are many in the church who love to grumble and dispute, but peace is how the Lord's body grows.
- D. All these exhortations would produce Christians who were blameless and innocent. Blameless means "free from fault," while innocent means "sincere." So in becoming examples to the world around them, they must be free from fault to the outside world and sincere inwardly.
- E. Their function was to be above reproach in the middle of a crooked, warped, perverted, and corrupt world. This is a world that is in a state of abnormal moral condition. They were lights in a dark world who shined forth the word of life (Matthew 5:16). Being an effective servant means living a pure life and standing for truth (2 Timothy 1:10).

III. ***The Model Of Personal Involvement -- Paul (2:17-18)***

- A. Paul demonstrated interest in the service of others. Paul here uses the imagery of the Jewish offerings and compares his death to a drink offering which accompanied the Philippians' presentation of their faith as an offering.
- B. Paul was comparing all his own great toils and sacrifices to the drink offering (the smallest part) and the Philippians' labors to the main sacrifice. Paul was perfectly willing to make his life a sacrifice for God; and, if that happened, to him it would be joy and he wants the Philippians to rejoice together with him.
- C. Paul reiterates his involvement with the Philippians later when he spoke of the sharing which occurred between he and the brethren (4:14-19). Paul's acceptance of monetary funds was for the profit of the Philippians, not because of his needs.
- D. Do we have brethren that are this encouraging to work with? Do we have brethren who seek to be involved for the building up of the body of Christ at this location? Paul had his eyes set on finishing his work, but he was not saddened by this, but rather he encouraged the

Philippians to rejoice that his life had been spent as it had. Paul had a personal involvement with others, and he honored their service to God as worthwhile.

IV. ***The Model Of Personal Concern -- Timothy (2:19-24)***

- A. Timothy demonstrated interest in the welfare of others. Paul here expresses hope and confidence in being able to send Timothy. Timothy had been with Paul extensively during his travels and was a valuable servant for the apostle (Acts 16:1-5; 1 Corinthians 4:15-17; 2 Timothy 1:1-6). Nevertheless, Paul was willing to part with Timothy for the greater good he could do for the Philippians.
- B. Paul knew of no one else who would be likeminded as Timothy. He was genuinely concerned for the welfare of the Philippians. He was of proven worth or was tested for this work. He had been with Paul in Philippi when that church was founded. He was also in Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. His dedication was extraordinary as Paul describes him as working for the furtherance of the gospel like a child serves his father. He was in complete contrast to Demas (2 Timothy 4:10).
- C. Here we have the development of a genuine congregation. Here we have a call to be sensitive to the needs of others. Timothy was one who was well suited for this work. Paul's solemn charge to Timothy demonstrates the seriousness of his ministry (2 Timothy 4:1-5). There are many servants out there who prefer their own pleasure and reputation before the things of Christ.
- D. Do we have brethren who are willing to show the kind of personal concern which Timothy had for the Philippians? Timothy had the interests of Christ at heart, not his own. How many of us can go into this next year stating, "I will concern myself with the things of Christ," even if it means concern for others?

V. ***The Model Of Personal Risk -- Epaphroditus (2:25-30)***

- A. Epaphroditus demonstrated interest in the kingdom of God. He had carried this letter for Paul. He longed or yearned for the Philippians and was distracted or restless because they had learned of his sickness.
- B. Epaphroditus was indeed sick to the point of death, but God's mercy was upon him. Paul expressed to the Philippians the need to send him so that they would not be worried. He then encouraged them to receive him with all joy and consider him as someone who is prized, precious, or honorable.
- C. The work of Christ came first in the life of Epaphroditus. This was a man who epitomized Matthew 6:33. "Not regarding" in vs. 30 literally

means that he “gambled” with his life. When Epaphroditus risked his life, he exposed himself to the danger of death in order to fill a gap in what was lacking in their service.

- D. Epaphroditus was a brave man. He laid his life on the line to further the cause of Christ. We need that type of dedication. We need more than just the barest of faiths. We need brethren with enough faith in God to risk whatever it takes to secure the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Satan. We need brethren who are bold and courageous. Those who truly love Christ will think it very worth their while to hazard their health to provide service to the church.

Conclusion. Can we be true models of these individual’s service? Can we be models of humility, integrity, service, concern, and risk? Someone once wrote, “The only way up is down.” I sincerely pray that this coming year will bode well for the kingdom of God. If we have dedicated Christians who seek to genuinely serve God and obey Christ, churches will grow and be lights in a dark world.