

The Servant's Heart

(Part One; Compiled by Paul Blake)

Introduction:

- A. Burnt bird with live chicks under wing
 - 1. Why do stories of selfless heroism appeal to us?
 - 2. *Confronting Casual Christianity*: "The severest sin of Christians is a numbing lack of concern, an anesthetized attitude of 'I'm in the fold. Why should I concern myself?' It is not enough to call Jesus 'Lord.' He is King of kings and Lord of lords whether or not we are committed and obedient to Him. He will never be satisfied with us calling Him by divine titles until we can testify from the heart, 'Jesus Christ is my Lord and Master.'" (C. Stanley)
- B. We are not called to be served but to serve.
 - 1. Rom. 12:1; Luke 17:10
 - 2. It doesn't count until we go above and beyond the call of duty, until we act from entirely unselfish devotion.
- C. What characterizes the servant's heart?
 - 1. Absolute loyalty - Gen. 24:9-10
 - 2. Unwavering love - 2Sam. 12:18
 - 3. Undaunted courage - 2Sam. 23:13-17
 - 4. Service before all other concerns - 2Kings 5:13
- D. Our Savior came as a servant, not as a celebrity.
 - 1. John 12:32 - He is remembered, not because he had the power to come down from the cross, but because He had the will to stay there.
 - 2. Mark 10:45; John 13:3-5, 12-17
- E. The theme of the book of Philippians is The Servant's Heart.
 - 1. Paul - (2:17) "I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith."
 - 2. Epaphroditus - (2:30) "For the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life."
 - 3. Timothy - (2:20) "No one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state."
 - 4. Jesus Christ - (2:7) "Taking the form of a bondservant."
 - 5. Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, un-named others, & Philippians themselves
 - 6. You and Me - (2:3) "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

I. EPAPHRODITUS: FOR THE WORK OF CHRIST HE CAME CLOSE TO DEATH

- A. I like Epaphroditus; I can't help it. He's one of those seldom noticed, infrequently mentioned, self-effacing heroes who, working together single-mindedly with others like himself, spread the Gospel throughout the whole world in 31 years. This devout man who took no thought for himself and focused only on serving others becomes our model of quiet toil for Christ.
 - 1. **Worker** - 2:25

- a. There are few accolades for the worker. Managers and foremen get production bonuses and honors at the company dinner, while the laborers stand day after day sweating in the assembly line, unknown and unsung. However, it's the united efforts of these persistent, loyal workers that comprise the foundation of the business. In the kingdom, the apostles' names are usually remembered by everyone, but how much more difficult would their task have been without the quiet, unselfish services of thousands of un-noticed people like Epaphroditus.
2. **Warrior** The soldier's life is not an easy one. He gives up a peaceful home life in a quiet neighborhood in exchange for unpleasant quarters near the battle front. He trades good food and leisure time for uncertain fare and guard duty. He puts himself in harm's way enduring hardship because a soldier fights on behalf of another. He dies so that others might live. Epaphroditus risked his life to wait on Paul, leaving the comfort of his home in Philippi to hazard his life and health seeing to Paul's needs in prison.
3. **Messenger** A messenger typifies the true servant of the Savior. He is not the author of the message; another gets the credit for the information it contains. He is not the recipient of the message; someone else benefits from the contents of the missive. The messenger just carries it from one to the other braving the trials along the path, fearing the displeasure of the sender should he fail, and risking the anger of the receiver who may despise the message.
 - a. Epaphroditus cared so much for those who would receive Paul's message that it troubled him to hear they were worried for his health. In his estimation, his own physical state was too unimportant to worry the people he served. "For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick" (Phil 2:26).
4. **Minister** As Epaphroditus ministered to Paul's needs on behalf of the Philippians, he did so at his own expense (indicated by the connotation of "ministered" in the original).
 - a. This service became quite expensive in terms of his health.
 - b. "Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me"(2:30)
 - c. Epaphroditus understood that ministering to others required sacrifice; it meant that the minister must place greater value on the needs of his charge than on his own interests.
 - d. Whether we minister by waiting at another's bedside or exhorting from a pulpit, we can profit by thinking more on what we can do and less on what we are due.
 - e. Make Epaphroditus your hero. "Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such men in reputation" (Phil. 2:29).

Conclusion: "Be the reason someone believes in the goodness of people." (G. Kent)