

Examples of Following Christ (Part 1) – Philippians 2:17-24

Introduction and Outline

- Scripture reading: Philippians 2:1-30
- An example of example: Driving. It cannot be learned merely by words. You've got to observe an example (an experienced driver) and imitate his/her practice. The same goes with sanctification. Christians need to have examples of following Christ. Philippians 2 has three examples, let's look at the first two today.
- Outlines:
 - Topic: Examples of Following Christ (Part 1)
 - 1. Paul's Example
 - 1a. His Life Is a Drink Offering
 - 1b. Double Joy: Main Offering Being Accepted Together with the Drink Offering
 - 2. Timothy's Example
 - 2a. Single-minded Devotion
 - 2b. Proof of Effective Service

Paul's Example (vv 17-18)

His Life Is a Drink Offering

- “being poured out as a drink offering”: Drink offering is one of the offerings that the Israelites are required to offer to God by the Law (Exodus 29:38-42). It is the only liquid offering (wine); its role is to accompany the lamb offering which is the main offering, so the drink offering is an auxiliary offering; the main offering and the drink offering are burnt together to produce a soothing aroma. The rising of the aroma symbolizes that it is pleasing to God.

Paul is comparing himself to the drink offering because:

1. Drink offering is an auxiliary that accompanies the main offering. Without the main offering, the drink offering is useless – Your faith is the main offering!
 2. Drink offering is a liquid that is poured out gradually, symbolizing that Paul's life is being poured out day by day as he serves the church with all his life.
- “upon the sacrifice and service of your faith”: *You* are the ones who offer the sacrifice and service to God through *your* faith. I'm not the offerer. I am just a sacrifice for *your* offering so *you* may be accepted by God. The New Testament often uses offering to symbolize acts of worship. (ref. 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrew 13:15-16; Roman 12:2)

Paul regards the Philippian believers more important than himself. Their offering to God is more important than his own offering to God. Paul is living out his encouragement in 2:3 “regard one another as more important than yourselves;” Do you regard the spiritual benefits

of your brothers and sisters being more important than ourselves? Do you truly desire for your brothers and sisters to have the offering of faith to God, or do you merely think about what you can offer to the Lord?

Double Joy: Main Offering Being Accepted Together with the Drink Offering

- “I rejoice ... share my joy with you ... rejoice in the same way ... share your joy with me”: can be summarized as a double joy, that is, the joy of the main offering and the drink offering being accepted together by God.

Paul’s joy is the joy of the drink offering being accepted, that is, the consumption of his life to accomplish the spiritual benefit of brothers and sisters. This joy is the joy of self-sacrificial service to others. Many Christians do not know Paul’s joy, because they don’t know Paul’s sacrifice. Paul is following Jesus sacrificing himself for others, so that he would know Christ more. This is his joy.

“share your joy with me” is the joy that Paul shares with the Philippians, that is, the joy of the main offering being accepted. I love you so much that, when I know your faith is accepted by God and you’re full of joy, I rejoice with you.

“Rejoice in the same way”: Follow my example of joy. Regard your life as a drink offering. Serve self-sacrificially. Complete the faith of your brothers and sisters. This is the sacrifice pleasing to God, so rejoice. Joy is the motivation for serving. If you lack joy, service becomes legalistic obedience. God does not want your legalistic obedience. He wants joyful worship.

Timothy’s Example (vv 19-24)

Single-minded Devotion

- “I have no one *else* ... who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare”: Obviously, Paul had already asked for other coworkers, but they didn’t want to go to Philippi? No one is as cornered for the Philippian church as Paul that they’d be willing to make the sacrifice to do this kind of ministry.

“be concerned” means to think over and over again. It’s often used in a negative way, rendered as “worry” or “be anxious”. It is the same word as in 4:6 “be anxious of nothing.” What makes the difference here is in verse 21- are you concerned about your “own interest”, or “those of Christ Jesus”?

If you are concerned about your own thing, you should let your request be made known to God by prayer. Jesus commands us to not worry about tomorrow, about what to eat or what to wear. Cast all you anxiety onto the Lord, for only then will your heart have the room to be concerned about the things of Christ.

- For they all seek after their own interest” : Not that they don’t have the saving faith, but they lack the desire to serve. When service means self-sacrifice, they’ll turn away to pursue their own interest. Taking a long, hard trip to visit a church is not what they want to do.

Philippians 2:4 “**Do** not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

- your own interests...those of Christ Jesus “: the interests of Christ Jesus are the interests of the church. These are the things we should pursue passionately.

Proof of Effective Service

- “his proven worth”: Timothy’s character has been proven to be reliable. This word is often associated with trials. (Romans 5:4). When trials come, Christians persevere by the Holy Spirit, believe and submit to God, and do not yield to evil thoughts and deeds, and their sanctified character is proven. This is also a requirement for Church leaders (1 Timothy 3:10).
- “served with me“: Literally, slaved with me. 1:1 says they are slaves of Christ Jesus. Slaves belong to the master completely; their whole life is for the master. Slaves do not have their own property, their own career, their own ambition, their own schedule; their only job is to obey their master to fulfill the master’s career.
- “child *serv*ing his father: In Jewish culture, family business is very common. A family often works in the same trade. The father would train his son to follow his career. In this kind of relationship, the father leads the family business with his experience and wisdom, and the son honors and trusts the father and submits to all that the father asks of him.

This is exactly how Timothy relates to Paul in ministry. He honors and trusts Paul and submits to Paul’s command, so much so that Paul can say that “I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me”. Timothy has no personal schedule; he fully obeys Paul and is always ready to devote himself to the need of the ministry.

One pastor said, many problems in the church are due to the fact that co-workers all want to be Paul and no one wants to be Timothy. Everyone has their own opinion and their own idea. Timothy serves as a submissive son. This is the proof of his trust and obedience in ministry.

- “furtherance of the gospel”. This is the family business of Paul and Timothy, which is also the church’s family business. This is a Gospel-centered letter: 1:5, 18, 27. Furtherance of the gospel is the church’s family business. Is it your business? Do you have the proof of service that you labor the gospel with brothers and sisters in your church?