

Victoria Fellowship Church
International & Interdenominational
Bible Study Worksheet – March 30, 2025

Theme: The Impact of Unsung Heroes in the Bible Topic: Epaphroditus: A faithful messenger
Main Text: P h i l i p p i a n s 2 : 2 5 - 2 0 , 4 : 1 6 - 2 0

Key verse: "...because for the work of Christ, he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking toward me". Phil 2:30 (NKJV)

INTRODUCTION: Philippians chapter 2 begins with a plea from the Apostle Paul for unity through humility and selflessness. One of the most famous passages in the Bible then follows, in which the Apostle presents Christ as the supreme example of humility and sacrificial love and exhorts us to let the same mind be in us as was in Jesus (Phil 2:5-8). As if sensing the objections that might come forth that the standard of God the Son was not a fair measure, Paul gives us three humans who followed Christ's example as more "accessible" role models – himself, Timothy, his protégé, and an ordinary member of the Philippian church who is only mentioned in this epistle – Epaphroditus. Paul describes him as "my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need...". This is high praise indeed coming from the Apostle to the Gentiles.

1. **Read Phil 2:3-8, 14-24(a) How do the characters of Paul and Timothy reflect the "mind which was also in Christ Jesus (v5)? (b) In what ways does our church reflect or fall short of that standard (see v21)? (c) From Phil 2:25-20, why do you think Paul commends Epaphroditus so warmly?**

Timothy and Epaphroditus both exemplify what it means to partner in the work of the gospel. Their lives reflect key qualities that every believer should aspire to: selflessness, a Christ-centered focus, proven character, and sacrificial service. We do not know much about Epaphroditus beyond the fact that he was sent by the Philippian church to take their gift to Paul, provide him with support, and, eventually, bring back word. We can deduce that he was a trusted messenger, and it is possible that he was an elder in the church, but there is no indication that he had any particular office or leadership position. Yet this "messenger" performed his task so faithfully, diligently, and at risk to his own life that he endeared himself to the great Apostle to such an extent that he was commended as "my brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier..." and someone to be "received in the Lord with all gladness..." and held in esteem (honor)". God uses people of different giftings, talents and abilities in many different ways. Service rendered faithfully and diligently as unto God for the cause of Christ is valuable, valued, and worthy of honor whether it is announced from the stage or hardly noticed by anyone.

2. **(a)The world honors those who are intelligent, beautiful, rich, and powerful. Whom should the church honor? Rom 16:1-2, 1 Cor 16:17-18, 1Thes 5:12, 1Ti 5:17 (b) Read Phil 2:25-28 Why did Paul send Epaphroditus back to Philippi? What does account this tell us about Paul and Epaphroditus?**

Philippians 2 starts with the magnificent mystery of God the Son laying aside his majesty to become not just a man but a servant (slave) and suffer the most shameful death of a criminal on a cross as a supreme example of humility followed by his exaltation to the name above every other name. We are then shown how Christ's example is followed by an Apostle, his protégé who became a bishop (Timothy) and an "ordinary" church member, Epaphroditus) who became an unsung hero through being a faithful messenger. The message seems to be that there is no excuse for not letting "this mind be in you (us) which was also in Christ Jesus."

3. **(a) Consider the character traits of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus – discuss how they compare with traits seen in "unsung heroes" such as Priscilla and Aquila, Epaphras (Colossians), Barnabas, Apollos, Nicodemus, Joseph (of Arimathea), Obadiah, Hushai, Rahab, Jonathan, Rahab and Jochebed. (b) Are you challenged in any way by what we have studied today? If so, what do you intend to do about it?**

Prayer: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the example of Epaphroditus, Timothy, Paul and of the unsung heroes that we have been learning about. Thank you most of all for the example of our Lord Jesus, who made Himself of no reputation in order to fulfill your will for mankind. Help me to be of the same mind and to do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit that I may fulfill His joy. In the Name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.