

## **Second Team Heroes**

*Philippians: I Will Choose Joy #4*

*Philippians 2:19-30*

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins. And love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. For a friend loves at all times; a brother is born for adversity.”

We are conditioned from the cradle to be noticed and applauded in life. How many times have you seen grown adults lose any semblance of normalcy when in the presence of toddler? They are making goofy faces, teaching the child to wave, or inventing slogans that defy English Grammar like: “a bugga bugga boo.” We’re taught in college, just before we exit for the “real world,” to craft a resume that makes us stand out and sets us apart from everybody else. When we go to a funeral, we hear about the noble virtues, professional and personal accolades, and spiritual devotion of loved ones who have gone on to be with Jesus. And every single one of these common ways of being noticed are appropriate and have their place in life.

But I want to suggest to you this morning that no endeavor in life, regardless of the context, can succeed without unsung heroes. You know them well. They are those rare individuals who have achieved great things and/or committed acts of bravery without being celebrated or recognized. They are on the second team and proud of it. Because they know that for every General Jimmy Doolittle, there had to be a Gunner the Dog, who could sense Japanese airplanes before they arrived. For every Joe Montana, there was a Steve Bono holding the clipboard behind him pushing him to be great. For every Abraham Lincoln, there was a Mary Todd Lincoln; who was the neck that turned her husband’s head. For every Peter, there had to be a John Mark to write his story about Jesus down on paper. And for every Paul, there had to be a Timothy and a Epaphroditus.

I want you to take your Bible’s this morning and turn to Philippians 2:19-30. It’s home to not one quotable Bible verse in a book filled with quotable Bible verses. As a matter of fact, it is the travel itinerary of Timothy and Epaphroditus. But, oh, what lessons it teaches us about joy from the sideline of the unsung heroes of the second team:

*<sup>19</sup> I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. <sup>20</sup> I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. <sup>21</sup> For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. <sup>22</sup> But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. <sup>23</sup> I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. <sup>24</sup> And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. <sup>25</sup> But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. <sup>26</sup> For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. <sup>27</sup> Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. <sup>29</sup> So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him,<sup>30</sup> because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.*

#### 4 Lessons about Joy from the Unsung Heroes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Team:

### **1. There Is Joy in Friendships (20)**

- **One Man Band In Saint Augustine**
- Text: “I have no one else like him”
- Paul had many genuine friendships – (1) In Romans 16, Paul’s list of friends crossed racial and socio-economic boundaries. (2) Some you’ve heard of: Aquilla and Priscilla; (3) Others you can’t pronounce: Andronicus, Ampliatus, Urbanus, and Apelles.
- Hesitant to entrust 50 weight friends with 200 weight tasks and information – (1) Since Paul was in prison, the Philippians needed someone to shepherd them. They didn’t need someone with a better idea than Paul or someone with a better skillset. So he didn’t send someone from the Romans 16 list, he sent Timothy. (2) Paul needed someone with courage to smuggle a letter out of prison and take it to the Philippians. So he chose Epaphroditus.
- Made his decisions on basis of consistency, candor and compassion: (1) Consistency – a friend loves at all times and is born for adversity (Prov. 17:7); (2) Candor – faithful are the wounds of a friend, but profuse are the kisses of an

enemy (Prov 27:6); (3) Compassion – whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends (Prov 17:9)

## 2. There is Joy in Being Rare (21)

### • Men Going Into an Antique Store

- Text: “For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.”
- Implication: (1) The most common thing in the world/church is looking out for our own interests; (2) The rarest thing in the world/church is looking out for the interests of Jesus Christ
- Common way to pursue Joy – (1) A road that many take and never find; (2) It’s the road taken by those who Paul said preached Christ from false motives [Phil 1:8]; (3) It’s a road we go down when we try to spell Joy different than the way Jesus wants us to spell it. (4) The “y” is always first, and the “j” and “o” vary.
- Rare way to pursue Joy – (1) A road that few take; (2) But the road where you really find joy; (3) It’s a road that spells Joy the right way: Jesus Others Yourself in that order.
- In Paul’s view, the two individuals that exemplified what it means to not preach Christ out of false motives, or what not having selfish ambition and empty conceit, or illustrated the example of Jesus he just wrote about were two unsung heroes, the second string and proud of it: Timothy and Epaphroditus.

## 3. There Is Joy in the Mundane (19; 23; 25; 28)

- **Who is faster than a speeding bullet? More powerful than a locomotive? Who can leap tall buildings in a single bound? (1)** Superman didn’t seek to be Superman. He sought to be Clark Kent; (2) He didn’t seek to save the world from Solomon Grundy. He sought to be Clark Kent; (3) And sometimes in life I despair the world will never see another man like him; (4) What made him super was the especially important fact that he didn’t seek to be super.
- Philippians home to some of the most quotable of quotes: (1) He who began a good work in you...(1:6); (2) For me to live is Christ...(1:21); (3) Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (2:12); Rejoice in the Lord always (4:4); (4) Be anxious for nothing...(4:6)
- But this passage isn’t one of them: (1) Not one quotable verse in these 11 verses; (2) Instead we get the travel itineraries of one person we’re vaguely familiar with

and another we've never heard of. (3) <sup>19</sup>*I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon;* <sup>23</sup>*I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me;* <sup>25</sup>*But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus;* <sup>28</sup>*Therefore I am all the more eager to send him.*

- But, oh, the power of the mundane: (1) Mundane events is where God performs some of his best work; (2) Without Timothy's travel schedule, no 1 and 2 Timothy; (3) Without Epaphroditus, no Book of Philippians to read; (3) Without shepherds, no go tell it on the mountain; (4) without women at the empty tomb, no he lives, Christ Jesus lives today; (5) Without Nazareth, no Jesus of Nazareth; (6) Without Bethlehem, no away in a manger.
- App: Heroes of the Bible were heroes because they didn't seek to be heroes. They sought to be good fathers, mothers, servants, workers, etc. And that's specifically when God wove a narrative of greater things in their lives.

#### **4. There Is Joy in Shoe Switching (25; 29)**

- **In College, I Signed Up to Participate In an Event I Thought I Would Ace: Men's Stellato Heal Walking Contest**
- We don't live in an honor vs shame culture: (1) The people of the NT did; (2) Epaphroditus did; (3) Paul sent him "back" to the Philippians after the Philippians sent him to Paul.
- Paul walked in Epaphroditus' shoes: (1) They view the fact that he got sick as because he wasn't suitable to minister to Paul; (2) They view him returning as a shameful event since they sent him to minister to Paul.
- Epaphroditus walked in Jesus' shoes: (1) That like Jesus, Epaphroditus was willing to be shamed that's what was necessary to get Philippians from Paul and take it back to Philippi so they could read it. (2) Like Jesus, Epaphroditus was distressed not because he was sick, but because he knew the Philippians would worry about him. The only other time the word distressed is occurs is in the Garden of Gethesemane. (3) Like Jesus, Epaphroditus received a place of honor with Paul on the first team in this book, specifically because he desired to be on the 2<sup>nd</sup> team. (4) For like Jesus, he who exalts himself will be humbled. And who humbles will be exalted. (5) Like Jesus, the suffering, shame and the cross Epaphroditus had to bear, led the applause, honor and crown on heaven.