

We are not a rich powerful church here in Philippi. But with the power of the Holy Spirit and the resources of our heavenly Father, we can accomplish everything God asks us to do.

Week One – Read 1 Corinthians 8:18, 22; Colossians 4:7-9; 1 Thessalonians.

Write a definition of the qualities of a true brother in Christ.

How does your life reflect the definition you have just written? Do you know anyone who does? What do you need to do to be called ‘brother’ the way Paul called Epaphroditus his brother?

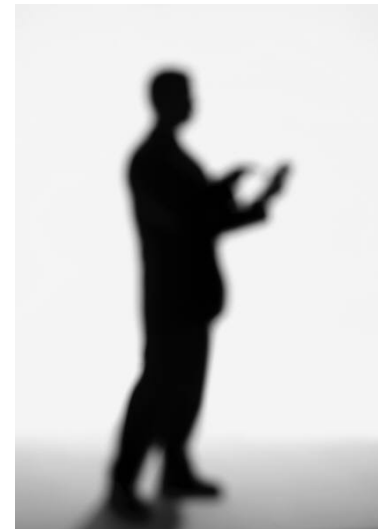
Week Two – Read 2 Corinthians 8:23-24; Colossians 1:6-8; 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-5.

Write a definition of the qualities of one who is a fellow servant? Think about what Jesus said about the importance of learning to be a servant in the kingdom. Are you being a fellow servant? What will be required for others to see you as a servant in the kingdom?

Week Three – Read 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 4:5. What does it mean to be a soldier in God’s work? What are the qualities of a good soldier? Now read Ephesians 6:11-18. How does the armor make you a better soldier?

Week Four – Read Philippians 2:25-30 and the description of Paul about Epaphroditus. Now read 2 Corinthians 9:12-14. Write a definition of the word ‘valor’. What makes a person a person of valor in the kingdom of God?

Ordinary Men



Studies in becoming a man of valor

Study 05
Epaphroditus

From the Diary of Epaphroditus

June of AD 51

When they asked for volunteers to go and visit Paul and bring him a special cash gift I had to stop and think about what that would involve. I had never traveled outside of Philippi. Never been in a boat. Never thought about taking such a trip. Never been away from my family for more than a day or two.

But when the pastor asked, the first thing that came to my mind was Paul's previous visit to us. He had left his home to come to us. He had willingly suffered; being beaten and put in jail so that we could hear the gospel.

It became very clear that God wanted me to go. So with no small amount of fear, I told my pastor I would go. I became a little more frightened when no one else was able to go with me. That meant I would be alone, not usually a wise thing to do when carrying money.

The church prayed for me and the journey. I felt like Ezra depending only on God's protection when he was leading a group back to Israel. He believed that God was better able to protect him than the soldiers the king offered him. At least he traveled with others, I would be alone. That word alone weighed heavy on my thoughts.

Many walked with me from Philippi to the seaport. That was a great encouragement. We stood together on the shore and prayed one last time before I got in the boat and waved as they returned home. Home. I wondered how long it would be before I saw home again.

The boat trip was a mixture of wonder and torture. The sea was incredible and carried us to such wonderful and exotic places, but my stomach rebelled constantly. Thankfully, it only took a few weeks to arrive at Italy and then I began my search for Paul.

Finding him was so easy. Everyone seemed to know his name and what he was teaching. Very quickly I arrived at the place where

he was staying. The expression on Paul's face will remain with me all of my life. The mixture of surprise, joy and confirmation of his faith made me forget the difficulty of the trip and all my fears.

The gift I brought was an answer to his prayers and was exactly what he needed. When he understood that I planned to stay and help with the work that brought another response. You could see the lines of fatigue lift from his face. Paul wasted no time and immediately assigned me a group to teach and disciple. I also helped with cooking and cleaning and anything else that needed to be done.

I have never been so happy or fulfilled as when I was able to disciple those who had received our Lord as Savior. The only thing that could have made this time even better would have been having my wife and children with me to share in the work. But, then I became ill. It may have been the food I bought one day while talking with a vender or maybe I was just doing too much. The tonics and remedies did nothing to relive my sickness and Luke became very concerned. Nothing seemed to work and my strength lessened each day. I sensed that the others were worried that I might die. But I felt a great peace. I was doing God's work. I was helping people know God and his love. I began to understand that real life only exists in Christ and that death is not to be feared, but to be seen as a door that gives access to all of God's promises for all of eternity.

In that moment God showed me what I must do and then my health returned to me. Paul and I agreed that it was time for me to return to Philippi and help with the work there. So, with Paul's letter for the church in hand, I headed home. This time the voyage was perfect because my stomach did not rebel and I realized my fears were gone.

When a person serves God, no matter what the risk, he has nothing to fear and can overcome any obstacle. I went home understanding that the true value of a man is defined by his dependence on God and his willingness to serve, no matter what the risks may be.