

8/23/25

Epaphroditus The Servant
Phil. 2:25-30

A certain dog had always boasted of his ability as a runner. Then one day a rabbit that he was chasing got away. This brought a lot of ridicule from the other dogs because of his previous boasting. His explanation was, “You must remember that the rabbit was running for his life, while I was only running for my dinner”. (Green:70)

* Too many people run after Jesus as a meal ticket and not as if He is their life!

Spurgeon the prince of preachers said, “I do believe it is before every Christian either to serve his God with all his heart, or to fall into sin. I believe we must either go forward, or we must fall. The rule is in Christian life, if we do not bring forth fruit unto the Lord our God, we shall lose even our leaves, and stand like a winter's tree, bare and withered”. #1296

Paul has reproved the Philippians for their lack of unity and humility by the example of Christ, as He humbled Himself and took on the form of a servant to the point of death, even the death on the cross.

* But knowing man, Paul knew some would respond, “Well he was God and we are mere men, we can’t do that”, so he has given them two human examples of servants after the model of Christ’s example, himself, Timothy and now the third being Epaphroditus.

Epaphroditus is portrayed by Paul as the suffering servant, evident by three characteristics. Phil. 2:25-30

- I. Epaphroditus was a committed servant. vs. 25
- II. Epaphroditus was a caring servant. vs. 26-28
- III. Epaphroditus was a commended servant. vs. 29-30

I. Epaphroditus was a committed servant. vs. 25

A. The apostle Paul described Epaphroditus as a brother. vs 25a-b

* “Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother.”

- 1. Paul in using the word brother “adelphos”, means literally born of the same womb.
 - a. He was not one who was hypocritical in his belief, Paul saw both Jew and Gentile as one in Christ.
 - 1) The article my “my” indicates mutual family relation by the new birth in the name of Jesus.
 - 2) The article “my” applies to the three nouns.
 - b. He was not intimidated by those of Jerusalem who still had a hard time with the Gentiles, as Peter who acted out of character at Antioch by separating himself from the Gentiles. Gal. 2:11-14

2. Paul was a kinsmen based on the fact that both Paul and he belong to the same family.
 - a. The occasion that prompted the subject was that the Paul considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus to the Philippians.
 - 1) The word considered “hegeomai” is an epistolary aorist to place himself into the time bracket of the past once the letter reached the Philippians.
 - 2) Paul just said he was going to send Timothy as soon as he found out about his trial and he would also come. vs. 23-24
 - b. The word necessary “anagkaios” means indispensable under the circumstances.
 - 1) The same word is translated “more needful” in chapter one. Phil. 1:24
 - 2) He had been sick and near death, marking the urgency. vs. 27
3. Epaphroditus is a Gentile name “Epaphroditos”, it means “charming”, from the goddess of love, Aphrodite or Venus.
 - a. His name appears only one other time. Phil. 4:18
 - b. He had been charmed by the idolatrous deception of religion and blinded to the truth of God.
 - c. He now had encountered the Son of God’s love and been set free to see the truth of God’s word by the Holy Spirit.

- d. He was committed to his new birth to walk in the light as Paul.
 - * Not to be confused with Epahras the Pastor of Colossee. Col. 1:7
- B. The apostle Paul described Epaphroditus as a servant in the church. vs. 25c
 - * “my fellow worker.”
1. Paul used the phrase fellow worker “sunergos”, simply to means one with work, a companion in work with another.
 - a. The context is in the gospel.
 - b. The word is used of Priscilla and Aquila as helpers in Christ. Rom. 16:3
 - c. The word is used of Paul and Apollos as fellow workers together with God. 1Cor. 3:9
2. Paul indirectly acknowledged the unity of the body through diversity, many members but one body. 1Cor. 12:12
 - a. Gifts differ and are dispersed as God pleases. 1Cor. 12:11, 18
 - b. Gifts may be the same, but operate in a different manner or fashion. 1Cor. 12:6
 - c. Gifts always are for the edification of the other members of the body not oneself. 1Cor. 14:26
3. Paul is testifying Epaphroditus, his brother saw himself as a necessary functioning part of the body of Christ with others.
 - a. Having at least one gift. 1Pet. 4:10

- b. Having to give an account to God at the Bema-Seat of Christ. 1Cor. 3:13-15
- c. Having in mind that only what is done out of the motive of God's agape love will be rewarded, the rest will be consumed by fire. 1Cor. 4:5

C. The apostle Paul described Epaphroditus as one in spiritual warfare. vs. 25d

* "and fellow soldier."

1. Paul says, "my" fellow soldier
"sustratiotees", means to be a man of war with someone else.
 - a. The phrase "fellow soldier" appears only one other time in the New Testament, for Archippus. Philemon 1:2
 - b. Timothy was encouraged by Paul to endure hardship, as a good soldier as he acted as the Pastor at Ephesus. 2Tim. 2:3
2. Paul was saying Epaphroditus the fellow soldier was committed to the spiritual warfare that could very well have real and lasting consequences.
 - a. He had identified himself with an accused man making him suspect also.
 - b. He would be attacked spiritually more intense in view of his commitment.
3. Paul is implying indirectly that the Christian life is a warfare.
 - a. The warfare is not carnal but spiritual. Eph. 6:12

- b. The weapons are not carnal but spiritual, mighty through God. 2Cor. 10:4
- c. The armor is provided by God. Eph. 6:11

D. The apostle Paul described Epaphroditus as a representative of the church. vs. 25e

* "but your messenger."

1. The word messenger "apostolos", means one sent out, translated at times "apostle".
 - a. He had been sent out as their ambassador or envoy to Paul.
 - b. The pronoun your "humon" is emphatic in Greek, sharply contrasting what he was to Paul and what he was to the Philippians.
2. The Philippians had sent Epaphroditus, as a commissioned delegate to the apostle.
 - a. To deliver a financial gift sent from them. Phil. 4:18
 - b. To aid Paul in his needs. Phil. 2:30c
3. The messenger Epaphroditus had been committed to travel the long journey about 800 miles on behalf of the Philippians.

* Travel was dangerous due to illness, thieves and loss of life at times!

E. The apostle Paul described Epaphroditus as one who ministered to his need. vs. 25e

* "and the one who ministered to my need."

1. The word ministered "litourgos" means a public servant of the state.

- a. The word is used of a man who would fund a city function at his own expense, because he loved the city, such as a play or sponsor an athlete.
 - b. The word is used by Paul for a government official. Rom. 13:6
 - c. The word is used for God's angels, His ministers, a flame of fire. Heb. 1:7
 - d. The LXX used it of the special consecrated priest and Levites. Ex. 29:9
2. Paul was saying Epaphroditus was one who served at his own expense.
- a. The apostle goes out of his way to point out that Epaphroditus was the very "one" who ministered to him in his needs.
 - * People want the most out of the church, but they do not want it to cost them!
 - b. The same word in a different form is used of Paul for his service "litourgia" to the Philippians and Epaphroditus for Paul. Phil. 2:17; 2:30
 - * Jesus said we are to go the second mile; many just want to do the minimum!
 - c. The very word marks Epaphroditus as a generous person, thinking of others needs, not just himself as His Lord.
3. The man Epaphroditus was committed to meet the needs of Paul not just accomplishing a mere duty.
- a. His heart, soul and spirit were in his commission.

- b. His heart and soul were motivated by his love God and Paul.
- c. His heart and soul were in the work of God had called and directed him.
 - * Many have noted the progressive and ascending order of Paul's description of Epaphroditus, perhaps showing development and maturity to be expected of the believer!

Illustration

A sign read, "There is no limit to the good that a man can do, if he doesn't care who gets the credit."

* If you and I really do not care who gets the credit, then we will just enjoy ourselves doing for God what he calls us to do or whatever we see needs to be done!

Application

If we are going to be committed servants like Epaphroditus then we need to recognize that being born again is only the first step to being:

- 1. A fellow worker, for you and I fit in the body for effective work with our gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rom. 12; 1Cor. 12, 14
- 2. A fellow soldier, faithfully opposing and being victorious over the attacks on our lives to hinder us from serving. Eph. 6:10-18
- 3. A messenger, one who can be trusted to be faithful and fulfill his call. 1Cor. 4:2

4. A person ministering to others even when it costs me, denying self, knowing Jesus paid the greatest price for me. Matt. 16:24

Epaphroditus was a committed servant!

II. Epaphroditus was a caring servant. vs. 26-28

* Paul gives the reasons he was sending him back before Timothy depicting his caring nature!

- A. The apostle Paul declared Epaphroditus was missing the Philippians. vs. 26a
 * “since he was longing for you all.”
1. Paul said Epaphroditus was homesick.
 - a. The word longing “epipotheo”, means to have a strong yearning or greatly desire.
 - b. The participle indicates persistent and continuous, marking his affection.
 - c. The word is used of Paul’s longing affection for the Philippians. Phil. 1:8
 - d. The word is used by James for the Holy Spirit who dwells in the believer to lust or long to envy for God. Ja. 4:5
 2. Paul was giving them his the first reasons he was considering it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to them. vs. 25a
 - a. Epaphroditus was a witness of a disciple of Jesus by his love.
 - b. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another”. Jn. 13:35

- B. The apostle Paul declared that Epaphroditus was concerned for their concern over his sickness. vs. 26b

* “and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.”

1. Paul gave them the second reason necessary to send Epaphroditus back to them.
 - a. He was distressed “ademoneo” which means to be sore troubled, full of heaviness and anguish, even depressed.
 * The origin of the word means, away from home, being beside oneself!
 - b. He was anxiously concerned about the anxious worry of the Philippians about him being sick.
 - c. The word is used of Jesus at Gethsemane in his agony. Matt. 26:37; Mk. 14:13
2. Paul does not say how long Epaphroditus was sick, but he must have been sick for quite a while, since the news had reached Philippi and back to Paul.
 - a. That was a distance of eight-hundred miles each way.
 - b. There are no details, Epaphroditus could have been accompanied by others and got sick before they returned to Philippi.
 - c. The other possibility is that someone who knew about his sickness traveled to Philippi and told them.

C. The apostle Paul declared the Epaphroditus came close to death. vs. 27

1. Paul stresses the severity of his condition by declaring, “For indeed he was sick almost unto death”. vs. 27a
 - a. The word unto “paraplesio” means near to or almost, found only this time in the New Testament.
 - b. The idea being that he was at the door of entering eternity.
 - c. Paul had nearly given up hope, the sickness is not indicated.
2. Paul acknowledged God’s mercy on both of them. vs. 27b-d
 - a. The sovereignty of God was identified by Paul towards Epaphroditus, “but God had mercy on him.” vs. 27b
 - 1) The word “but” marks a sharp contrast between his nearness to death and his recovery to life.
 - 2) The mercy “eleeo” of God intervened, meaning compassion or pity to help.
 - 3) God does as He wills, when He wills, to whom He wills, where He wills and as often as He wills, being perfect in knowledge and wisdom, knowing the end from the beginning!
 - b. The sovereignty of God was identified by Paul also towards himself, “and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” vs. 27c-d

- 1) The way Paul saw God’s pity over him was that he didn’t have to sorrow upon sorrow, implying sorrow multiplied.
- 2) The love of Paul for Epaphroditus is marked by the intense degree of sorrow he would have experienced.
3. Paul reveals to us some very important truths about sickness and divine healing.
 - 1) Paul certainly had the gift of healings, for he prayed for many and were healed.
 - 2) Paul admits that God at times chooses to work apart from a human vessel.
 - 3) Paul also shows us it is not the will of God for all to be healed right away or at all at times or every time, God is sovereign.
 - 4) Paul at the same time knew it did not ultimately rest on his faith to believe as a mark of his spirituality, as so many today teach in the positive confession faith doctrine or seed faith doctrine, demanding God to heal.
 - * Neither did he blame Epaphroditus of having sin or a lack of faith!
 - 5) Paul teaches us He did not control the gift of healing, but God did. Heb. 2:4
 - * By the way Paul left Trophimus sick at Miletus. 2Tim. 4:20
 - 6) Paul indicated sickness as part of life in this fallen world, without it being related

to sin, lack of faith or even the chastening of the Lord.

- D.** The apostle Paul declared that Epaphroditus was a source of comfort. vs. 28
- 1.** Paul would relieve the Philippian's concern over his sickness by his presence. vs. 28a
 * "Therefore I sent him the more eagerly."
 a. This was Paul's concluding decision.
 - 1)** The word sent "epempsa" is another epistolary aorist to place himself into the time bracket of the past once the letter reached the Philippians.
 - 2)** The manner of his decision was more eagerly "spoudaioteros", means with diligent hastily.
 - b. This was evidence that Paul was also a servant after the order of Christ, thinking of others before himself. Phil. 2:17
 - 2.** Paul would gladly do without Epaphroditus in prison knowing they would be relieved of their anxiety seeing him again. vs. 28b
 * "that when you see him again you may rejoice."
 a. He was concerned about their personal joy, to be glad, well knowing that he would be alone perhaps.
 b. Well knowing that he himself would miss Epaphroditus in their usual daily routine of the day.

- 3.** Paul would also be filled with joy concern over the joy of the Philippians. vs. 28c
 * "and I may be less sorrowful."
 a. The joy of Paul is implied by no longer being sorrowful over the sick condition and homesickness of Epaphroditus.
 b. He would be less sorrowful, knowing that they were relieved and rejoicing in seeing Epaphroditus and he them.
 - 1)** This letter is known as the epistle joy.
 - 2)** The bond that tied Epaphroditus and Paul was their Christ like service to others in the body of the church.
 - 3)** This is not natural, but motivated by the fruit of the Spirit, agape love. Gal. 5:22

Illustration

A Christian has a mind through which Christ thinks: a heart through which Christ loves: a voice through which Christ speaks; a hand through which Christ helps. # 1158

* Spurgeon said, "As an arrow which falls short of the mark, as a fig tree which yields no figs, as a candle which smokes but yields no light, as a cloud without rain and a well without water, is a man who has not served the Lord. He has led a wasted life-a life to which the flower and glory of existence are lacking. Call it not life at all, but write it down as animated death". #1297

Application

If we are going to be caring servants like Epaphroditus then we must:

1. Be cultivating our relationship with people in the body, don't settle for fast spiritual food, where you drive in and drive out.
 - a. Hang out and meet people.
 - b. Find out what goes on in the church.
 - c. Ask how you can get involved.
 - * The purpose of the church is to perfect the saints in the word. Eph. 4:11-16
2. Be aware of other people's needs and hurts.
 - a. If you see someone sitting by themselves, go up and introduce yourself.
 - b. If you see someone looking bumed out or disturbed, ask if you can help or pray for them.
 - * Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman. Jn. 4
3. Be a source of comfort to others.
 - a. Sometimes all that may be needed is a hug.
 - b. Other times a little help to relieve the hectic pace.
 - * "Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the **meekness** of wisdom." Ja. 3:13

Epaphroditus was a caring servant!

III. Epaphroditus was a commended servant. vs. 29-30

- A. The apostle Paul declared they were to welcome Epaphroditus as family. vs. 29a
 1. Paul said there were to be no reservations about Epaphroditus as if he had failed in his mission, but actually suffered.
 - * "Receive him therefore in the Lord."
 - a. Paul used the word receive "prusdechomai", which means to receive to ones self favorably.
 - 1) This is an imperative command.
 - 2) The apostle knew the Philippians had a problem with esteeming others better than themselves. Phil. 2:4
 - b. The word also means to look for or wait for something or someone.
 - 1) It is used of Simeon who was waiting for the consolation of Israel. Lk. 2:25
 - 2) It is used of Jesus receiving sinners. Lk. 15:2
 - 3) It is used of looking for the blessed hope, the rapture. Tit. 2:13
2. Paul gave the manner they were to welcome Epaphroditus and is express by the term "with all gladness".
 - a. This is also an imperative command.
 - b. Expressing the fulfillment of their longing and expectations.
 - c. Re-enforcing that idea of having no reservations about him and his mission.

- B.** The apostle Paul declared they were to see such men as Epaphroditus as invaluable. vs. 29b
 * “and hold such men in esteem.”
1. Paul is not telling the Philippians to worship Epaphroditus.
 - a. Men and women are the mere instrument.
 - b. God is the One using men and women.
 2. Paul is telling the Philippians to honor such men recognizing their value to the body and work of Christ.
 - a. The word esteem “entimos” means honor, prize or precious.
 - b. The word is used of honorable men. Lk. 14:8
 - c. The word is used for Christ and translated “precious”. 1Pet. 2:4
 * “A man’s pride will bring him low, But the humble in spirit will retain honor.” Prov. 29:23
 3. The esteem is in what Christ has done in and through them not self-esteem!
 - a. Believers after the example of Christ, not considering themselves before others, men of reputation based on character.
 - b. Believers like these are to be held in high regard and valuable in the church and it’s service. 1Cor. 16:15-18
 - c. The secret of greatness, is a servant of all, the example of Christ. Mk. 10:35-45

- C.** The apostle Paul declared the reasons they were to hold in high regards and value Epaphroditus. vs. 30
1. Paul said Epaphroditus almost lost his life serving Christ. vs. 30a
 * “Because for the work of Christ he came close to death.”
 - a. He came close to death not in and for his own service, but as a bondservant like his Lord, in benefit to Paul, without any selfish ambition or conceit. Phil. 2:3a
 - b. He came close to death putting him in the same league as his Lord Jesus, Who became obedient to the point of death, even the death on the cross. Phil. 2:8
 2. Paul said Epaphroditus was not concerned about himself. vs. 30b
 * “not regarding his life.”
 - a. The word regarding “parabaleuestha” is a gambling word, to stake everything on the turn of a dice, only here in the New Testament.
 - b. The word is used of people who risked their lives by caring for the sick and dead during pestilence.
 - 1) From the word “parabolos” venturesome, reckless.
 - 2) In Alexandria there grew up an association of men known as the “Parabolani”.

- 3) Among the hazardous duties of this “suicide squad”, these people chanced visiting the ill and contagious in prison, risking their lives.
- c. He was lowly of mind esteeming others better than himself. Phil. 2:3b
- 3. Paul said Epaphroditus was thinking of others. vs. 30c
 - * “to supply what was lacking in your service towards me.”
 - a. The word supply “anapleroo” means to fill up to the capacity.
 - 1) The word is used of fulfilled prophecy. Matt. 13:14
 - 2) The word is used to describe the filling up the sins of men. 1Thess. 2:16
 - b. The idea is that the money sent to Paul was not his only need.
 - 1) The word lacking “huserema” means deficiency.
 - 2) Paul was in need of practical help, not just money, though he was most appreciative of it. Phil. 4:14, 17-18
 - 3) The apostle needed other members of the body to edify him and complement his own gifts.
 - 4) The apostle needed fellowship with other believers, like all others.
 - e. He was not looking out for his own interest, but thsy of others. Phil. 2:4

Illustration

Parenthood is the best illustration for commended service and is usually done by our children when they grow up, if we have done a good job out of love! But parents never do it to be commended, but out of loving care!

Application

If we expect to be commended servants like Epaphroditus then we need to be:

1. Do you thank God for the faithful servants that are obedient to the Lord?

* Paul says, “Only Luke is with me. Get **Mark** and **bring** him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.” 2Tim. 4:11

2. Let others honor us not ourselves.

* “Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.” Prov. 27:2

3. Take some risks and not play it so safe always.

* Isaiah says, “Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: “Whom shall I **send**, And **who** will go for Us?” Then I said, “Here *am* I! **Send** me.” Is. 6:8

* Spurgeon the prince of preachers said to this congregation, “I want every member of this church to be a worker. We do not want any drones. If there are any of you who want to eat and drink and do nothing, there are plenty of places elsewhere where you can do it. There are empty pews about in abundance; go and fill them, for we do not want you”. #1293 Service

Epaphroditus was a commended servant!

Conclusion

Epaphroditus is portrayed by Paul as the suffering servant evident by three characteristics.

- I.** A committed servant!
- II.** A caring servant!
- III.** A commended servant!