

Epaphroditus: Faithful Servant

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Would you please turn to your Bibles to Philippians chapter 2, beginning in verse 25.

The passage that we're going to be going through paints a vivid picture of what the love of God, that's the love of Christ, that constraineth us. This constraining love that overwhelms us, that takes over our very lives and our concerns. We're going to see a detailed depiction of a man where his circumstances looked very bleak. It's the life of Epaphroditus, his journey.

We see this man journeying from Philippi to Rome where Paul was imprisoned. After learning of his situation, the Philippians collected an offering for Paul. Epaphroditus traveled the same amount of time and nearly 800 miles to give a church offering. We see that in Philippians 4:18. It was short-lived, meaning that he had to be returned back to his home church in Philippi.

But what I want us to see in the passage that we're going to go through is lifting out from the life of Epaphroditus his love and spiritual unity for the Apostle Paul, for his love and spiritual unity for the Philippian church, for his love and spiritual unity that he has not only for the church but each individual in the church. But above all of this, the love of God that poured out in the hearts of his people. Romans 5:5 says this, "And hope maketh not ashamed because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

You see the love that we get to experience as believers is very much interconnected with spiritual unity. He wasn't an elder, wasn't a deacon, wasn't a prominent church leader in Philippi. He was most likely just a member of the church in Philippi. And he was originally sent to Rome by the Philippians to serve Paul, and it was supposed to be indefinitely. While there he became gravely ill. When he was with Paul, the news of his sickness greatly distressed the Philippians and in turn their sorrow caused him to be sorrowful. By God's mercy, Epaphroditus recovered and Paul decided to send him back to his home church.

Paul sent Epaphroditus as the bearer of this letter to ensure that the Philippians understood the reason for his return. He wanted to make it clear why he's returning. And

Paul wrote this passage specifically to commend Epaphroditus and eliminate any question, any doubt regarding his character, his service and faithfulness.

The world esteems people based on your pedigree, your appearance, your wealth, your education, positions in this world, your talents and achievements. But these are not the standards to be of the church of Jesus Christ. The church should honor sacrificial service for Christ.

What does it mean to be a servant worthy of honor? God will show us that here in these passages. That spirit-produced love produced by God that has a love for each believer, that has love for the pastor and has a love for other brothers and sisters in Christ. That's the kind of spirit that comes from the love of God to a believer.

And you know this love takes many risks. This man travels close to 800 miles. Not an easy feat by any means. Persecution was going on in Rome. He could have been easily killed on the way to Paul. So it's actually more dangerous than when Paul went because he was in prison and they knew, okay, these Christians, we got to watch for them. So think about that. It's more magnified when Epaphroditus goes to Rome.

But you know, this is the kind of love that risks one's own life. We don't think about ourselves. Sacrificial love, agape love. We don't think about the circumstances. We think about the people. God puts that love for his people above our circumstances. Love that refuses to let others suffer alone. We don't like to see people suffer alone as believers. We have this closeness to each other, this body of believers here at Calvary Road, for example. I see it. I hope you see it as well all of you. That's my heart's desire that you never suffer alone.

You know what? And this is the love that is reflected in the heart of Christ, isn't it? It comes from the source. This is the heart of Christ.

So, let's read together this text, this amazing text, life of Epaphroditus. You stand as we read the text together, verses 25 to 30, out of respect of God's word.

This is what it says and reads: Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and my companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that he had heard that ye had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

May God bless the reading of this word. You may be seated.

What we're going to see in verse 25 is the why. He starts with the important question why. He says yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother. Paul begins with the most intimate word he could choose. My brother.

I often say this. I say that we are first Christians. We are first brothers and sisters in Christ before our position. Amen. Before our position must and so Paul, this is Bible language. This is not casual language. This is family language. My brother, born not of blood, but of God's love. God's love adopted us into this household of God. And in Christ, our shared identity established a new equal standing with God, with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We're all equal and brothers and sisters in Christ.

For instance, though Timothy was like a son to Paul, Epaphroditus was regarded by Paul as a beloved brother, emphasizing their relationship of equality in Christ. Epaphroditus loved Paul because God made them family. God was the one that united them together. And so Paul acknowledges this. This is what God has done that I can count you as my brother in Christ.

So Paul loved Epaphroditus because God knit their hearts together. And this is the love Jesus, the Lord Jesus prayed for in John 17. And by the way, this is a reminder for myself. When I am praying, I remind myself of this part of the text. It reminds me in John 17, the Lord Jesus prayed for other believers and for me to understand the one only perfect relationship in this earth and in heaven is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, he prayed here. By the way, his prayers were perfect and always answered and he still continues to be answered as he prays for us. Amen. So as he was praying he said this in verse 21 that they (and I put parenthesis me and other believers) that all may be one, such a great reminder isn't it that we are all in one that's what he prayed for as thou father art in me and I in thee that they (other believers and also me) may be one in us that the world may believe that thou hast sent me by our unity. That's how the world is going to know. Another way Paul said is that they will know by your love for one another.

Such an important reminder. I'm not the one that's building relationships. It's him. It's him. He brings us together.

So this is the love the spirit pours out into our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Romans 5:5. This is the love that marks a true biblical church. This is how it's built from this love. You see when God saves us from our sins which is isolation from each other. We lie to each other. We don't really actually love each other. It's all based on transaction more or less. He saves us from all of that and more. Amen. He doesn't save us into isolation. He saves us into a family.

This is our family. Calvary Road. The church is not a club, not an event that we go to, not a building. It is a family bound by God's love. This is what we are proclaiming when we come in the household of God. We are proclaiming God's love for us and for each other.

Always remember this fundamental basic truth because this is a mark of a true biblical church. When God's love fills us as the church, people feel it the moment they walk in. I remember the first time I walked into the church that I was at and I just saw everyone together. I didn't see people isolating themselves. In fact, the pastor would say, "If you are by yourself, that's not good." He said, "You should always be talking with somebody when you're fellowshiping, of course." And as well as we're when we're congregating by the way and hearing this message. I hope that also is extended to you. No conviction there. It's you between you and the Lord. But you see the idea. We love to be next to each other. We love it because God does it for us. He creates this kind of love.

When God love fills a church, what does it do? Well, think about it. If you are next to somebody, you want to talk with them and I hope you continue talking with that person and you meet up again the next week and you talk with them again and you keep talking and you keep knowing and what happens is your love deepens for each other. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as some but we do it the more as you see the day approaching. Hebrews 10:25.

So our love deepens as a result of being together. Forgiveness also flows from each other. Because here's the thing, we are still living in a fallen world and a fallen nature. Again, it's only by God's grace and mercy that we can gather together that we can be one with one another because of what Christ has done in our lives individually. And out of that we are able to forgive because Christ forgave us first for our sins.

That we can do the same for each other. Can we 70 times 7 as he said to Peter when he's like is there any other way? He says no this is the only way because I said it. It's Christ's own word of that. So spiritual unity strengthens the body of Christ, not diminishes it when we gather. And ultimately, who is the one that we're pleasing anyways? Is it ourselves? Look at how good we are. We're also together. No, we look to God and go, "Thank you, God. Thank you for bringing us together like this as a family of God, adopted into this wonderful family."

Always, always, always remind yourself of that. So reflect who in this church has God knit your heart to. Who has God used to show you his love through that person? Because remember he is the source. Amen. He is the source. Just think of all the people that you are knitted together right here in this church.

Now continuing God also makes us co-laborers and co-sufferers. Continues on he says and companion in labor and fellow soldier. You see that these are not titles of

achievement. They didn't achieve anything or he didn't achieve anything to deserve these titles. They're expressions of God's love continuing to flow in these areas.

You see, love made Epaphroditus a companion in labor. Another way of putting it, a fellow worker, a fellow laborer. God's love was the driving force behind his service to Paul. Paul's letter to the church highlights in Philippians 1:5, fellowship in the gospel. That's what it said in Philippians 1:5. It still holds the same here.

See, as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are destined for eternal life together. But our time to be fellow workers for Christ is limited. It is limited to our part in this world. So the love of God in Christ involves work.

See Paul starts with the first thing, brothers and sisters in Christ, that's going to be eternal. Then it's this other kind of love that's flowed for temporary co-laboring. And then he goes on and says he's also a fellow soldier. Epaphroditus's strength which allowed him to stand with Paul in spiritual warfare came from God's love. That's also part of God's love. It's trifold. Brother in Christ, fellow laborer and fellow soldier.

Paul's generous praise reflect this. The love of God in Christ includes spiritual battle. Namely, we are going to be suffering unjustly. All right, we got we went through a whole series in first Peter about that. And we see it here in the church in Philippi. That's why he says fellow soldier which comes with fellowship in the gospel.

This is what fellowship is. When we call ourselves, we're fellowshiping with each other. We're fellowshiping as brothers and sisters in Christ first. We are fellowshiping in our laboring together. And we are fellowshiping in being fellow soldiers together in the spiritual battle. We can talk about those things. That's what the gospel does.

However, Paul's commendation focuses not on Epaphroditus's own effort, but on God's love working, flowing through him. And God makes it so that we are not alone in this conflict. We are never alone in this conflict. We always have someone that we can lock arms with in our brotherhood, our sisterhood, our laboring together, and in our spiritual warfare.

Love makes us stand with people in their battles. Love makes us stay when things get hard. Love makes us lock arms shoulder to shoulder our burdens that are not ours. And love makes us faithful in the trenches of ministry. The more we do for Christ, the more difficult the battle is because Satan wants to hold on and destroy as many people as possible. And so when we go into the thick of ministry as it were, we're going to be there's going to be conflict. There's going to be hurt.

It's such an illustration, right? In military, if you're in the front lines, you see more activity, don't you? So, who has God called you to stand beside? Who have you been standing beside? Continue in it and look for more to lock arms with in this fellowship of the gospel. Who needs your presence right now? Who needs your prayers right now? Who needs your encouragement right now? This is what fellowship is.

Next we go on to in the passage in verse 25 where it says, "But your messenger and he that ministered to my wants." Here we see that God's love makes us servants of one another. Epaphroditus loved Paul because he loved the church. He loved the church because God loved him first. He did all that traveling to visit with Paul, to be with Paul because God's love moved him. God's love moved him to travel that distance. He stayed in Rome because God's love sustained him there. He served Paul because God's love flowed through him to Paul.

The Greek term often rendered as apostle in the New Testament signifies one who is sent. That's what the word apostle means. The twelve apostles in the gospels were specifically commissioned eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Christ tasked with establishing the foundation of the gospel message for churches and a wider application of this term. Epaphroditus functioned as an apostle for the Philippian church. That's where the word messenger applies to. Specifically, it was him being an envoy dispatched to Rome to deliver their gift, the Philippians gift to Paul. That's what he was, a messenger from the Philippian church to Paul.

So, Epaphroditus served the Philippian church as their minister. Which is in the Greek refers to sacred service to God. So it wasn't namely to Paul. It was to God and then to Paul. It was something that was called of Epaphroditus. It was a calling. It wasn't just feelings, emotions. No. Again, the kind of love that moves him to travel this far and takes the risk sustains him in the place where he reside with Paul and to be able to serve Paul because the love of God flowed through him.

He undertook a ministry to Paul that the church itself could not perform. This service was largely, by the way, a behind-the-scenes ministry. We prayed this earlier this morning about those who serve behind the scenes. Well, Epaphroditus is one of those. Rather than leading the church's public ministry, Timothy, we went over with that last week. He was primarily behind the scenes, but we're going to go into it, the ministry that he did.

Paul considered Epaphroditus ministry to be the work of Christ. That's the words that he uses here in the text because it was the outflow of Christ's love operating through him. Right? If we just put Epaphroditus, then oh, his love came from him. No, Paul is very particular wording, isn't he? Puts the work of Christ. We're going to see this later in the text.

So, when God's love fills a believer, service becomes a joy, not a duty. He wanted to do this. He had a strong desire, a strong calling. I'm called to do this and I'm going to do it because God put that in me. And so, when God's love fills a believer, sacrifice becomes a privilege, not a burden. When God's love fills a believer, ministry becomes worship to God, not work. We're not just working for each other. This is worship. I am wanting to please God in this work.

So, where is God calling you to if he hasn't already called you to a certain ministry of Calvary Road to let his love flow through you to someone else? Because that's how God's love works. It doesn't just go into whereverland. It connects to the body of Christ, the members of the church here.

Now, we're going to go from the why to the explanation in verse 26. God's love makes us deeply concerned for one another. Look at the text with me. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness. I just want to stop there. This is one of the most tender verses in the New Testament.

It's an expression Paul used in Philippians 1:8 where it reads this, "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ." Literally the same kind of compassion Jesus Christ had, Paul had, and now we see it in this man Epaphroditus. This is supernatural kind of love. The kind that makes your stomach come out as it were.

Epaphroditus was dedicated to serving Paul and was undoubtedly pleased to be by his side. And like Paul and Timothy, he greatly desired the well-being of the Philippian believers. Epaphroditus was not in heaviness because he was sick primarily. He was in heaviness because the Philippians were in heaviness. You see how he was thinking more about them than himself.

This word heaviness means could mean mental distress. It could mean emotional distress. It can mean spiritual anguish. It's the kind of soul-wrenching pain. That word used is agony. Agony or altogether it's a deep grief, a deep grief felt within the soul. It's the kind of a mother would know this child birth pains. I've seen my wife and the pain that it creates in her facial expression. I remember our first child, her knuckles were as white as white can be. She was just gripping onto that bedside. It's like, okay, it's coming, isn't it? It's like, yep, sure enough, within a few minutes, it's that kind of agony.

It's also used in other places in the New Testament, namely in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is really close to heart to Christ. Matthew 26:37 and Mark 14:33 puts it like this where he was very heavy when he was praying in the garden of Gethsemane. He was that kind of deep sorrow and heaviness felt in the garden of Gethsemane.

You see, Paul used this word to describe Epaphroditus, intense suffering for the church at Philippi. Epaphroditus experienced this and it was not self-pity. It was not an internalized personal sorrow. Again, it wasn't personal. Often times, that's what depression is. Depression is self-pity for yourself. It's internalized sorrow, woe is me mentality. This is not the expression Epaphroditus has. Rather, it is other-focused. It's you remember Timothy with often infirmities. Think of it for example when test time comes or something very serious happens in your family what happens to your stomach it it's you feel weak in your stomach that's the kind of thing that happened with Timothy was so concerned that his stomach turn feel weak and he felt weak so much for the love of the church and so this is the same kind of thing as this intense suffering in his body of Epaphroditus.

And both of these brothers in Christ were living and breathing this. Philippians 2:4 says, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." You know, this is what he would say a servant of Christ. He or she will do anything for the local body. It's a selfless attitude that we can all model. Amen. We can better model.

Now just a kind of a side note, we do live in a fallen world and because of that there is why people get sick. But Paul does not say Epaphroditus sinned because here's the thing in Bible time people connected sickness to sin that is not Epaphroditus situation and we'll see that in the text and nor was it a lack of faith why he is sick or a bad witness because we're going to see that he is not at all trying to boast of himself in vain glory like others we're doing. No, none of that. This is again God's love flowing through him in this way to think about others to feel the hurt of others hurting to love that reflects the heart of Christ.

And so we see in verse 27, Paul says this, God had mercy on him. You see, mercy is a divine compassion that holds back what we deserve. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." Healing is a demonstration of the sheer mercy of the Lord. We all deserve death. That's the reality. We all deserve death. And so, whenever God heals somebody, it's a demonstration of his sheer mercy.

So in the case of Epaphroditus, this mercy was twofold. God healed Epaphroditus and by doing so prevented Paul from enduring the deep sorrow of losing his close friend, brother in Christ. And this highlights a Christian view of this kind of love relationship that only Christians can experience. Again that agape love where continued presence of loved ones is a precious gift and divine mercy that we can be together is even God's mercy. Do you realize that we don't deserve this but yet his mercy we can be together and love each other and this have this kind of relationship only that Christ can bring to us.

So Epaphroditus's death would have caused Paul, you see here, sorrow upon sorrow. Because you see, he was sorrowful in his imprisonment for the gospel. But now if he

died, it would bring sorrow upon sorrow. And so when God healed him, Paul said it was mercy. It was mercy on Epaphroditus. Mercy on Paul. Because you see love the kind of love that again expressed in agape grieves when love suffers loss. This is the kind of love that makes a church healthy. By the way, this is a healthy church when we have this kind of love for each other. I would hate to see one of us go. This is the kind of love that makes a church safe that we are watching after each other in this kind of way. We're just so knit together like it's gonna be so sorrowful if I don't see you.

This is also the kind of love that makes a church beautiful, doesn't it? This is beautiful. The fact that we can come together with all of our differences, with all of our circumstances going up and down, that we still manage to gather together in this way when we can be doing anything else but that. But again, it's a beautiful picture of the bride of Christ. This is the kind of love that makes a church irresistible to a watching world.

What you're gathering this is all this is everything to us. The body of Christ. We don't need to be entertained. We need God and we need each other. That's more important.

So do you feel the burdens of others? Does God give you this kind of burden like Epaphroditus? Does your heart move when someone in this church suffers? I hope you do. It's a good kind of suffering that we should lock arm in arm to each other's suffering.

Now verse 28. I sent him therefore the more carefully that when you see him again you may rejoice. Just stop right there. You see Paul loved the Philippians so deeply that he sent Epaphroditus home. That's a good pastor's heart when he sees someone really ill or really sick. No, just go home, brother. Go home, sister. He can't work with this kind of weakness.

And so even though it meant Paul will be more alone, he doesn't think about himself. He thinks about his brother in Christ. He does not focus on his own sacrifice, but rather takes joy in the happiness of the Philippians. It's going to be better for them to have joy than me in this situation. It's a pastor's heart.

The letter to the Philippians is frequently referred to as the epistle of joy. We started off with that, right, in the sermon series. This is one of the epistles full of joy and more joy. In fact, that's the context mainly of this epistle. It's mentioned over 16 times this word joy or rejoicing.

And this is God's love. A love that rejoices in the joy of others. A love that sacrifices own comfort for the good of the local church. A love that reflects the heart of Christ who for the joy set before him endured the cross. What are we laying down ourselves for? For the good of others. This is how it should be. Every time the church meets together. Amen.

Every time we meet together. It hurts when people are sick and cannot be with the church body. You don't know how much that hurts me. It hurts. This past season has been difficult for me. I'm sure it's been difficult for you as well to see so many people in the body hurt, sick. And these are people who miss coming to church by the way.

And I thank God for Paul writing this part of the passage. It's not only about the doctrinal writings of Paul, very important, but it's also a part of our devotion to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, which is just as important. Amen.

So, another important note here is that his anxieties were not sinful worries about his affairs. No, because 2 Corinthians 11:28, he talks about in a different church setting, but very applicable to here. He says, "Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" and that's Philippi is one of those of all churches. The care for the church is not sinful. That kind of anxiety is not sinful according to God's word. Amen.

So, love seeks the joy of others. Love celebrates when others are blessed. Love rejoices when others are strengthened. Love is happiest when others are helped. So question to you is whose joy has God called you to pursue? Who needs encouragement from you today? Think about it. We have this moment. We don't know if we're going to be here next week. Really, let's not be presumptuous. Let's make the best time for our opportunity. Ephesians 5:15. Make it the best time right now today.

Let's go to verse 29 and 30. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, meaning joy, and hold such in reputation, meaning honor. Hold them up in honor. Paul displaying the heart of a pastor here. Lovingly instructs the church to welcome Epaphroditus with joy. This instruction serves as an act of protection for Epaphroditus. I want you to see that he knows some might misunderstand why he returned early. I thought Epaphroditus are going to stay there indefinitely. Why are you coming early? I'm going to protect you from that. He has no reason to be embarrassed. No reason to be ashamed of what people may know or think about him. No.

Paul says, "I will speak on your behalf. I'm your undershepherd." Okay? That's what an undershepherd does. Protects the flock. So Paul writes this passage to shield him with God's love. It's not his love. It's God's love.

So a genuine Christian faith seeks to safeguard reputations. Honor rather than destroying them. We can honor or dishonor, can't we? We got to be very careful of that. And this is a passage that teaches us how to model it out first and foremost as a pastor to you and to you as a member Calvary Road that I make sure that you are honored. That you are honored for right reasons. And we're going to see that here in the text.

Paul commands the church to honor him not because of his effort but because God's love was displayed in him. The sacrificial servants of Christ within the church deserve honor. And by the way, a lack of encouragement is far more common struggle than excess of them. What I mean by that is there's less of encouragement than more of encouragement in a church if it's by default. It takes an active sacrificial love to stay on top of this encouragement that we all need because the world is discouraging, isn't it? Our flesh discourages us. The devil tempts and discourages us. But here we must make it where we think about God's love.

If we're really brothers and sisters in Christ, if we're truly laboring for Christ and we are fellow soldiers of Christ, then let's encourage each other in it because it's discouraging. It's hard. It's difficult. God's love wants to flow into that space and stay connected. Stay connected. Don't minimize what's going on. Lift each other up in honor. Right? Knowledge puffeth up but what love edifies it builds up for the body of Christ to stay healthy.

So Paul emphasizes a reason for honoring and rejoicing over Epaphroditus return in verse 30 look with me there says because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death not regarding his life to supply your lack of service toward me. This passage confirms a second time. He repeats this twice if you noticed to clarify a point that Epaphroditus was close to death and clarifies this as he nearly died for the work of Christ.

The work of Christ was delivering the church's offering and giving practical assistance to Paul. And as noted earlier, those who serve in the front lines like Paul and Timothy are not the only ones doing the work of Christ. There are those serving behind the scenes quietly, practically, faithfully, and unnoticed ways, but they are doing the work of Christ. Epaphroditus is doing the work of Christ behind the scenes.

And he didn't regard his own life, not regarding his life. Literally means a gambler throwing the dice. Now, don't go and throw dice and play dice, but that's the illustration. He's throwing the dice. He doesn't know where it's going to go. Is it going to be a four? Is it going to be a five? A one. This is what it is. Having gone all-in the Lord Jesus Christ, he said, "I'm all-in."

If you know the Lord Jesus Christ in a saving way, he is worth living and dying for. Amen. To put yourself at risk for the sake of Christ is no gamble at all. Amen.

So, love honors the work God does in others. Love celebrates faithfulness, not fame. Love lifts up the unnoticed servants. Love protects the vulnerable from criticism. And let me just tell you, this is timely. I just had a conversation with two brothers and I can't tell you that when I went to this part of text, I was like, "Wow, that was so timely." Because there's some people here I need to honor. I need to do it more often.

And so this is Bible language and this is for me and for all of us. So, who in this church needs to be honored? Who in this church needs to be encouraged or affirmed for the love of God that has been shown through them? This is what God desires for us.

So as I conclude here, although the focus has been on Epaphroditus, I want us to look beyond that. I want us to go back and look at Christ in light of Epaphroditus. Here it is. You see, although Epaphroditus nearly died for Paul, Jesus did die for us. Epaphroditus risked his life for the church. Jesus gave his life for the church.

Christ love Epaphroditus love is a mere reflection of Christ's love in reality. Epaphroditus sacrifice is a shadow compared to Christ sacrifice as the substance. Epaphroditus shows us that what God's love can look like in a believer. Jesus shows us what God's love is. So Jesus is the greater Epaphroditus.

Jesus traveled infinitely farther than Epaphroditus. 800 miles is a long distance, but Jesus traveled from heaven to earth, which is far, far more. Jesus bore infinitely more than one sickness. No, it was sin. Sin, remember, leads to death. We deserve to die. He died in our place. The perfect sinless son of God.

Jesus suffered infinitely deeper, not like Epaphroditus near death, but death itself. Jesus returned not to Philippi but to the father's right hand. Jesus brings not a letter from Paul but he brings salvation to sinners.

Fit with that. Let that weigh in truth in your life. Behold Jesus. Don't just look at Epaphroditus. It's beyond the temporal that we're talking about here. We're talking about eternal truth in the Lord Jesus Christ who was the one that created Epaphroditus to love the church, to love Paul, to be an example for us.

We must go back to the source always. And may this be a time of that for us as brothers and sisters in Christ. May we have more of a reminder what Christ has done for us, what he continues to do in our lives to shape and mold us to become more like him and less of ourselves.

And that for you that are not in the household of God does not know what it means to be in Christ, know this. If you're here this morning under the preached word of God, you know what? It will not return unto void. It will prosper. But it depends upon the work of the Holy Spirit on your life. Do you see a need for your sins to be blotted out once and for all? That although you are in isolation, you are lying left and right and you are not the person you really say who you really are, it's because of sin. And until you have an identity in Christ, you will never be truthful. You'll always stay in isolation and you'll be in isolation in hell.

But the encouragement is when you are in Christ, you will truly be with the household of God. Not only in this part where we stay in this earth, but forever in heaven as brothers and sisters in Christ, we'll be forever with him. Christ who saved us from our sin. And we'll forever be able to give glory to God and less of ourselves. This is the gospel. And may this resonate with you in ways that have not resonated with you. May the Holy Spirit speak to your heart and may you truly be the one that is saved this morning.

Let's pray.

Father, I am overwhelmed by your love this morning. I'm overwhelmed by when your love is truly the source what it can do to us. How it can transform the way first of all we love you father because of what Jesus Christ being our intermediator access to you that we can cry out abba father that we can truly have the heart of Christ and that we can have the heart of Christ for each other that it all flows from you to us to others and father the more we're connected to you, the more your love flows. That we can be channels of blessings and that we can be a people to a watching world. And there are some here that are of that watching world that they would know that we are Christ's disciple by the love we have for each other. This agape love that only Christians can experience. And father, I pray that you would affect their hearts as well. That you will stir with them their hearts by the work of the Holy Spirit. Convict them of their sin that although they have not trusted in Christ, they can do today if they will yield to you. Work in this mighty way, this two-fold way. Pour out your mercy and your grace and we'll thank you in Jesus' name. Amen.