

# THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

## PHILIPPIANS 1-2

There is a British tradition that the Queen's flag flies from Buckingham Palace only when the Queen is in residence. *And likewise, "Joy is the flag that indicates King Jesus is in residence in the palace of our hearts."*

The presence of Jesus always brings joy - *but at times that joy is tempered with sorrow.* The message of Philippians is that the flag of joy often flies at half-mast.

The joy of the Lord is present even in the midst of trials and heartbreak. A believer's joy isn't dependent on happy circumstances. In tough times there is still a joy to be had. **Philippians is about joy at half-mast.**

It's amazing that Paul's letter on joy begins with a couple of guys in jail... Chapter 1, **Philippians 1:1 "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ..."** It's the year 62 AD. Imagine, Paul in a Roman prison awaiting his day in court before the evil emperor, Nero. Whether he lives or dies is about to be decided. It could go either way.

The book of Philippians is one of four letters - along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon - that we call **"The Prison Epistles."** They were written during Paul's first incarceration in Rome. He's behind rusted bars, yet he's brimming with joy. *It's joy from a jail cell.*

*But also imagine...* A doctor diagnosing a cancer, yet God gives you peace... Your boss hands you a pink-slip, but you know God is in control... Your friend dies in an accident, but your sure he's in a better place... Again, **joy at half-mast** is the theme of Philippians!

And how to experience joy in the midst of any situation is the secret that is revealed in its chapters.

Paul writes, **1:1 "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi..."** The town of Philippi was in the region of Macedonia. It was one of Paul's initial stops after sailing across the Aegean Sea, from Turkey to Greece.

Acts 16 recounts the birth of its church. Philippi was the first Christian assembly planted on European soil.

He writes to **1:1 "all the saints... with the bishops and deacons..."** **1:1 "Bishop"** means **"overseer"** - **1:1 "Deacon"** means **"servant."** These were the two categories of leadership in the early church that helped the pastors.

The bishops, or **elders**, concerned themselves with ministering to the spiritual needs of the saints or believers... The **deacons** were the **designated doers.** They served the

physical needs of the fellowship.

To all the church Paul writes, <sup>1:2</sup> “Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

My daughter, Natalie, has twins - a boy and a girl. And I loved Natalie's baby reveal. When we cut into her cake half the slice was pink, and the other half was blue. Two colors made up the same slice of cake.

And this describes the Gospel. It's a slice of blessing in two colors. **Grace** drew Jesus to the cross. **Peace** reigns in its aftermath. It's all about <sup>1:2</sup> *grace and peace*.

Verse 3, <sup>1:3</sup> “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, <sup>1:4</sup> always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, <sup>1:5</sup> for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, <sup>1:6</sup> being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...”

One of the reasons Paul could *rejoice* - which means “to take joy” in any circumstance - is he was confident that what God had started in his life, God would finish.

I'm notorious for starting projects I never complete. I have jobs that just keep rolling over to the next honey-do list. *But I'm not the only one...* Michelangelo was a genius - a sculptor, and a painter. His statues of Moses and David are among the world's masterpieces. Yet there's an entire museum in Florence, Italy that's dedicated solely to *Michelangelo's Unfinished Works*. Yet not so with Jesus. *What Jesus starts, He finishes...*

If you're discouraged. If you've tried and failed, take heart! Jesus hasn't begun His work in you to leave you high and dry. He doesn't abandon us in midstream. Jesus intends to *hang in there with you*, so you *hang on to Him*. Our Lord Jesus has no unfinished projects.

Verse 7, <sup>1:7</sup> “Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. <sup>1:8</sup> For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.” I love this statement Paul makes of the Philippians, “*I have you in my heart.*”

Paul's life was full of joy and here's one reason why... **His priority was people**. *Not stuff, but people*. Paul wasn't primarily concerned with the *clothes on his back*, or the *roof over his head*, but with the *people in his heart*. There's no lasting joy in perishables things.

At his retirement party, a man stated, “*As I look back on my career my fondest*

memories are not of the money I made, or the goals I accomplished, but the relationships I formed." This was true of Paul. He says of the Philippians, <sup>1:7</sup> "because I have you in my heart."

Life gets joy-less not when we encounter hardships, but when we go them alone. The road can be tough, but don't let it get lonely. Keep people in your heart!

And Paul prayed for his friends. The next few verses constitute a model prayer we can pray for each other.

<sup>1:9</sup> "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment..." As your pastor I have the real fear that the more you get to know me the less you'll like me. "What happens when you realize I'm not the perfect pastor. I get grumpy. I make mistakes." Getting to know *me* is risky business!

This is why to experience joy you need to fix your eyes on Jesus. For He is the only person of whom it can be said, "The more you know Him, the more you'll like Him!" He has no downside. Jesus is totally cool!

Recall this when you pray for a pal. All that keeps that person from falling head-over-heels in love with Jesus is them getting to know Him better. *Our love for Jesus abounds as we grow in our knowledge of Him.*

Paul also prays, <sup>1:10</sup> "that you may approve the things that are excellent..." It's easy to choose *good from bad*, but it's far more difficult to pick *the best from the good*.

When you first become a Christian God calls you to clear out the evil from your life, and replace it with what's pure. You make choices between good and bad - right and wrong - and the choices are pretty clear cut.

But God wants more for us - not just good things, but the best life can offer. It's been said, "The good is often the enemy of the best." *Good things* can crowd out *the best things*. This is why we all need to pray for the discernment to pick out the <sup>1:10</sup> "things that are excellent..."

And also pray for a lingering, lasting sincerity, <sup>1:10</sup> "That you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ." In every Christian's life there's a gap between what *we are* and what *we should be*. Our goal should be to shrink that gap. *But over time we tend to ignore the gap, or grow content with the gap as it is, or even deny a gap exists...* Paul prays that God will keep the Philippians on the cutting edge - that they won't grow dull to either *where they're at* or *where they need to be*. He prays they maintain a sincerity about their faith.

And he continues his prayer, verse 11, <sup>1:11</sup> "being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." In other

words, pray that your life is stamped with God's fingerprints.

Fruits of the Spirit like love, peace, joy, good works are the evidence that God's hand is on your life.

So to sum it up, when you pray... **pray your love for Jesus abounds as your knowledge of Him grows - that you'll discern best from good - you'll stay sincere - and God's fingerprints will be found all over your life.**

Verse 12, <sup>1:12</sup> **"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, <sup>1:13</sup> so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ..."**

Here's another reason Paul rejoiced in difficulties - *God was in charge!* God saw to it Paul's prison time had advanced the Gospel. God turned Paul's *imprisonment* into a *platform*. It gave him an opportunity to preach to the palace guard.

Most of us would be bummed out to be thrown in prison. We'd moan, and whine, and probably accuse God of abandoning us. **We need to retrain ourselves to view *our inconveniences* as *God's opportunities*.**

Cliff Barrows was Billy Graham's right-hand man for 60 years, but it's interesting how they first teamed up. Barrows and his newlywed bride were on their honeymoon. They'd scraped together enough money to buy train tickets and hotel reservations. But when they reached their destination the hotel where they were supposed to stay had closed down. They managed to find a vacant room above a grocery store.

The next day the owner of the store heard Cliff playing Christian songs on his trombone. He told him about a rally being held that night. A young evangelist named Billy Graham was in town. *Barrows went...*

That particular night the man in charge of the music didn't show up, and Cliff Barrows was asked to help. *The rest is history.* What seemed a disaster was for <sup>1:12</sup> **"the furtherance of the Gospel."** When you're delayed or sidetracked realize it could be God rerouting you.

Verse 14, <sup>1:14</sup> **"And most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."**

Paul's boldness had inspired other Christians to come out of the closet with their witness. If Paul could witness behind bars; then they could do it in the open.

<sup>1:15</sup> **"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: <sup>1:16</sup> The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; <sup>1:17</sup> but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the**

**defense of the gospel.”** Paul knew this sudden rash of Christian witness was coming from a mixture of motivations...

Some of the preachers were truly inspired by Paul. While others figured while Paul was out-of-commission they could make a name for themselves. They saw his imprisonment as a chance to increase their popularity.

But Paul says in verse 18 <sup>1:18</sup> **“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”** Paul was just happy that Jesus was being proclaimed.

Understand Paul is not suggesting that motive doesn't matter in ministry. 1 Corinthians 3 teaches us that it's not just **quantity** or **quality** that matters when we serve the Lord, it's our **motive** that determines our reward. **God judges the heart behind our service.**

The right motives are a must for God - *but it may not be that important to the person receiving the ministry.* For when the pure Gospel is preached people come to Christ, even if the preacher's motives are suspect.

Isaiah 55:11 reads, <sup>55:11</sup> **“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.”** God's Word is powerful, and one of the proofs of its power is its ability to shine despite some of the shady people who have preached it. Sadly, not every pastor has the best of intentions.

Remember, God spoke to Balaam through the mouth of a donkey. Just because God chooses to use a person to share His truth doesn't mean He's placing His stamp of approval on everything else going on in that person's life. It just means God loves people, and will use even a donkey to save them and heal them.

Paul continues, <sup>1:19</sup> **“For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...”** Paul knows that if the Philippians pray, the Lord Jesus will bring deliverance.

*But Paul has a goal more important than his release.* He says in verse 20, <sup>1:20</sup> **“according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.”** Far more strategic to Paul than his *deliverance from jail* was *his witness for Christ*. His <sup>1:20</sup> **“earnest expectation and hope”** - his utmost desire - is to not buckle under to the fear of death, or pain of torture. Paul hopes to shine brightly for Jesus until the last ray of light is extinguished from his candle. Whether he lives or dies his goal is to magnify Jesus!

1:21 "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." I love how this line reads in the Living Bible, *Philippine 1:21* "to me, living means opportunities for Christ, and dying - well, that's better yet!" Here's why Paul could take joy in any situation - **all that mattered to him was Jesus.**

Paul had placed all of his eggs in one basket. Jesus wasn't a piece of the pizza called Paul's life - He was the cheese that covered the whole pizza. Jesus is the **Big Cheese!** Everything else in life gained significance only as it related to Jesus. Jesus was all that mattered.

Even Paul's survival paled in comparison to the magnification of Jesus. If he lived, he could be used for Christ's glory. If he died, he would see Jesus face to face. You can't lose when Jesus is all that counts!

In the movie, *"The Wind And The Lion,"* Sean Connery plays the Raisuli. He's the leader of the Berber bandits that fight to resist American and Western Imperialism in the deserts of Morocco. At the end of the movie the Raisuli's army gets trounced.

And in the final scene he and his right-hand man are riding horseback on the beach, when his sidekick moans, "Raisuli we've lost everything. All is drifting on the wind, just as you said. We've lost everything." And with a roguish laugh the Raisuli replies... the clip.

Did you make out what he said, "Ahh, isn't there one thing in your life worth losing everything for?" What if I asked you that question. *Does your life have one big, overarching purpose that dwarfs everything else?* If you're a Christian it should. There is a cause that transcends both life and death... **to magnify Christ!**

Let me ask you to fill in the blank, "To live is \_\_\_\_\_."

How would you answer? *Work - success - friends - kids - sports - sex - hobbies - popularity - security...*

**Work** that lacks fulfillment?

**Success** that's temporary?

**Friends** that come and go?

**Kids** that'll grow up and leave home?

**Sports** you can't play forever?

**Sex** that leaves you empty and ashamed?

**Hobbies** that grow boring?

**Popularity** that's fickle?

**Security** that's an illusion?

*Are these things really worth your one and only life?* Listen to Paul's words again - *Philippians 1:21* **to live is Christ, to die is gain!** Paul would go anywhere, do anything for

Jesus. No sacrifice was too great... And ironically, no one lived a fuller, more satisfying, more joyful life than Paul.

In verse 22 Paul weighs out his options, <sup>1:22</sup> “But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>1:23</sup> For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. <sup>1:24</sup> Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you.” It’s *be in heaven or be a help on earth!* Death would be heavenly, but to live would be more opportunities to magnify Jesus.

I'm not sure you can live life to the fullest until you're first ready to die. For Paul heaven was just around the bend. Whatever he endured on earth was as bad as it would ever be for him. *He could do it for Christ's sake.*

<sup>1:25</sup> “And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, <sup>1:26</sup> that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.”

After thinking it through, Paul was confident he would be released. He felt he still had work to do. He was even planning another trip to bless the Philippians.

But whether he makes that visit or not, he exhorts the Philippians <sup>1:27</sup> “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel...” Paul wants them and us *to stand fast, to stand together,* and *to stand up* for the Gospel.

The word translated <sup>1:27</sup> “*striving*” speaks of strenuous effort - effort that pushes beyond exhaustion. He’s saying, *leave it all out on the field for the Gospel.*

High School football is a dreadful sport. You practice five days a week for 16 weeks to play just 10 games. You endure a sweltering summer, rigorous exercise, the risk of injury - *and for what?* There’s no pay and little recognition. *Why does a High Schooler do it?*

It’s because when everyone pulls together - and the horn sounds - there's a joy that swells up inside! Even if your team doesn’t always win, you’ve still belonged to something bigger than yourself. There’s a sense of unity and accomplishment that’s worth the sacrifice.

And this is the joy you find in church. You come week after week - give an offering - serve somewhere with little or no recognition. You put up with the heat of conflict, and run the risk of getting hurt. *And why?*

Because when we click, and God gets magnified in big or little ways - there's

incredible joy! You are part of a team that's bigger than yourself. There's a fulfillment!

Joy comes when *we stand fast, stand together, and stand up* for Jesus - and when we do, we're not afraid, verse 28, <sup>1:28</sup> "and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. <sup>1:29</sup> For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, <sup>1:30</sup> having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me."

I'm not sure the Philippians saw opposition and persecution as an honor, *but Paul did. And this is the truth the modern church denies. We claim prosperity as the birthright of the believer. Faith should make life easier, not harder...* But that's not what Paul taught.

To suffer for Jesus' sake is also a reason to take joy. *Suffering is a much a badge of honor as is salvation!*

Chapter 2, <sup>2:1</sup> "Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy..." And in Christ there is an abundance of all the above! Joy comes not from our circumstances, but from Christ's work in our heart. Our comforts are *not situational, but spiritual.*

And since God is working in you, Paul encourages the church, <sup>2:2</sup> "fulfill my joy by being likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind."

Years ago a small rural community met to decide on a name for their village. But differing opinions surfaced and tempers arose. The meeting grew contentious. Finally someone pounded the table, and shouted, "*Let's have harmony.*" *His words just hung in the air.* Until someone else saw their relevance and just like that, the town got its name: **Harmony, Minnesota.**

We'll find out in Philippians 4 that all was not well in the church at Philippi. Some sisters were squabbling. And here Paul is shouting, "*Let's have harmony!*" Let's focus on Jesus, and be of the same mind and heart.

And here's the formula for harmony in a church: <sup>2:3</sup> "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. <sup>2:4</sup> Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." Let's put aside selfish ambition and esteem one another.

Let's seek *to serve* rather than *be served.* *And where would we get such an idea?* Verse 5, <sup>2:5</sup> "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, <sup>2:6</sup> who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, <sup>2:7</sup> but made Himself of no reputation..."



Here's the Phillips translation, verse 5, [Philippians 2:5-11](#) "For He, who had always been God by nature, did not cling to His privileges as God's equal, but stripped Himself of every advantage." Jesus was God, but stripped Himself of the advantages of being God. He became fully human.

The word translated [2:7](#) "made" means "emptied." He laid aside the clout and privileges of being God. When Jesus became a man He didn't stop being God, but He emptied Himself of His divine advantages.

Jesus took [2:7](#) "the form of a bondservant..." The great composer, Leonard Bernstein, was once asked, "What's the most difficult instrument in the orchestra to play?" He replied, "The second fiddle... I can get plenty of first violinists, but to find someone who can play second fiddle with enthusiasm - that's a problem. And if we have no second fiddle, we have no harmony."

Jesus deserved honor and pleasure and glory, yet He laid all that aside to work out a salvation for us.

[2:7](#) "And (Jesus came) in the likeness of men."

A few years ago I ran across a description of what life would be like in America if our next President were a dog: All public buildings would have a doggy door... The title "Mr. President" would become "Here Fella..." The Washington Monument would be replaced with a one-hundred-story fire hydrant... A new law would pass requiring everyone to drive with their head hanging out the window... In other words, if the next President were a dog you'd have to be a dog *or become a dog* to understand his policies, and embrace their relevance.

And likewise for God to grasp the ethos and feelings of the human predicament He had to become a man.

Jesus was God in human flesh. The Almighty God got down on our level. He identified with our struggles. In Christ He let us know just how much He cares.

Verse 8, [2:8](#) "And being found in appearance as a man..." Notice, when God came to Earth He took a Y chromosome. He became a man - not a woman. Jesus is now the man all men are meant to be, and here's His greatest act of masculinity... [2:8](#) "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." This was history's manliest moment. God's strength was on display throughout the OT, but on the cross, in Jesus, God revealed to us His humility.

What made Jesus the man above all men wasn't that He dished out pain and enforced His will, but that He endured pain to accomplish God's will. He was capable of costly obedience. This is the mark of true manliness.

Verse 9, <sup>2:9</sup> “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, <sup>2:10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, <sup>2:11</sup> and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” In the end God exalts the humble! *And He'll start with Jesus!* The One who descended so low, will be exalted to the Highest. Everyone will bow to Jesus.

Either you'll bow your knee willingly, or He'll bow them for you. But in the end, every knee will bow.

<sup>2:12</sup> “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; <sup>2:13</sup> for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.” Here's Christianity in a nutshell... **we work out what God has worked in.**

You and I are never required to *work for* or *work on* our salvation. Jesus' final breath was, <sup>John 19:30</sup> “It is finished.”

God worked *for us* and *in us* on the cross. His Spirit plants in us new desires and new dexterity. God <sup>2:13</sup> “*works in us both to will and to do for His good pleasure.*” *But what God works in spiritually - we're to work out practically.* We apply these new desires God gives us to our everyday life. There's **God's part** and **my part**.

It's been said, “**Man can do nothing without God, and God will do nothing without man.**” *God* revs up the engine - but *you* let off the brake and pop it in gear...

God puts in you *the life of Christ*. Then you take on *the mind of Christ*... God changes me. Then I change my mind... God lights a spark. Then I begin to steer...

This is working out your salvation. Believe deeply and seriously, then start living out what you believe.

Verse 14, <sup>2:14</sup> “**Do all things without complaining and disputing...**” Once, differing battalions of Maryland firefighters - from neighboring counties - arrived at a burning house simultaneously. It was unclear as to which battalion had jurisdiction, so a fight ensued over which crew was responsible for putting out the fire.

And irony of all ironies, the house burned while the firemen fought with each other... **And this is the story of too many churches.** We argue while hell rages.

Paul continues, <sup>2:15</sup> “**that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...**” Everywhere people gather today squabbles erupt. I think the most obvious way for Christians to stand out is to simply get along.

We need to shine, and we shine brightest... Verse 16, <sup>2:16</sup> “holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Here's the best way to preserve unity and stay like-minded - keep your nose and heart in the Bible.

<sup>2:17</sup> “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. <sup>2:18</sup> For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.” In the OT a drink offering was poured on the sacrifice to soften and season the meat. Once it was applied it was no longer seen. The sauce was absorbed into the meat. The only one who appreciated its taste was the one who ate the sacrifice.

Spiritually speaking, the Philippians were the *sacrifice* - Paul was the *seasoning*. He was the steak sauce, the meat tenderizer. He willingly poured his life into the Philippians, and with no desire for recognition he didn't mind if only God tasted his contribution.

Is this the kind of influence we have on one another? Do we tenderize and add flavor - *and do it so that only God notices?* I say, [let's all be A1 servants of the Lord!](#)

Verse 19, <sup>2:19</sup> “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. <sup>2:20</sup> For I have no one likeminded, who will sincerely care for your state.” Timothy knew Paul's heart, and was trusted to represent Paul well.

<sup>2:21</sup> “For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.” Sadly, Christian ministry attracts more than its share of inflated-egos, though Timothy was not one. <sup>2:22</sup> “But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.” In the early church Timothy was a known-quantity. Paul led him to Christ and was a spiritual dad to young Timothy.

<sup>2:23</sup> “Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. <sup>2:24</sup> But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.” Paul will send Timothy to Philippi, and he hopes to be coming soon after him.

Verse 25, <sup>2:25</sup> “Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need...” In the Roman prison system if you ate or were clothed it was up to friends or family who cared about you. Jail was not a guaranteed bed, and prison suit, and color TV, and three squares meals.

If the folks on the outside forgot you, then you went hungry. Apparently, the Philippians had sent Paul provisions through a messenger named Epaphroditus.

2:26 “Since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 2:27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.” It seems while in Rome Epaphroditus got seriously sick - and notice this - *Paul, the great faith healer was powerless to help his buddy.*

And certainly Epaphroditus' illness was not the result of some sin in his life. He got ill doing the will of God.

Realize, despite what some preachers say, believers are not immune to sickness and disease. God has left us in a *fallen world* and in *fleshly bodies*. We're subject to sin's effects. And here all Paul can do is pray for his pal. Epaphroditus' recovery wasn't credited to a miracle or a gift of healing... *God had mercy on him.*

Chapter 2 closes, 2:28 “Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 2:30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.” Sometimes what we think are simple tasks end up the most threatening.

Epaphroditus was just a courier. His job was to carry supplies to Paul - *simple enough* - yet he almost died doing it. His distinguishing trait was that he persevered. Epaphroditus finished his mission. *And that's being like Jesus.* Remember 1:6, [Philippians 1:6](#) “He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus...”