



Epaphroditus, A True Friend and Servant Leader
Philippians 2:25-30
November 17, 2019

Some of the greatest people I have ever met have been people that are virtually unknown throughout the greater part of the world - friends that I have made in Argentina, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Johannesburg, Haiti, and Canada. The people I am referring to are people that work diligently behind the scenes with no desire for attention. Their names are not known to us, but rest assured they are known by our God.

Epaphroditus was another protégé and coworker of Paul. He was not an apostle or spiritual statesman such as Paul, or as far as is known, even an elder, like Timothy. There is no record of any outstanding work that he accomplished. Nothing is known of his family, his personal background, his conversion, how long he had been a believer, or his specific functions in the churches at Philippi, Rome, or elsewhere. We're introduced to him in Philippians Chapter 2, but he's unknown to most of us, and that's because his name only shows up *twice* in the Bible, and both of them are found in the book of Philippians.

Takeaway:

Epaphroditus is a good example of how good people go unnoticed. They serve behind the scenes. They're content to be active but behind the scenes. Their names aren't in lights; it's not on the program or in the bulletin. You've never read their books or heard their music, but they are important servants, nonetheless.

The name Epaphroditus means beloved of Aphrodite. Aphrodite was the Greek goddess of love and fertility; the Roman equivalent was Venus. Epaphroditus means somebody who belongs to or who is favored by the pagan goddess, Aphrodite. He had a pagan background, and he was saved on one of Paul's missionary journeys in Philippi.

Three Christian ways to treat all people:

I. Applaud Their Strengths

Philippians 2:25 (NASB) But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.

Paul gives Epaphroditus five different titles:

1. My brother

My suggestion toward describing people:

Instead of saying they're blacks whites Asians Hispanics Democrats or Republicans Why can't we just call each other brother or sister? If you are a Christian, we are family. In fact, you will notice that sometimes you are closer to your spiritual family than even your physical family.

2. My fellow worker
3. My fellow soldier
4. Your messenger
5. A minister

Question:

Are you quick to first point out people's strengths³ or their faults? Many people see only the negative and never the positive. We pick out all the faults, all the problems, all the reasons something can't be done. So, you need to be trained by God's grace to start looking for the good and the positive in people and not the negative.

II. Acknowledge Their Shortcomings

Philippians 2:25-26 (NKJV) 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;²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

Philippians 2:28 (NKJV) Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.

Takeaway:

Friendships always flourish at the fountain of forgiveness, and when you can overlook certain people's faults and shortcomings it goes a long way.

III. Affirm Their Sacrifice

Philippians 2:27, 29 (NASB) For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.²⁹ Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard.

Philippians 2:30 (NKJV) 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.

Two challenges concerning friendships:

1. Be a mentor for a Timothy
2. Be a model of Epaphroditus

Closing question:

Are you willing to join the ranks of Epaphroditus? Truth is, every time you minister to someone in need you risk something. You risk being taken advantage of. You risk being misunderstood. You risk being ostracized. In fact, there is no ministry without some kind of risk, great or small. It seems to me that we've become a complacent people, seeking comfort and control over our lives rather than taking even minimal risks for the gospel.