

## “The Epistle of Joy (Part 8 – Philippians 2:19-30)”

Paul writes in Philippians 2:18-30: *“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>20</sup> For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. <sup>21</sup> For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. <sup>22</sup> But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. <sup>23</sup> Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. <sup>24</sup> But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. <sup>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; <sup>26</sup> since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. <sup>27</sup> 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. <sup>28</sup> Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. <sup>29</sup> Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; <sup>30</sup> 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.”*

There is great joy in celebrating and commending other people. It’s incredibly rewarding to genuinely brag about the triumphs and worthiness of others. Our human nature, though, wants others to notice and dote on us. Even when others disappoint us and let us down, we should always believe for the best in others. Paul commends Timothy and Epaphroditus in this passage and highlights several characteristics from their lives that are worthy of emulation.

In Philippians 2:19-24 Paul shows us that ***Timothy was an unselfish servant***. It’s grounds for celebration when, like Timothy, we:

- **Care for fellow-followers of Jesus.** Like Paul, Timothy was sincerely burdened for the welfare of others.
- **Become consumed with the interests of Christ.** Timothy was a trustworthy, devoted and faithful servant in the Lord’s work.
- **Prove that we can be counted on.** Timothy had proven himself, like one who had been tested by fire and seasoned by suffering.

In Philippians 2:25-30 Paul shows us that ***Epaphroditus was a suffering servant***. It’s grounds for celebration when, like Epaphroditus, we:

- **Become friends, and then family in the cause of Christ.** Paul describes him as a “brother,” “fellow-worker,” “fellow-soldier,” “messenger,” and “ministrant to my need.” The Philippians sent Epaphroditus to Paul to deliver the gifts and to serve his needs. One commentator writes: *“In a culture where prisoners were not cared for by the state, but whose ‘necessities’ for life (especially food) had to be supplied by friends or relatives, this*

*is no small thing that they have done. They have thus 'offered priestly service' to God by sending Epaphroditus with the gift necessary for Paul to sustain life in prison."*

- **Serve and support one another in our community of faith.** We need to come alongside people when they're struggling and serve and support them any and every way we can. Epaphroditus risked his life in order that he might fulfill his mission to Paul on behalf of the Philippians.
- **Trust God's mercy to have a direct hand in helping us.** Epaphroditus almost died, "*but God!*" God had mercy on him and had a direct hand in him recovering and getting better.
- **Devote ourselves completely.** We are to honor sold-out servants like Epaphroditus. For the sake of Jesus Christ Epaphroditus gambled or hazarded his life.

## **Discussion Guide/Action Steps**

1. Let's apply the truths in this passage in the following 10 ways:
  - a. Work at learning people's names;
  - b. Look for, find, and celebrate good in others;
  - c. Instead of seeking to be noticed, validated, and acclaimed by others – turn the tables, and seek instead to do these things for others;
  - d. Be sincerely burdened for the welfare of others;
  - e. Be consumed with the interests of Christ;
  - f. Let it be proven that you can be counted upon;
  - g. Come alongside people when they're struggling;
  - h. Carry things through to completion (especially Kingdom matters), regardless of your state or condition;
  - i. Always believe: *BUT GOD will have a direct hand in helping me;*
  - j. Demonstrate reckless courage and gamble your life to serve Jesus Christ and people.