

Epaphroditus, My Brother

Philippians 2:24-30

24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. 25 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. 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. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 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. NKJV

Epaphroditus was a special person in the New Testament. He is not named anywhere outside the book of Philippians. Yet we see what type of person he was. He was a convert from Philippi and was a gentile. His name means handsome or charming. I don't know what Epaphroditus looked like on the outside but I know what he looked like on the inside. And he certainly was charming as we will see.

I. Epaphroditus

A. My brother

1. Christianity crossed all barriers.

- a. For the most part the ancient world was sharply divided between Greeks and Romans, Jews and Gentiles, aristocrats and plebeians, citizens and soldiers. There was nothing that genuinely united all branches of this greatly polarized society. Boice, James Montgomery: *Philippians : An Expository Commentary*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books, 2000, S. 158
- b. Paul was a Jew, Timothy was half Jew, but Epaphroditus was a gentile.
- c. But he was a brother.
- d. The Greek word "brother," means literally, "from the same womb." It speaks of a common origin. A common origin speaks of a common level. The great apostle puts himself on a common level with this humble brother in Christ who was the Philippians' messenger to Paul. Thus it is that Christianity levels off artificial earthly distinctions and places all, rich and poor, nobility and peasantry, wise and unlearned, on the same level, yes, but on what level? Wuest, K. S. (1997). *Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English reader (Php 2:25)*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- e. There were not degrees or levels in the Christian experience. Those

were put there by man a hundred years later.

- f. There was a closeness that Paul felt with all believers.
2. Now in some churches they use brother so and so and sister so and so.
 - a. I like that for it reminds us of who we are.
 - b. But I would much rather be in a church where they do not use the language but have the attitude of brothers and sisters than to be in a church where they use the language but it is empty and hollow.
 3. In Christianity we do not distinguish between the haves and the have-nots.
 - a. At Philippi each person was lost and without hope when Paul came to town.
 - b. They each were separated from God and bound for hell.
 - c. It was only their connection to Jesus Christ that had lifted them out of the miserable pit they were in.
 - d. And when you come to the cross, all your self-importance is left behind.

B. Fellow worker

1. But Paul's relationship with Epaphroditus was not just one of fellowship.
 - a. Now fellowship is good.
 - b. Every church should have times of fellowship and spend time with one another.
 - c. You should have more in common with the people of your church than with anyone else.
 - d. That does not mean that you do not have other friends, that is dangerous also.
 - e. But we must remember that people who do not know the Lord are following a different master.
2. Warren Wiersbe says that Epaphroditus was a well rounded Christian.
 - a. He was more than just someone to hang around with and fellowship with.
 - b. He was someone who would help in the work.
 - c. He was a balanced Christian (v. 25). Paul could not say enough about this man—"My brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier." These three descriptions parallel what Paul wrote

about the Gospel in the first chapter of this letter:

“my brother”— “the “fellowship in the Gospel” (Phil. 1:5)

“my companion in labor”— “the furtherance of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:12)

“my fellow soldier”—“the faith of the Gospel” (Phil. 1:27)

Epaphroditus was a balanced Christian!

Balance is important in the Christian life. Some people emphasize “fellowship” so much that they forget the furtherance of the Gospel. Others are so involved in defending the “faith of the Gospel” that they neglect building fellowship with other believers. Epaphroditus did not fall into either of these traps. He was like Nehemiah, the man who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem with his sword in one hand and his trowel in the other (Neh. 4:17). You cannot build with a sword nor battle with a trowel! It takes both to get the Lord’s work accomplished.

Dr. H.A. Ironside used to tell about a group of believers who thought only of “fellowship.” They had little concern for reaching the lost or for defending the faith against its enemies. In front of their meeting place they hung a sign: JESUS ONLY. But the wind blew away some of the letters, and the sign read—US ONLY. It was a perfect description of a group of people who were not balanced Christians.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Php 2:25). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

C. Fellow soldier

1. Paul saw life as a battle and Christians as soldiers in the fight.
 - a. I wonder how many see it that way today.
 - b. That is how Christians get pulled off course.
 - c. They suppose that the world is basically good and that everyone is a Christian.
 - d. We need to remember that their a saboteurs afoot.
 - e. Satan has many followers who are not gangsters or in prison.
2. Paul used language of the soldier with sword and shield.
3. A soldier is on watch and ready for the fight.
4. We need to defend the faith against those who would destroy Christianity

both from without and from within.

- D. Your messenger
 - E. The one who ministered to my need
- II. His sickness
- A. since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick almost unto death;
 - B. but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
 - C. ²⁸ Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.
- III. The Honor due Epaphroditus
- A. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 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.