

Epaphroditus: The Selfless Risk-Taker

Philippians 2:25-30
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In this passage of Scripture Paul sets forth yet another example of selfless and sacrificial service in the church for the cause of the gospel of Christ.

Exhortation in Philippians 2:3-4

Jesus – the Ultimate Example Philippians 2:5-8

Paul’s model – throughout the letter but especially in 2:17-18

Last week - The example of Timothy – 2:19-24

Today we are going to look at the example of Epaphroditus 2:25-30

Who is Epaphroditus?

His name means “lovely,” “charming,” or “amiable” (“having or displaying a friendly and pleasant manner”).

Epaphroditus is a name associated with pagan idolatry, the goddess, Aphrodite.

Epaphroditus was a convert to Christ (not to be confused with Epaphras from Colossae (Col. 1:7; 4:12). He is mentioned 2 times in Scripture, both in the letter to the Philippians (2:25 & 4:18).

The Philippian church wanted to support Paul with a gift and they sent that gift with Epaphroditus (4:15-18). He delivered the gift but at some point he became seriously ill and almost died.

We are not told if he became ill on the way to Rome how long he was in Rome before he became ill nor are we told how the believers at Philippi found out he was ill.

In our text today Paul commends Epaphroditus and explains why he is sending him back to Philippi (2:25-28). Then he gives instructions to the church how they are to receive him (2:29-30).

Paul commends Epaphroditus and explains why he is sent him back to Philippi. (2:25-28)

25But I thought it **necessary to send** to you Epaphroditus,

my brother and

describes Paul’s close personal relationship with Epaphroditus

fellow worker and

those who work together for the cause of the gospel (1 Cor. 3-9)

fellow soldier, (describes those who fight side by side)

they faced trials and conflicts together and perhaps even enemies of the gospel in their labor together (Phil. 1:28-30; 3:18)

Spiritual warfare as well as physical opposition – 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10ff

The responsibilities of a soldier - 2 Timothy 2:3-4

who is also your messenger and

apostle – not in the unique and restrictive sense like the Twelve and then Paul but more like an ambassador or envoy sent as a representative of the sender, here, the church at Philippi

minister to my need;

one who serves to meet the needs of others

in 2:17 & 2:30 translated as service in the NASB

2 Reasons are given why Paul is sending Epaphroditus home.

26because he was longing for you all and

“longing” – intense longing or yearning

Used by Paul in 1:8, “For God is my witness, how I long for you with the affection of Christ.”

was distressed

“to be anxious or to be troubled”

The only other New Testament occurrences are in reference to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:37 & Mark 14:33)

The reason for his longing and distress:

because you had heard that he was sick.

His distress was not because of his own illness or needs but because he was concerned for the believers at Philippi.

He is a perfect illustration to the Philippians of what Paul was writing to them.

Phil. 2:4 "Do not look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others."

27For indeed he was sick to the point of death,

"indeed" emphasizes the that he was sick and just how serious it was.

"to the point of death: see Phil. 2:8

Her it most likely means that "he almost died" or "he came near to death"

but God had mercy on him,

The emphasis is not on the healing but God's sovereign mercy

Eph. 2:4ff.

and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

2 Corinthians 6:4-10 (v. 10a "sorrowful yet always rejoicing")

28Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.

"less anxious" (ESV)

It was a sacrifice for Paul to send him back to Philippi.

Phil. 2:3-4; 6

Paul could have listed all the reasons why he needed to keep Epaphroditus with him but he didn't, Instead he sent him back.

Paul exhorts the church how to treat those who faithfully discharge their duties in the work of Christ.

29Receive him then in the Lord with all joy,

"receive," or "welcome" (a command)

"in the Lord"

"with all joy"

and hold men like him in high regard; (honor – ESV)

“great esteem,” “regard with great respect”

Reason

30because **he came close to death** for the work of Christ,

risking his life

Risk – a situation involving exposure to danger. It involves the possibility of loss.

Acts 20:24

Mark 8:35

to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

(see 4:15-19)

Application:

Think about the string of examples that Paul has presented to emphasize the importance of Philippians 2:3-4.

Think about and put into practice the model of Epaphroditus and his risking his life for the cause of Christ.

Do I ever take risks for the cause of Christ?

Epaphroditus faithfully served Christ.

1 Peter 4:10-11

Honor people who work in the work of the gospel.

By God’s grace, let’s be a church that models Philippians 2:3-4.