

Series: Unlikely Heroes

EPAPHRODITUS

PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30

Text: Philippians 2:25-30

Introduction:

As we read the epistles of Paul it is easy to see that he crossed the paths with many different individuals.

Some of these individuals, it would seem, were a great hindrance to the work that the Lord called and commissioned Paul to.

2 Timothy 2:14

¹⁴ Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.

Philippians 1:16

¹⁶ The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

1 Timothy 1:19-20

¹⁹ Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: ²⁰ Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.

However, most of the people Paul met were a great blessing to his life and ministry. Paul closes most of his letters with a personal note to some of these very special people. In the last chapter of the book of Romans, Paul mentions at least 35 people by name!

In our text this evening, Paul speaks about two men who were very helpful to him and the work of the Lord.

One we know several things about, the other we know next to nothing.

It's this little known individual that we consider this evening – his name is Epaphroditus.

While we may not know much about Epaphroditus, but the small amount of information Paul gives us, tells us much about this special man. His name means “*lovely*” and he was a man who lived up to his name.

In these verses, we are given a glimpse of a man who possessed certain characteristics that should be possessed by every believer.

The things we see in Epaphroditus are the things that should be in the life of every believer.

Note:

1. HIS BACKGROUND

- He was a Gentile – either Greek or a Roman.
- He was a member of the local church at Philippi.
- His name means: agreeable; handsome or charming.
- Though we don't know what this man looked like we certainly know that his character and service matched his name.

2. HIS BALANCE

It is easy for Christians to get out of balance. We are prone to focus on one area of our Christian walk to the exclusion of other areas that are just as important.

Some people get off balance in the area of fellowship; everything is about being with their “*group*” and having a good time.

For some it is legalism, they are so concerned with keeping things in line with their idea of how things ought to be that they set themselves up as spiritual detectives who investigate and correct the motives and action of others.

Notice the three areas of his life that were balanced:

A. In His Walk As a Son – Paul calls him brother which would make him a son of God.

Philippians 2:25

²⁵ *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, **my brother**, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

Not only was he balanced in his “Walk” but also:

B. In His Work as a Servant

Philippians 2:25

²⁵ *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and **companion in labour**, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

He shouldered his portion of the load. He was not a loafer, who let others carry his part but rather he was a laborer he was doing all that he could do in the work of the Lord.

Note again in verse 25 it tells us that he was a “messenger and a minister.”

He was sent by the church at Philippi with a gift for Paul. He was their messenger.

But, I think the greatest gift from Philippi was Epaphroditus himself.

Why?

Because, when he arrived in Rome, Paul had somebody who was willing to assist and help him in the ministry.

Not only was he balanced in his “Walk,” and his “Work” but also:

C. In His Warfare as a Soldier

Philippians 2:25

²⁵ *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, **and fellowsoldier**, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.*

When Paul calls this man a “fellovsoldier” he is talking about a man who is “an associate in the spiritual conflicts of the Christian life”.

We need to understand that there are spiritual conflicts and warfare daily in the Christian life. Epaphroditus was active in all these areas of the Christian life.

We have seen his “Background” and “Balance” – balanced in his walk, in his work and in his warfare but note also:

3. HIS BURDEN

Note:

A. The Focus of the Burden (vs. 26-27)

Philippians 2:26-27

²⁶ *For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.* ²⁷ **For indeed he was sick nigh unto death:** *but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*

Paul says that “he was sick nigh unto death”. It’s interesting to consider; Paul had healed others so why didn’t he heal Epaphroditus?

Possibly, the sign gift of healing had already been phased out.

Either way, this passage lets us know that God, not man is in charge of healing.

Even though he was desperately ill, his focus was not on himself. His focus was on his brothers and sisters at

Philippi! He had heard that they had heard he was sick. He is burdened because they are worried about him!

Note not only the “Focus” of his burden but also:

B. The Fruit of His Burden

Epaphroditus was the kind of person who made you feel important and loved.

He was an encourager! As a result, he was a joy to know and be around!

We have seen his “Background” “Balance” and “Burden” but note also:

4. HIS BRAVERY

Again we see his bravery in his

A. Service

He put his life on the line to see Paul’s needs met and to see souls brought into the kingdom of God.

Philippians 2:25

²⁵ *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that **ministered to my wants.***

Philippians 2:30

³⁰ *Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, **to supply your lack of service toward me.***

This seems to indicate that the sickness Epaphroditus endured was the result of his labors for the Lord.

Tradition tells us that Epaphroditus was known for his work among the sick in Rome. It is said that he and others would try to help people that most others would not even dare go near.

For this man, nothing in this life was more important than doing the will of the Lord, even if it cost him everything!

Not only do we see his bravery in his “Service” but also it’s seen in his:

B. Sacrifice

He put his life on the line to see Paul’s needs met and to see souls led to the Lord.

Illustration: John Elliot

John Elliot who gave his life trying to reach a tribe of Indians in South America made this statement:

“He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”

Epaphroditus knew this and lived by this motto! He put everything on the line for the Lord!

We have seen his “Background” “Balance” “Burden” and “Bravery” but note also:

5. THE BLESSING

- He was a blessing to Paul.

Even in sickness he was serving Paul.

- He was a blessing to his church.

Paul admonishes the church to honor him.

Philippians 2:29

²⁹ *Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:*

There is nothing wrong in giving honor to a Christian who serves Christ. Christ still gets the glory.

Note 1 Thessalonians 5:

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13

¹² And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; ¹³ And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. *And* be at peace among yourselves.

He is a blessing to us today

He shows us that the joyful life comes in a life of sacrifice and service and that the submissive mind really works.

Close:

Epaphroditus was to be prized and considered precious.

Do you know what Temple Baptist Church needs?

Not money, this is God's boat and He knows how to keep it afloat!

Not prestige in the community.

You can look for many to criticize this church as the day's move forward.

Why?

Because we are out of step with the world and we don't intend to change!

Not political influence.

This world and all that is within it will burn one day.

What we need are people who will commit themselves to be like this example!

We need men, women, boys and girls who will put everything on the line for the cause of Christ, who will hold nothing back.

Are we willing to be such a person?