

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS
“Epaphroditus: Apostle of Philippi”
Philippians 2:25-30

Reconsider

1. For the sake of the Gospel, Paul was in prison (cf. 1:12, 13). To many this could have been viewed as a hindrance, but the prison became an opportunity for witness (1:13-18).

2. Moreover, the prison experience elicited Paul being employed to write some letters to some churches in which he had been involved. One of these was Philippi. He hopes to stand at the Judgement Seat of Christ with joy knowing he had run and labored among them successfully (2:16).

3. Regretfully, now in prison his fate was unsure (2:17, 18). Therefore Paul intended to send Timothy, his trusted son in the faith, to learn about them and they about him (2:19-23). Timothy's mission was to wait the outcome of Paul's situation.

4. Meanwhile, Paul decided to send (back) Epaphroditus to Philippi. In so doing, Paul gave his evaluation of him:

1. The POSITION of Epaphroditus v. 25

The epistolary aorist employed concerning Epaphroditus was due to the fact that Timothy's visit and that of Paul were probable, but contingent (2:23, 24). The Philippians had interest and confidence in Epaphroditus. It was necessary to send him. This man apparently was named by his pagan parents after the goddess Aphrodite. He is probably not the same as Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 23). Paul sees this man as:

a. The Brother

Under the vinculum of a common article, three nouns are listed. The first is “brother.” This demonstrates a filial relation. He is to Paul a brother in the faith, in the Lord.

b. The Companion

The text actually has one word: “fellow worker.” He was, therefore, a co-worker in preaching the faith.

c. The Fellowsoldier

The possessive “my” is associated with the final epithet. It stands in sharp contrast with the word “your.” “Fellowsoldier” is the climactic consideration of Epaphroditus. It affirms he shares Paul's common danger (cf. Philemon 2).

d. The Messenger

The particle “but” distinguishes “messenger” from the previous three nouns. Epaphroditus is the “Apostle” (sent one from Philippi, so Greek). While etymologically the noun is the same as those chosen by the Lord, the significance varies.

e. The Minister

This noun expresses a wide reference to Epaphroditus on his seeking the offering of the Philippian church and his ministering to Paul's needs (not “wants”).

2. The CONDITION with Epaphroditus vv. 26, 27

a. Personally v. 26

Epaphroditus was deeply moved for the Philippians. Two imperfect verbs (longed and full of

heaviness) point to continuous action in the past. The first verb is found earlier (1:8). The second means to be distressed and suggests bewilderment, not knowing what to do for relief.

b. Physically vv. 26, 27

The fact that the news reached Philippi about Epaphroditus brought him distress. And the fact of the matter is -- Epaphroditus did become sick (ingressive aorist) nigh unto death (only N.T. example of this adverbial position).

The adversative “but God” is so neat. What could have been death was changed through God's mercy! It is true that Paul exercised the gift of supernatural healing, but he did not do it continuously nor was it at his absolute disposal. One must acknowledge the transient and temporary character of supernatural signs in Apostolic times (cf. Heb. 2:1-4).

c. Practically v. 27

The mercy of God toward Epaphroditus was not limited to him. It reached out to Paul (“But also me”). The purpose clause is clear. God's mercy delivered Paul from the additional sorrow which bereavement over Epaphroditus's death would have brought him. The sorrow associated with his captivity was enough. God had mercy on him.

3. The INTENTION for Epaphroditus v. 28

a. His return

Inasmuch as Epaphroditus recovered and the Philippians had heard about his sickness, Paul sent him back with greater eagerness.

b. His relation

The word “again” is best taken with the verb “rejoice” rather than “see.” The Philippians would regain their rejoicing when they saw Epaphroditus. Additionally, Paul himself would have less sorrow. The sorrow of prison remained.

4. The CONSIDERATION of Epaphroditus v. 29, 30

a. Receive him v. 29

The strengthened form of the verb in the imperatival mode expresses to receive favorably to oneself (cf. Luke 15:2; Ro. 16:2). This is to be done “in the Lord” and “with every kind of joy.”

b. Hold him v. 29

Here is another imperative verb meaning to have in the sense of acknowledge. “Such” is used to identify Epaphroditus as a sort of specimen of a class. He is to be held “in honor” (KJV “reputation”), a term denoting “in high value” (cf. Luke 7:2; 1 Pet. 2:4, 6).

c. Remember him v. 30

The work Epaphroditus performed in behalf of Paul was really the work of Christ, the Gospel. By it, he was in danger and almost died. In fact, hazarded his life (throwing it aside) to fill up for the lack of the personal presence and care the Philippians were unable to provide. Epaphroditus did it all and almost died in the process.

Conclusion

So what is there to learn from this study? God has His select men for His service. Some virtually get sick doing their job. Nevertheless, they alleviate the pain others endure. Check out what God has called you to do. Give it your full energy. You will bring blessing.