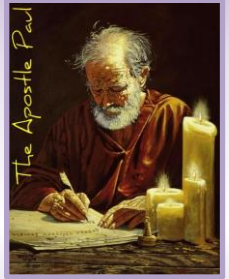


PHILIPPIANS

Joy In Christ



Lesson 08: Three Examples of Humility ... [PHILIPPIANS 2:17-30]

PREVIEW

Paul rejoices in his service to the Lord, despite not knowing his fate, whether release or death at the hands of his captors, and asks his readers to do the same. He prepares to send two men back to the Philippians, with this letter. The first is Timothy, who according to Paul, has a tender heart for the Philippians and who has been a faithful servant to both Paul and the gospel. The second is Epaphroditus, who brought the original message to Paul from Philippi. Epaphroditus suffered much, almost to the point of death, for the gospel and still had a great concern for his fellow Christians in Philippi.

PAUL POURED OUT: (2:17-18)

HIS OFFERING (17)

The phrase “on the sacrifice and service of your faith” points to the time when Paul completely surrendered his life to God. Unfortunately, many believers never make this decision to lose their lives for Christ’s sake (Matthew 16:24-25). The “sacrifice” refers to the Jewish rite of the burnt offering in which an animal was totally consumed on the altar to show the complete and voluntary dedication of a person to God. Offerers made this sacrifice because they were thankful for all that God had done for them. Paul gave his life entirely over to God to live for His glory (1:20).

The conditional clause “if I am being poured out” reveals the strong possibility of imminent martyrdom of the apostle. Paul had given his life to live for God and others; now he was willing to give his life to die for them. In this way he emulated the self-emptying of Christ and His obedience unto death (2:7-8). Paul elsewhere confessed his willingness to die for Christ as a drink offering (Acts 21:13; 2 Timothy 4:6-8).

HIS REJOICING (18)

Rejoicing has two directions. First, “I am glad and rejoice with you all.”

He rejoiced in the prospect of a death that would glorify God and advance the believers’ faith. Second, he called upon them to rejoice with him (“For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me”). They were saddened by his imprisonment, but he wanted their despair to be turned into joy by the truth of his letter and by the personal witness of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

TIMOTHY COMMENDED: (2:19-24)

PAUL’S PURPOSE FOR TIMOTHY (19)

Paul always made his travel plans in total submission to God’s will (Acts 18:21; Romans 15:32). His human desire is seen in the verb “I hope”. His acknowledgment of the divine will is evident in the phrase, “I trust in the Lord.” At the beginning and the end of this section, Paul presents three purposes concerning Timothy. In between, he discusses the character qualification of his young associate.

Paul’s first purpose for Timothy was to send him to the church “shortly” (2:19, 23). Paul was awaiting the disposition of his appeal before Caesar and the Roman authorities (2:23).

Paul’s second purpose was to be encouraged “that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.” Timothy would be the first to be cheered by the response of the church to Paul’s letter; then he would report back to Paul either by personal visit or by representative.

The final purpose for Timothy was to prepare for the visit by Paul (2:24). Paul then expressed confidence that he would be able to visit Philippi. The verb “I trust” is different than the one used for the sending of Timothy (2:19). It denotes a settled assurance and conviction of heart produced by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

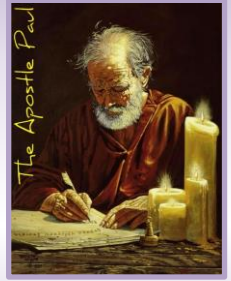
WHY DID PAUL DECIDE TO SEND TIMOTHY? (20)

HE WAS “LIKE-MINDED” (2:20): Both Paul and Timothy shared the mind of Christ, thought the same things, and had the same spiritual goals.

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HE HAD CONCERN (2:20): Timothy manifested the same care for the churches that Paul showed (2 Corinthians 11:28). He prayed, taught, and counseled others.

HE WAS NOT SELFISH (2:21): The words “for all seek their own” have a ring of sadness in them. Selfish persons do not seek the things “of Christ Jesus.” These things include the mind of Christ as seen in humility, obedience, and concern for others.

HE WAS A SERVANT (2:22): Timothy was a Proven Servant. The Philippians were aware of his character (“you know”), for they had had contact with him. **Timothy was a Cooperative Servant.** Paul said of Timothy, “he server with me.” Timothy, however, served “as a son with his father”. **Timothy was a Servant of the Gospel.** He determined to further the outreach of the redemptive message in the lives of both sinners and believers.

EPAPRODITUS PRAISED: (2:25-30)

Epaphroditus means “lovely” or “charming”. It is probably based on Aphrodite, the pagan goddess of love and beauty. His name occurs only twice in the Scriptures, both times in this book (2:25; 4:18).

THE BROTHER: Relationship is more crucial than responsibility; so Paul first describes Epaphroditus as his brother. They were both in the family of God through regeneration, and they were joined together with the brothers and sisters at Philippi (1:12; 3:1).

THE WORKER: Epaphroditus was a fellow worker. He and Paul were working out what God was working in. Paul saw himself as a coworker with God and with other believers in a common effort to reach people with the gospel.

THE SOLDIER: Epaphroditus was a fellow soldier. He endured hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3-4). He took his stand with Paul in aggressive defense of the gospel (1:7).

THE MESSENGER: Epaphroditus was the “messenger” of the church. This term is nominally translated “apostle”, but he was not an apostle in the technical sense.

THE MINISTER: Epaphroditus was also a minister to the needs of the apostle. The phrase “the one who ministered” is actually a noun. It is used of official and sacred service.

Epaphroditus truly looked on the interests of others (2:4), as clearly demonstrated in the details surrounding his sickness.

HE WAS DISTRESSED: This is the same term used of Christ’s agony in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33). It stresses mental (body), emotional (soul), and spiritual (spirit) anguish.

HIS HEALING: The church knew that their member had become ill, but they apparently did not know the severity of the weakness. Paul now informed them that Epaphroditus was sick “almost unto death.” God extended physical mercy to Epaphroditus and psychological mercy to Paul (“and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow”). The first sorrow came when the co-worker became sick, and the second would have come if he had died.

RECEIVE HIM: The word “therefore” shows what response the church should have toward Epaphroditus in the light of his dedicated service and return. They should receive him in the Lord with all gladness (Matthew 10:40-41).

HONOR HIM: They should also “hold such men in esteem.” The phrase “in esteem” literally means “in honor”.

HE WORKED FOR CHRIST: Epaphroditus’ motivation was the gospel ministry. He declared the redemptive work of Christ, namely, His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 16:10). In his concern for Paul’s needs, he did not look on his own needs.