



# PHILIPPIANS 2: 25-30

## Epaphroditus' Example of: Christ-likeness



*19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. 20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. 23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.*

## PHIL 2:25 – 30 :

25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; 26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore 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. 29 Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.



25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

## Is Ephaphroditus here the Same as Epaphras in Colossians?

- i. It's the same name- Epaphras is a shortened version of Epaphroditus
- ii. Epaphroditus means: a charming, handsome, loved one belonging of Aphrodite
- iii. Aphrodite: Greek goddess of love and beauty
- iv. Epaphras: the contraction just means, charming, handsome, etc.
- v. BOTH: in Rome with Paul 60 to 62 A.D. during his imprisonment. Epaphras was (possibly) a fellow prisoner in Rome w/ Paul and started the Colossian church & Epaphroditus got the letter penned to the Philippians.

**Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you,** (Philemon 1:23) (in a plea to Philemon to consider Onesimus the slave as now- a brother. Tychicus was escorting Onesimus back to his owner Philemon; Tychicus was bringing the letter to Colossae and to Philemon)

### COL 1:

4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel 6 which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, *even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth;* 7 **just as you learned it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant,** who is **a faithful servant of Christ** on our behalf, 8 and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.



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COL 4:

12 Epaphras, *who is one of your number*, a bonds slave of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, **always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers**, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God. 13 For I testify for him that he has a deep concern for you and for those who are in Laodicea and Hierapolis.



# Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

## Paul's Epistle to the Philippians: Introduction

- **History of the Epistle:**

- The letter was written to the believers in Philippi in ~60-62 A.D. while Paul was under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial before emperor Nero.
- After several roadblocks in his travel, Paul went to Troas where he was given the vision of a Macedonian man to come to Europe. On his way Paul went to Philippi. Luke joined Silas and Timothy there.
- The letter must have been written after the 3 other Epistles were sent from Rome, because Luke was likely no longer with him (*Phil 2:20*)
- When Paul arrived in Philippi, he discovered that the man of Macedonia was the woman Lydia, holding a prayer meeting by the riverside (*Acts 16:13-16*).

1st Missionary Journey (45 - 47 A.D.)		
No books were written		
2nd Missionary Journey (51 - 54 A.D.)		
1.	1 Thessalonians (52 - 53 A.D.)	Written from Corinth
2.	2 Thessalonians (52 - 53 A.D.)	Written from Corinth
3rd Missionary Journey (54 - 58 A.D.)		
3.	1 Corinthians (Spring, 57 A.D.)	Written from Ephesus
4.	2 Corinthians (Autumn, 57 A.D.)	Written from Macedonia
5.	Galatians (Winter, 57 A.D.)	Written from Greece
6.	Romans (Spring 58, A.D.)	Written from Corinth
First Roman Imprisonment (61 - 63 A.D.)		
7.	Philemon (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
8.	Colossians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
9.	Ephesians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
10.	Philippians (61 or 62 A.D.)	Written from Rome
Between First & Second Imprisonments (63 - 67 A.D.)		
11.	1 Timothy (67 A.D.)	Written from Macedonia
12.	Titus (67 A.D.)	Written from Ephesus
Second Roman Imprisonment (68 A.D.)		
13.	2 Timothy (68 A.D.)	Written from Rome

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**‘But’**: *de* : not a contrast but a ‘moreover’ conjunction, or ‘furthermore’

Necessary: the condition of things with Paul in Rome and the necessity of the spiritual well-being of the Philippian saints required him being sent back

Epaphroditus is an: *adelphos* – fellow believer united with a bond of affection

Epaphroditus is a fellow worker, a *synergos* – with-laborer, a fellow together-working in an undertaking, enterprise (this case the gospel of Christ, Christ’s ongoing ministry to believers)

Fellow soldier: *systratiōtēs* - a fellow corpsman / platoon member, (a band of soldiers from the Greek): *stratia* This designation denotes an in-common exposure to the dangers of a gospel warrior. II Cor. 11:26 (dangers from: rivers, seas, wilderness, in the city, false brethren, robbers, etc.)

Epaphroditus is a messenger: a *commissioned* ‘sent one’ from the Philippians to Paul; *apostolos*

Epaphroditus is a minister to Paul’s need – *leitourgos* – one about the business of, the undertaking of the needs of a group of people (Politics: Housing Minister); laboring in spiritual things for just Paul



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## MEETING PAUL'S NEEDS:

The church at Philippi sent Paul: a monetary care package with Epaphroditus. When in prison, he needed to provide his own provisions

Not only that: Phil. 4:12 – the Philippians supported Paul after he left them and was establishing the church in Thessalonica (more than one gift)





26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

Epaphroditus' sickness:

Could have been the Roman fever according to H.A. Ironside. 'trench fever' was spread in body lice and "*causes cyclical five-day fevers, bone pain, headaches, nausea, vomiting and other unpleasant symptoms.*" (Smithsonianmag.com)

Important Point: Philippi believers sent Epaphroditus, an approx. 800 mi. trek (perhaps a month-long trip). They Heard of it from someone, then a same someone or another person, went back to Rome because he was distressed about them hearing about his sickness

***'But God had mercy on him'***

***eleos***: to help in affliction; [Wuest, quoting Trench,] removing one's misery, or making it less in severity. God assuaged both: Epaphroditus' misery in sickness; and Paul's heart-sickness if Epaphroditus had died.

Paul: could have healed Epaphroditus, why didn't he in your opinion?

***'sorrow upon sorrow'*** (Vincent): an accusative implying motion: sorrow coming upon sorrow, wave after wave





Epaphroditus' possible route

Or: perhaps more likely:







28 Therefore 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.

Therefore: Paul logically concludes the best thing to nurse 1) Epaphroditus' troubled, anguished soul about being worried over, and 2) the Philippian's longing to see him again, to turn their sorrow into joy

*On his return trip to Philippi: I surmise that Epaphroditus had an invisible army of angels following him, (Elisha and the opening of his servant's eyes to the invisible protection in II Kings): to get the letter to the Philippians safely in their hands*

*Epaphroditus was a courier of great value. This letter has eternal value.*

**'all the more eagerly'**: *spoudaiōs* is sending Epaphroditus back to you: post-haste!

**'that you may rejoice'**: "joy" used 7 times in this epistle; "rejoice"- 8 times. An important theme of Philippians is Paul's joy in them and their joy in the Lord. *(A fruit of the H.S. and the presence of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ within the believer.)*

Paul is displaying his role of shepherding the Philippian flock in these verses: ***(poimainō)*** the flock; which has some of the following associated works: ***protecting; rescuing; mending wounds; consoling***



29 Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

v. 29, 30 – we have a restored Epaproditus coming back with the Letter

**‘receive him’** – **pros** (facing towards) – **dechomai** (take by the hand, take in, grant access to oneself for fellowship, friendship, hospitality)

**‘hold men like him in high regard’** – prize him highly, honor him, he is precious

**Thrust of Paul’s vignette on the life and work of Epaphroditus:** is to show his example as a man who put himself and his welfare behind for the work of ministering to Paul as a representative Philippian believer. [Phil 2: 3,4]

... And having the mind of Christ, Christ’s thinking and heart; emptying himself to serve Paul and serve the Philippian flock... [Phil 2: 5-8]

**‘risking his life’** to complete this mission – [Vincent] not regarding his life; venturing his life, exposing his life to risk, hazardly; early church brothers who cared for the sick were regard as ‘reckless persons’

**‘what was deficient (or lacking) in your service to me’** – is contrary to how it reads in English; a compliment, an affectionate way of saying: I see your service (and gifts to me) and that you could have brought them to me personally if you could have.... The deficiency is in the distance of Rome to Philippi.



## Summarizing the Ministry of Epaphroditus; Philippians 2: 25-30

- “Six verses in our chapter are devoted to the perfect pattern, to the Lord’s humbling of Himself and His exaltation, and six verses are devoted to Epaphroditus and the way he answered to the pattern. And Epaphroditus was neither an Apostle not an apostle’s delegate, he was just a brother.” [J.T. Mawson]
- Indispensable to Paul and a pattern of the Lord Jesus’s pattern of sacrificial service
- He ‘filled the gap’; C.H. Mackintosh: “But Epaphroditus, that dear, unpretending, self-surrendering servant of Christ, presented himself to supply the missing link, to do the very thing that was needed and nothing more; to be the channel of communication between the assembly at Philippi and the apostle at Rome. Deep and real as was the apostle's need, precious and seasonable as was the Philippians' gift, yet an instrument was needed to bring them both together, and Epaphroditus offered himself for the work. There was a manifest need and he filled it”
- “Epaphroditus was not one of the pushing, self-confident, extensive class. He was a dear, self-hiding, lowly servant of Christ, one of that class of workmen to whom we are irresistibly attracted. Nothing is more charming than an unpretending, retiring man who is content just to fill the empty niche; to render the needed service, whatever it is; to do the work cut out for him by the Master's hand.”  
[EPAPHRODITUS: C.H. Mackintosh, From Short Papers]