

In PHI 2:25 we meet Epaphroditus who was a leader and a commander of the Philippian church, and a true friend of the Apostle Paul. Considering the fact that God the Holy Spirit chose to record his name forever in the Word of God, we should take more than just a quick glance at this man Epaphroditus.

PHI 2:25 “Now I consider it necessary to send face to face with you Epaphroditus, my brother also my fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;”

Notice that this is a reference to Paul's spiritual need not his material need. Epaphroditus was a very relaxed individual with integrity and honor, and was one of Paul's most devoted and faithful friends. We, like Paul all need a companion, a friend. If there is anything that is priceless and rare to have in life, it is a true friend you can trust. Even a mature believer, like Paul needs encouragement and companionship at certain times as they're going forward in the Pre-designed Plan of God (PPOG).

While we live by GAL 6:5 “For each one shall bear his own load; we also need to remember the balance in GAL 6:2 “Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.”

Epaphroditus was a leader of the Philippian church and he really loved his congregation. He was a doctrinal teacher and a doctrinal teacher always falls in love with a positive congregation. A pastor's love for his congregation should never be on the basis of personal rapport or friendship, his entire love should be based upon those who come under his ministry and listen to the teaching of the word of God.

The Philippians are saturated with doctrine in their souls and many of them have become spiritually self-sustaining. They don't work into their pastor's time by crying on his shoulder or trying to get counsel. They recognized that their pastor has given them the most important thing in life, the most precious and the most valuable, Bible doctrine. The Philippians have been blessed because of their spiritual advance and they not only supported their pastor financially, but they supported the apostle Paul for the next twenty years of his ministry. Both of them had more than enough, as Paul will say in PHI 4:18. Nero will very shortly release him and Paul will then use that money to travel all over the ancient world including Spain.

As we move to verse 26, we see so great was Epaphroditus' capacity for love that he became distressed at the thought of bringing discomfort to someone he loved, his congregation. Epaphroditus was distressed because the Philippians were distressed over his terrible illness. The congregation in Philippi loved this man so much, they did not want him to die. Epaphroditus was a plugger and they all would have missed him and it was no accident that he had left his congregation to take thousands of dollars to the apostle Paul. Many people take a plugger for granted. He was faithful and consistent and he kept right on teaching, teaching and teaching, in spite of any problems he faced. He didn't have the genius of Paul or the eloquence of Timothy. He did not have the impulsiveness of Peter, or the sweetness of John, he wasn't tough like Titus, and they were all great communicators of doctrine. Epaphroditus was, what most would call, the average pastor, but he was not average at all but a person who was persistent as well as consistent, who kept on plugging. He kept at it. Sometimes the only way to ever come to appreciate a plugger is for God to remove him for a while. So God took him away from Philippi and took him over to Rome and that's when they really began to appreciate him. When they heard that he was dying and they might not get him back at all, they were in total despair.

So there is the background then to PHI 2:26-27 “because he was longing for all of you and was distressed because you had heard that he had become critically ill. For, in fact, he was so critically ill that he nearly died, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.”

Epaphroditus was the beneficiary of grace and mercy as was Paul. Epaphroditus has been a spiritual blessing to Paul just as Paul has been to Epaphroditus. To take out Epaphroditus would leave Paul desolate at this point and therefore God had mercy on the apostle as well. Every one who came into contact with this super-grace believer was blessed by association. The Philippian congregation was blessed by his teaching. The apostle Paul was blessed by his friendship. The congregation was also blessed because he didn't want them to know that he was dying. Epaphroditus came at the right time, when so many believers as it were, had stabbed Paul in the back. The Roman church had turned against him in their cowardice and began to malign him and then they actually took the side of Nero against him.

So the death of Epaphroditus would have been additional sorrow to Paul, maybe even more than what he could bear. Under the principle of logistical grace, God never puts on the believer more than he can bear and that is especially true in spiritual adulthood when the pressures are so much greater. Therefore, Epaphroditus was not only spared for Paul's sake but for the congregation who had come to appreciate his faithfulness in the day by day teaching of the word of God. God is extremely thoughtful of any believer in spiritual adulthood. God will pull many strings in history so that the mature believer will never come under the principle of sorrow stacked upon sorrow. Very few individuals were willing to stand by Paul, especially for the last two years of his life when he had made a series of negative decisions and was under discipline by God. Epaphroditus was willing to take a servant's place so that he could fulfill the responsibility of the Philippian church to the Apostle Paul. Epaphroditus was an affectionate friend to the apostle, he knew his soul in adversity, acknowledged him in prison, and contributed to his comfort and support. God will not give the believer more than he can bear, and at this time Paul needed Epaphroditus alive.

The phrase in verse 27 "lest I should have sorrow stacked upon sorrow" reveals God's love for the apostle Paul. God will allow His people to descend to the last degree of sorrow to relieve them afterwards from it with greater appreciation for the power of God. For God, the greater our danger, the more glorious His power which is another manifestation of His love for us. You may often be challenged rightly or wrongly on the issue of how much you love God? This is, of course, an important question. However, try dwelling on the assurance that God loves you. You need to be assured of this before you try to love God, MIC 7:18; ZEP 3:17; ROM 8:38-39; 1JO 4:10-16. When we believe that God loves us, it makes us very sensitive toward others.

We must also mention that there are many forms of sorrows, Paul experienced sorrows under the Gal 6:7 principle of reaping what you sow. There are four reasons for sorrow:

1. The law of volitional responsibility.

2. The law of divine discipline.

This happens if the believer persists in the life of negative volition toward doctrine and lives in the cosmic system quenching the Spirit or grieving the Spirit.

3. To increase spiritual growth and momentum. This type of sorrow is designed to strengthen the believer and to increase his spiritual growth. It is strictly for blessing.

4. Testing for blessing. This falls under the category of undeserved suffering. Paul had both deserved and undeserved but they were all eventually turned into blessing because of ROM 8:28, we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God.

In Phi 2:28-30, it says, "Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; because He came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me."

In these three verses, we have the conclusion of a great biography. The biography of a person who should be the exact copy for every believer today. This is what a pastor should be, a plugger, studying and teaching. This is what every person who is faithful in taking in the word should be, stabilized and consistent. Consistent in the intake of the word. Never being jealous or vain or proud. Never being lustfully ambitious, never trying to compete with others in the sense of outdoing people.

Epaphroditus is about to be returned and this is a very dramatic thing. He never gave up for a moment. When he gets back his departure and his absence has been so much appreciated that they will stare and be happy to have him back. They really didn't appreciate that until he was gone. Many of them are willing and anxious for Epaphroditus to return. He was gambling his life when he went and he knew that he might not come back, but he went anyway. He left Philippi with that large offering but he was sick and he didn't tell anyone. You can see what a fantastic man he was! He didn't complain. He didn't run around looking for someone to feel sorry for him. He knew when he left his congregation that he was getting really sick but he never said a thing.

Epaphroditus was the kind of person willing to risk everything for the sake of others. He is a memorial to the type of a person who starts life as a plugger and winds up to be a truly great person.

Paul streaked to greatness, Epaphroditus plugged to greatness and so can YOU!

I 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints or Royal family in Christ Jesus who are located in Philippi including the overseers [pastor-teachers] and deacons:

I 1:2 Grace to you and prosperity from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I 1:3 I keep on giving thanks to my God for every memory of you,

I 1:4 always in every prayer of mine on behalf of all of you when offering prayer with the inner happiness [a reference to God's love]

I 1:5 Because of your contribution in spreading the gospel from the first day until this very moment.

I 1:6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who has begun in you an absolute good work will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus.

I 1:7 Since it is right for me to be holding this opinion in behalf of all of you, because you have a very special place in my heart [right-lobe], both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, all of you keep on being my partners in the gospel.

I 1:8 For God is my witness, how I deeply desire all of you with the affections of Christ Jesus.

PHI 1:9 In fact, I pray this, that your virtue-love may excel to the maximum still more and more by means of metabolized doctrine resulting in all spiritual discernment,

PHI 1:10 with the result that you may approve after testing the things of greater value, in order to be inwardly pure [that is in thought] and blameless [in action] until the day of Christ;

PHI 1:11 having been filled up with the production of righteousness [which is the total fulfillment of spiritual progress] which comes through Jesus Christ, for the glory and praise of God.

PHI 1:12 Now I deeply desire all of you to comprehend, royal family, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater advancement of the gospel,

PHI 1:13 with the result that my imprisonment in Christ has become well known throughout the entire praetorian guard and to all the rest, [a reference to those at Rome]

PHI 1:14 In fact, the majority of the royal family, having received confidence in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have much greater courage to communicate without fear the word of God.

PHI 1:15 "Certain ones, on the one hand, are proclaiming the Christ even from jealousy and strife or discord, but certain ones on the other hand because of good motivation"

PHI 1:16 the latter category out of the motivation of love, fully convinced that I am appointed for the defense of the good news;

PHI 1:17 the former category from the motivation of divisive self-promotion proclaim Christ, not from pure motives, since they presume to arouse mental distress with regard to my imprisonment.

PHI 1:18 What is my conclusion? Only that in every way, whether in false motivation or in true, Christ is being proclaimed; and in this I am happy, not only at this time, but I will continue being happy.

PHI 1:19 Indeed I am convinced that this event shall turn out for my deliverance through your intercessory prayers and the logistical provision motivated by the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

Phi 1:20 "On the basis of my intense concentration and confident expectation [a personal sense of destiny] that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but with all confidence, Christ shall even now [in time] as always [in eternity] be glorified in my body, whether by life or by death."

PHI 1:21 For me, living is Christ, likewise dying is profit.

PHI 1:22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this status of maturity will mean fruitful accomplishment for me; and I'm not going to declare what to prefer.

PHI 1:23 In fact I am hard-pressed from the two alternatives [a reference to living and dying in verse 21], because I have the desire to depart and to keep on being together with Christ, for that is better by far;

PHI 1:24 Yet, on the other hand, to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

PHI 1:25 And so since having this confidence, I fully understand that I shall remain and will be continuing with all of you for your spiritual progress and inner happiness from the source of doctrine,

PHI 1:26 so that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus by means of me through my return face to face with you again.

PHI 1:27 Only live in your Heavenly privileges in a manner worthy of the good news doctrines of the Christ; in order that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm by means of one and the same Spirit, with one soul since you have joined in the conflict for the doctrines of the gospel;

PHI 1:28 Likewise, in no way be intimidated by your enemies-- which to them [intimidation] is a manifestation of destructive ways, but with reference to you, deliverance, in fact, this [deliverance] is from the source of God.

PHI 1:29 Because to you it has been graciously given with reference concerning Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer on behalf of Him,

PHI 1:30 since you have the same conflict such as you have seen in me, and now hear through me.

Phi 2:1 Since therefore there is encouragement in Christ, since there is comfort from virtue-love, since there is fellowship of the Spirit, since there is tenderesses and compassions,

PHI 2:2 Bring to completion my inner happiness [in your life] by thinking the same things, maintaining the same virtue-love, united in soul, concentrating on the same objective.

PHI 2:3 Do nothing motivated by contentiousness or ambitious pride, but with humility of mind [by means of grace orientation] let each of you keep on considering one another as more important than himself;

PHI 2:4 do not merely be regarding your own personal interests, but also for the personal interests of others.

PHI 2:5 "Keep on thinking this [doctrine] within yourselves which was also resident in Christ Jesus,"

PHI 2:6 who, although He preexisted in the essence of God, did not think equality with God a gain to be seized,

Phi 2:7 "but He deprived Himself of the proper function of deity when He had received the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men."

PHI 2:8 In fact, although having being discovered in outward appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of spiritual death, that is the death of the cross.

PHI 2:9 Therefore also the God has highly exalted Him to the maximum, and bestowed on Him the name or rank which is above every name,

PHI 2:10 in order that at the title of Jesus every knee of the heavens should bow, and on earth, and under the earth,

PHI 2:11 and that every tongue should acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, resulting in the glory of God the Father.

PHI 2:12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, be accomplishing your own preservation with respect toward Christ and reverence toward doctrine;

PHI 2:13 for it is God [the Holy Spirit] who is at work in you, both to will [give you motivation] and to work [He gives you the ability to execute] above and beyond His good pleasure.

PHI 2:14 Keep on doing all things without complaining, grumbling or arguing;

PHI 2:15 In order that you yourselves may become blameless and not diluted by evil, students of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom you appear as light giving bodies in the world,

PHI 2:16 "Be concentrating on the word of life, so that I may have a basis for boasting with reference to the day of Christ [the Rapture with emphasis on the Judgment Seat of Christ] because I did not run without profit nor worked hard in vain."

PHI 2:17 But even if I am being poured out as a libation [a drink offering and I am] on the altar of sacrifice [that's study] and service [teaching] with reference to your doctrine, I keep on having inner happiness [+H] and congratulate all of you.

PHI 2:18 For the same reason also you keep on having inner happiness, in fact, you ought to congratulate me.

PHI 2:19 But I anticipate by the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you without delay, so that I may have tranquility of soul when I learn of your condition.

PHI 2:20 For I have no one else of equal soul [comparable spiritual growth] who will genuinely be concerned for your status quo.

PHI 2:21 For they all [reversionists under the influence of evil] keep seeking their own interests, not the interest of Christ Jesus.

PHI 2:22 But you have come to know his very own character that as a student with reference to his academic ruler or teacher that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel.

PHI 2:23 Therefore I expect to dispatch him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me;

PHI 2:24 Now I have confidence in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming soon.

PHI 2:25 Now I consider it necessary to send face to face with you Epaphroditus, my brother also my fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister with reference to my need;

PHI 2:26 because he was longing for all of you and was distressed because you had heard that he had become critically ill.

PHI 2:27 For in fact, he was so critically ill that he nearly died, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow stacked upon sorrow.

PHI 2:28 Therefore I have sent him with special urgency in order that when you see him again you might have intensified happiness and I may be less concerned or less anxious about you.

PHI 2:29 Receive him [Epaphroditus] therefore in the Lord with all inner happiness, also keep on holding men like him in highest honor.

PHI 2:30 because on account of the business of Christ, He came close to dying, when he had gambled his life in order to make up for your lack of service to me.

