

Philippians, Chapter Two, Lesson Five

THE JOY OF REUNION Philippians 2:25-30

STIMULATE

** Every Christian needs to establish the pattern of turning to God's Word for answers to the questions that life can put forth. In our ongoing study of Paul's letter to the Philippians, we have arrived at the end of chapter two. The apostle will be portraying for us what it is like to be reunited with a loved one in the Lord. As he does so, we are going to be privileged to meet a man of great Christ-like qualities.

MOTIVATE

** Last week we asked, "Who is it in your Christian life that the Lord has made very dear to you?" Today the question before us is, "Who is it in Scripture that the Lord has made dear to you?" We should be able to identify, study and copy those personalities in Scripture that truly lived for the glory of God. As Paul shows us "**The Joy of Reunion**" in our passage for today, we are going to meet just such an individual. Please open your Bibles to Philippians 2:25-30

Read Passage (V.25-26) (V.27-28) (V.29-30)

Opening Prayer

The Joy of Reunion

INVESTIGATE

V.25 ** We learned together from the previous passage that Paul was going to be sending Timothy to minister to the needs of the Philippians, but what was he going to wait for according to verse 23 before sending Him?

(V.23) - "...as soon as I see how things go with me..." (The outcome of his Roman trial).

** Since this will delay Timothy's departure, what is Paul going to do?

"...I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus..." lit. lovely or loving

We are going to meet a marvelous individual in this Epaphroditus - it would be wise for us to glean all that we can from his life and apply it to our own for the glory of God.

** How many ways does Paul describe him in this verse?

Five ways -

"...my brother..."

"...fellow worker..."

"...fellow soldier..."

"...your messenger..."

"...minister to my need..."

As we study these characteristics, we will see the profile of a very Godly man.

1) "...my brother..." adelphos, Paul uses a form of this term nine times in this epistle alone. It is a tremendous term of endearment.

** What does this say of Epaphroditus' ability to form lasting and meaningful relationships?

He was a willing member of Paul's spiritual family and he would eagerly fulfill all that is expected of him as a brother. cf. 1John 2:10, 3:10, Acts 9:17

2) "...fellow worker..." cf. 2Timothy 2:6 (hard working)

Paul would list Apollos, Aquila and Priscilla, Aristarchus, Clement, Mark, Onesimus, Philemon, Timothy, Titus and Tychicus; all as fellow workers.

Epaphroditus is here added to the hall of fame of the co-workers with Paul.

** What are the two character traits always found in the heart of one who is a fellow worker for the cause of Jesus Christ?

Very willing - cf. 2Corinthians 8:5

Very available - cf. Matthew 16:24, Luke 9:23

This was the man Epaphroditus!

3) "...fellow soldier..." How is this term different?

cf. 2Timothy 2:4 - not entangled in the affairs of everyday life.

He was not only willing to work hard for the advancement of the kingdom, he knew it would be a "war or battle" and was willing to die for Christ if need be. cf. V.30 with Ephesians 6:12

4) "...your messenger..." apostolos lit. - "sent one" This is the word that gives us our English word apostle.

** Was Epaphroditus an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ?

No - he was a "sent one" on behalf of the Philippians for the needs of Paul.

** What does that say about his character from the perspective of the Philippians?

Epaphroditus was trustworthy!

5) "...minister to my need..." leitourgos lit. "a public servant" - His was an official and sacred service, on behalf of the Philippians, toward the apostle Paul, for the advancement of the kingdom.

The apostle Paul used the same word to describe his own calling to "minister" to the Gentiles in Rome. cf. Romans 15:15-16

** How do you suppose Epaphroditus viewed Paul's instructions in Philippians 2:3-4?

He lived it everyday - of course he would agree!

V.26 ** We can see that Epaphroditus is certainly one of those we would do well to emulate, what is the reason given in verse 26 for Paul to send him back to the Philippians?

"...he was longing for you all..." This expression speaks of the love capacity of the man. Not only was he sacrificially caring for the apostle, he was at the same time caring about all of his brothers and sisters in Philippi.

** Was Epaphroditus being selfish at this point? What was the cause behind his longing?

He was concerned, even distressed, because they had heard he was extremely sick!

** How would you put into your own words the nature of his concern?

He loved the Philippians so much and knew that their love for him would cause them grief at the news of his illness. That's an amazing amount of concern for others.

V.27 ** How sick was he?

To the point of death!

** Have you ever heard it said today that if you just have enough faith you won't ever be sick, or that "God wants you to be healthy"?

That popular thought in some Christian circles is in direct opposition to what is being said in this verse. Epaphroditus was a godly man who worked himself unto illness for the cause of Christ.

cf. 2Timothy 4:20, 1Timothy 5:23, Galatians 4:12-13 - Epaphroditus, Trophimus, Timothy and Paul were all godly men who were sick. Why? What were they to do with their physical weakness? cf. 2Corinthians 12:7-10 (be well content with weakness)

** Back in our passage, what was God's response to Epaphroditus' illness?

"...but God had mercy on him..."

** Did anyone else receive God's mercy?

The apostle Paul did as well, sparing Him from the sorrow he would have experienced in the permanent loss of Epaphroditus (sorrow upon sorrow).

** What was the initial cause of sorrow for Paul?

The great illness of Epaphroditus.

** What could have caused a whole second wave of sorrow?

His death, prevented by the mercy of God!

V.28 ** From all of this heart breaking concern, Paul now turns to "**The Joy of Reunion**" as he gives us the 2nd reason for sending Epaphroditus home. What is it?

So that the Philippians can rejoice when they see him again! This should always be the response of those who have been knit together by the Spirit of Christ.

cf. 1Peter 1:22, 2:17, and 1John 2:10

** Are you getting the sense of a close family love in this amazing passage?

Absolutely, everybody loves everybody!

** How does Paul feel about the urgency of sending him home to his beloved Philippians?

"...all the more eagerly..." Paul wants them to rejoice and to experience "**The Joy of Reunion**".

** Paul now lists a 3rd reason for sending Epaphroditus, do you see it?

"...that I may be less concerned about you..." Paul knew he could trust Epaphroditus to care for the Philippians, so his own loving concerns would be alleviated. I think that this is the most thoughtful group of people I have ever seen. Everyone is concerned for everyone else!

cf. Acts 2:42-47

V.29 ** Paul now shifts his attention back to the character of Epaphroditus as he instructs the Philippians as to how they should receive him. What two things were they to do?

- 1) Receive him in the Lord with all joy!
 - 2) Hold him (and anyone like him) in high regard!
- cf. 1 Timothy 5:17

V.30 ** As Paul continues to describe the man, what additional characteristics come forth in verse 30?

He was committed, sacrificial, devoted, he had integrity and was brave.

** When he brings this chapter to a close, is Paul issuing a reprimand to the Philippians?

No - he had "received everything in full" from them. cf. Philippians 4:18

** Then what is he saying?

The Philippians wanted to do more, but they all could not be there. So, they sent Epaphroditus to "complete" their service to Paul.

EXTRICATE

** Let's describe the character profile of Epaphroditus, what was he like?

V.25 - a brother, hard worker, a soldier, a trustworthy messenger and a servant.

V.26 - compassionate and sensitive.

V.30 - committed and sacrificial

DELINEATE

** How many people showed the love of Christ in this passage, and how?

Paul - by sending Epaphroditus home!

Philippians - by caring for Paul through Epaphroditus!

Epaphroditus - by caring for Paul, almost to the point of death on behalf of the Philippians.

God - by showing mercy on all with the healing of Epaphroditus.

EVALUATE

** How were the Philippians to respond to Epaphroditus when they got him back?

With joy! They were to experience "**The Joy of Reunion**" as they were faithful to hold him in high regard.

ACTIVATE

** Our passage for today has been overflowing with examples for us to follow. Is it reasonable for us to emulate Epaphroditus in our daily conduct as well as how we receive brothers and sisters in the Lord through "**The Joy of Reunion**"?

May we take to heart the amazing examples laid before us in this passage, that we too might be more Christ-like each day.

Closing prayer