

## EPAPHRODITUS; PHIL. 2:25-30 (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION.

ON THIS SUNDAY MORNING, ~ WE'LL EXAMINE PHIL. 2:25-30, ~ PAUL'S DISCUSSION about Epaphroditus.

▶▶ Previous paragraph . . . . ~ Now Paul turns to speak about Epaphroditus.

IN VERSE 25a, ~ PAUL STATES HIS INTENTION TO SEND EPAPHRODITUS BACK TO Philippi. ~ Verse 25a . . . .

EPAPHRODITUS WAS PART OF THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI.

▶▶ Paul refers to him in *verse 25b* as "your messenger and minister to my need."

▶▶ Acting as the church's messenger, ~ at some point Ep. traveled from Philippi to Rome in order to deliver most likely a financial gift from the church to Paul, ~ ¶¶

▷▷ and to care for Paul on the their behalf. ~ Mission of mercy.

▶▶ And now Paul thought that he should send Epaphroditus back to Philippi.

IN VERSE 25b, ~ PAUL DESCRIBES EPAPHRODITUS IN FURTHER DETAIL. ~ 25b . . . .

OBSERVE THAT PAUL DESCRIBES EPAPHRODITUS AS "MY BROTHER."

▶▶ This reminds us that believers are family, ~ specifically, ~ brothers and sisters in God's family.

▶▶ In *Eph. 2:19*, ~ Paul says that believers "are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

▶▶ When we were unsaved, ~ we were outside of God's family. ~ We were outside the kingdom of God. ~ We were dwelling in "the domain of darkness."

▷▷ And Paul says that that is no longer true. ~ This has all been reversed. ~ Radical changes . . . . for those . . . .

↪↪ We are "no longer strangers and aliens."

▶▶ God the Father rescued believers "from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son." ¶¶ 1/6

▶▶ But he didn't stop with that radical change. ~~ Made us citizens of His kingdom.

▶▶ But God the Father did not stop with just those radical changes. ~~ He went even further. ~~ He also made us part of His family. ~~ He adopted us as his very own children.

▷▷ Rom. 8:12-17 . . . .

ALSO IN VERSE 25b, ~ OBSERVE THAT PAUL DESCRIBES EPAPHRODITUS AS "MY brother and fellow worker."

▶▶ These terms remind us that there is equality among believers.

▶▶ Here is Paul the apostle putting himself on the same level as Epaphroditus and all other believers.

▶▶ In Revelation John says to us, ~ believers, ~ "I, John, your brother and partner."

▶▶ We've talked about this before. ~~ And it bears repeating ~~ There is no caste system in the kingdom of God. ~~ There is no spiritual elite in the kingdom of God.

▷▷ In God's kingdom there is no spiritual superiority or inferiority.

▶▶ Look at what Peter says in the introduction to his second epistle.

▷▷ 2 Pet. 1:1, ~ "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."

▷▷ Writers in Peter's day used the Greek word translated "of equal standing" to refer to those who shared the rights & privileges of citizenship.

▷▷ This means that everyone who has genuine, ~ saving faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord share equally in the rights and privileges of citizenship in God's kingdom.

▶▶ This means that all believers of all places, ~ financial status, ~ and ethnic background are on an equal level.

▷▷ Whatever position we may hold in the church, ~ every one of us is just as important and equal as anyone else. ~~ There may be distinctions in the work undertaken by each one.

↪↪ And yes, ~ there is a definite leadership structure in the church and in marriage and the family. ~~ But in regard to our standing before Christ, ~ we are all equal.

OBSERVE ALSO FROM VERSE 25b, ~ PAUL DESCRIBES EPAPHRODITUS AS A "SOLDIER."

▶▶ This reminds us that we, ~ believers, ~ are soldiers in a war. ~ We must never fall for the false idea that the Christian life is easy and simple.

▶▶ It is an inescapable fact of the Christian life that we believers are soldiers engaged in a war. ~ "Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus." {2 Tim. 2:3}

▶▶ But the war we find ourselves in ~ is not a physical war ~ but a spiritual war, ~ fought on three fronts.

▷▷ The Bible identifies three evil influences that control unbelievers and that try to exert their influence on believers.

↳↳ Paul mentions them together in Eph. 2: ~ the world, ~ the devil, ~ and sin nature.

→→ World . . . . ~ Satan . . . . ~ Sin nature . . . .

▷▷ Add to this the fact that we dwell in enemy territory.

▶▶ And on this side of heaven, ~ until Jesus returns or calls us home, ~ the battle will rage.

▶▶ But there is no need for us to be afraid or to throw our hands up in surrender.

▷▷ Because the ultimate outcome of the battle is not in doubt.

↳↳ Over sin . . . . ~ Over death . . . . ~ Over powers of evil . . . .

▷▷ No need  . . . .  ~ because the Lord is with us and for us.

↳↳ "Always." ~ "If God is for us . . ." ~ Is. 43:1-3a . . . .

▷▷ And no need  . . . .  because the Lord has given divine resources to enable us to be victorious.

↳↳ Prayer . . . . ~ Armor of God . . . .

↳↳ A new nature, ~ which by instinct wants to please, ~ to live for, ~ and to serve Jesus.

↳↳ Holy Spirit . . . . ~ Not a cosmic dualism . . . .

▷▷ Absolutely no need for us to be afraid or to throw our hands up in surrender. 📌 3/6

AND BACK IN PHIL. 2:25b, ~ OBSERVE THAT PAUL SAYS Epaphroditus is a "fellow soldier."

▶▶ Paul and Epaphroditus fought side by side for the cause of the gospel.

▶▶ Recall Paul's exhortation to believers in 1:27b to strive side by side to defend the faith in the face of opposition.

▷▷ There Paul reminded us that it is teamwork that wins victories.

▶▶ Here in 2:25b, ~ Paul is using a military metaphor but the principle is the same.

▷▷ Fighting side by side for the cause of the gospel wins victories.

↳↳ Like a mighty army moves the church of God; ~~ Brothers, ~ we are treading where the saints have trod; ~~ We are not divided; ~~ All one body we; ~~ One in hope and doctrine, ~ one in charity. ~~ Onward, ~ Christian soldiers . . . .

▶▶ No wonder Satan tries to destroy our unity.

VERSE 26 GIVES US THE REASON PAUL WAS SENDING EPAPHRODITUS BACK . . . .

ON HIS MISSION OF MERCY, ~ EPAPHRODITUS HAD FALLEN ILL & ALMOST DIED (VV. 27, 30).

▶▶ What is worth mentioning here is the fact that God uses his people to be his hands, ~ feet, ~ and voice in ministering in the community of believers.

▷▷ However, ~ he does not exempt his servants from adversity, ~ even when they are engaged in missions of mercy.

↳↳ Perhaps something to keep in mind as we serve the Lord.

▶▶ Observe that, ~ in Epaphroditus, ~ we have a picture of an exemplary believer.

▷▷ More than 700 miles. ~~ Review what Paul says in passage . . . .

▷▷ Picture of an exemplary believer. ~~ Did nothing wrong. ~~ Not in sin. ~~ Not weak in faith.

▷▷ Strong in faith and faithful to Jesus.

▷▷ And yet he had gotten sick, ~ showing the health and wealth gospel and the name and claim it gospel to be the lies that they are. 📖 4/6

▷▷Remember Job's friends? ~ Their thinking: "All suffering is punishment for sin; ~ Job is suffering; ~ therefore, Job is a sinner."

↪↪And yet, ~ 3x we read that Job "was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil." ~ And 2 of those times God was speaking. (Job 1 & 2)

▷▷Man born blind. (Jn. 9:1-3)

▷▷In 1 Tim. 4:1, ~ Paul warns Timothy, ~ LEB ~ "Now the Spirit explicitly says that in the last times some will depart from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons."

↪↪Loved ones, ~ there are a lot of voices out there telling us that God wants us healthy and wealthy, ~ and that we can "name and claim" whatever we want.

→→Don't listen to them. ~ They are deceitful spirits and these are demonic teachings.

### IN VERSES 27-28, ~ PAUL ELABORATES ON THE SITUATION . . . .

I.E., ~ LESS ANXIOUS ABOUT THEM, ~ THAT HE WOULD NOT BE SO WORRIED ABOUT these saints in Philippi.

▶▶Paul was probably worried that they were very troubled about their friend Epaphroditus.

▷▷He was far from home. ~ They heard that he was sick. ~ And they most likely were worried what was happening with him, ~ etc.

▷▷So Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back to them in order to set their hearts and minds at ease.

▶▶Paul was not just wrapped up in himself and his circumstances . . . .

▷▷Our sphere of concern should be broader than ourselves, ~ and should include the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

▷▷Phil. 2:4 . . . . ~ Timothy . . . . ~ Paul . . . .

▷▷David, ~ O Lord, ~ I have so many enemies; ~ so many are against me. ~ So many are saying, ~ "God will never rescue him!" ~ Ends, ~ "May your blessing be on your people."

▷▷Again, ~ our sphere of concern should be broader than ourselves, ~ and should include the needs and concerns of our brothers and sisters in Christ. ↯↯ 5/6

IN VERSES 29-30 GIVES THE PHILIPPIANS AN EXHORTATION TO RECEIVE Epaphroditus and to honor him, ~ and then says why he deserves to be honored.

ALMOST SOUNDS LIKE A REBUKE, ~ BUT I DON'T THINK THAT'S WHAT'S GOING ON here.

▶▶ Could be paraphrased as, ~ "For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away."

▷▷ So Paul wasn't rebuking them. ~~ Simply, ~ Epaphroditus was doing what they couldn't do, ~ due to the distance between Philippi and Rome.

OBSERVE THAT PAUL POINTS OUT HERE THAT WE SHOULD HONOR THOSE WHO RISK their lives for the sake of Christ.

▶▶ You know, ~ the world honors stuff like beauty, ~ wealth, ~ and power.

▶▶ It's not that way in the kingdom of God. ~~ In the kingdom of God, ~ things like servanthood, ~ humility, ~ and self-sacrifice for Christ and our fellow believers are honored.

THINK ABOUT IT: ~~ EPAPHRODITUS SET ASIDE HIS OWN COMFORT AND convenience and was willing and did risk his life for the cause of Christ.

▶▶ Perhaps a question to ask ourselves this morning . . . is this: ~~ Would I?

CONCLUSION.

MUCH TO THINK ABOUT FROM THIS PARAGRAPH ON EPAPHRODITUS.

LET'S PRAY . . . . 6/6