

Sermon Discussion

28 February 2021

Read Philippians 2:25-30 together.

Dig Deeper

Epaphroditus' name appears nowhere else in the New Testament other than in Philippians. However, Epaphras, the less formal name, appears in Colossians 1:7; 4:12; and Philemon 23. These were probably two different individuals.

Paul described Epaphroditus in five relationships. He was Paul's **brother** in the faith, a sharer in spiritual life by God's grace. Second, he was Paul's **fellow worker**, more than a brother but one who joined in the service of building the church of Jesus Christ, a partner in the gospel ministry.

Third, he was Paul's **fellow soldier**. He was not just a worker but a worker who had entered into spiritual warfare by standing up for Christ in a hostile environment and boldly proclaiming the gospel.

Fourth, Epaphroditus was the Philippians' **messenger** to Paul. He had carried their gift to him as their representative. Translators usually render the Greek word translated "messenger" as "apostle". This word has a general meaning and a specific meaning in the New Testament.

Generally it means a messenger and describes such people as Barnabas (Acts 14:14), James, the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:7), probably Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:7; Phil. 1:1), and Epaphroditus here.

Technically it refers to the 12 apostles and Paul, those whom Jesus had specially commissioned with the ministry of planting and establishing the church. This second usage is more common in the New Testament. Many men functioned as apostles in the early church, but only 13 were official apostles.

Finally, Epaphroditus was the Philippians' **minister** to Paul's needs in prison. This word sometimes describes the kind of ministry a priest performs (Rom. 15:16; Heb. 8:2). Paul may have been thinking of Epaphroditus' ministry to him as similar to a priest's. He presented the Philippians' offering to Paul as a sacrifice (4:18).

1. How do you know if a risk is worth taking? Why do people differ in the risks they are willing to take in life?
2. Must every Christian be willing to be sent anywhere? Is the "missionary" calling something every Christian must consider?
3. How did Epaphroditus exemplify the "life of Christ"? What parallels does Paul draw between his description of Epaphroditus and his description of Jesus?
4. Given his minor role in Scripture, would you consider Epaphroditus's mission a success or a failure and why?

Application & Prayer

- Who models for you what “unrecognised service” to Christ looks like in your daily experience? Take a moment to praise God for them. Now, take the next step of ringing them or writing them to say “thank you.”
- Ask the LORD to search your heart for any pride that you may have from not being noticed for your service. Confess it, repent, and worship Him for His forgiveness.
- Meditate of this verse: *“But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”* -Acts 20:24