

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

### **A Priceless Pair Philippians 2:19-30 Part 4**

There is much discussion about the importance of role models. As a child we might choose to embrace our neighborhood friend as a role model in establishing the types of toys we may want to play with. As a youth we may choose to embrace a supposedly cool guy or gal at school as a role model in establishing how we might want to dress. As adults we might choose to embrace a neighbor as a role model in establishing our retirement plans. We are all to some degree effected by role models but who should our primary role models be.

We are presently studying Philippians 2:19-30. In this passage Paul introduces two men who hopefully will serve as powerful role models for our lives.

The first role model that we considered was Timothy, in Philippians 2:19-24.

We are now considering Paul's second role model a man named Epaphroditus. Let us read **Philippians 2:25-30, "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, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. (28) 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. (29) Therefore receive him 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."** This passage contains nearly all the information available to us about Epaphroditus in all of the scriptures. But even though we only have these few verses to study there is much for us to learn about him.

#### What do we learn about Epaphroditus from **Philippians 2:25-30**?

We learn who Epaphroditus was to others (Philippians 2:25). First of all we learn who Epaphroditus was to Paul. Let us read **Philippians 2:25, "But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier....."** And then we learn who Epaphroditus was to the Philippians **"..... who is also your messenger and minister to my need."** Epaphroditus was a very important person in the early church; a man who was deeply loved by those who knew him and who served alongside of him.

Hopefully who Epaphroditus was to Paul and to the church at Philippi would challenge us to personally emulate his life and ministry. Hopefully we would want to strive to be individuals that could be referred to as "my brother, my fellow-worker, my fellow soldier. Hopefully we would want to be individuals who could be trusted to faithfully and effectively represent the church of Christ in difficult times. Hopefully this is the type of individual we would want to become.

We also learn why Epaphroditus was sent back to Philippi by Paul (Philippians 2:26-27). The Philippian church had heard that Epaphroditus was seriously ill and perhaps dying.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

In light of this distressing news Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi because of their mutual concern for the emotional state of the Philippian church. Let us go back and read this passage again, but this time we will read down through **Philippians 2:28**, “**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 only him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.**”

Epaphroditus’s return to Philippi for the reason Paul states in this passage communicates very strongly the depth of the love that these Christians had for one another. It was not only the Church of Philippi loving Paul through Epaphroditus but also Epaphroditus loving the church at Philippi and Paul loving the Philippian church and Epaphroditus. Hopefully their mutual love for each other would challenge us to love one another in this same very special way ..... But this is not all that we learn.

This weekend we will continue on in this passage and look at the third and final thing that we learn about Epaphroditus from this passage. My hope in examining this passage is that you might be able to better appreciate the important role that individuals such as Epaphroditus play in the life of the church and our personal responsibility toward them.

What is the third and final thing we learn from this passage about Epaphroditus? We learn how Paul wanted Epaphroditus to be received (Philippians 2:28-30). Let us read **Philippians 2:28-30** “**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. (29) Therefore receive him 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.**” First of all we learn from these verses that .....

Paul wanted Epaphroditus to be received with joy (Philippians 2:28-29). There can be no question that this is how Paul wants them to receive him. Twice in these two verses he associates joy with the coming of Epaphroditus to the Philippian church. We see this in **Verse 28** “**Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice.....**” And then we see this emphasis again in **Verse 29** which begins “**Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy.....**” Having established the fact of this we can now go back and see how he develops this thought.

He begins in **verse 28** by saying, “**therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly .....**” Why does Paul use the word “therefore”? We have seen that Paul was comforted in the improving health of Epaphroditus in **verse 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, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.**” Having been comforted by God in the healing of Epaphroditus Paul is THEREFORE all the more eager to extend the same comfort to the Philippians by sending Epaphroditus to them so that they can personally witness with their own eyes his good health.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

How desirous was he to extend this comfort? The verse says, “**Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly .....**” The word “more eagerly” (SPOUDAIOTEROS) communicates “eagerness, earnestness, diligence.” Paul sending Epaphroditus certainly was not grudging.

And how does Paul expect the Philippians to respond to this act of kindness in sending Epaphroditus to them? Let us go back to the verse, “..... **Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice.....**” The Philippians had been very faithful in standing with Paul in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. In their faithfulness they were suffering. They were suffering attacks from the outside which we see indicated in **Philippians 1:27-30** and turmoil on the inside which is alluded to in **Philippians 2:1-4** and spelled out more clearly in **Philippians 4:2-3**. They also knew their spiritual father in the faith, the Apostle Paul, was imprisoned in Rome with an uncertain future ahead of him. Then on top of all of this they heard that Epaphroditus was extremely ill and perhaps in jeopardy of dying. They must have thought the sky was falling. The burden they were carrying was huge. Paul therefore sends Epaphroditus back to them hoping that their response to this act of kindness would be one of rejoicing.

Did Paul eagerly sending Epaphroditus back to them solve all their problems? No, but that is not the point. He sent Epaphroditus back to them simply to encourage them. I am sure that there are people in our lives at this present time that we care about who are suffering greatly. And perhaps we are totally unable to solve their problem but we can do what Paul did. We can do what we can with the hope that whatever small offering of comfort that we can extend will be joyfully received.

And if our act of kindness is received in this way it will certainly serve us as Paul expected the Philippians joyful response to serve him. Let us continue to read **Philippians 2:28** “**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.**” Seeing someone we care about rejoice in the midst of their suffering helps to diminish our Godly anxiety for their welfare causing us to be less concerned (Philippians 2:28). I hope that when I am in the midst of hard times that I might be able to lessen your concern for me by rejoicing in every expression of kindness that is extended to me and my family as I pray that the same would be true for you.

Was there a possibility that the Philippian church may not actually joyfully respond to the coming of Epaphroditus? I believe that Paul actually considered this a possibility. Why do I say this? Look at **Philippians 2:29** “**Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy .....**” The word “receive” (PROSDECHOMAI) is in the imperative mood. Or in other words in a command form.

Why would Paul have to command the Philippians to receive Epaphroditus with all joy? Obviously they highly valued him otherwise they would not have sent Epaphroditus to Paul as their messenger and as their minister. Obviously they highly cared about him otherwise they would not have been so distressed when they heard that he was seriously ill. So why would he have to command them to receive him with all joy?

Paul’s command to receive him with all joy is an attempt to remove any criticism of Epaphroditus for abandoning his ministry to Paul.

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

He is commanding them to receive him because there may have been a few Philippians who felt that Epaphroditus had not completed the task for which they had sent him, namely to help Paul. Paul does not want anything to diminish the positive impact of Epaphroditus' return. He wants his return to be characterized by how much joy? All Joy! ..... What do we learn about Epaphroditus from Philippians 2:25-30? We learn who Epaphroditus was to others (Philippians 2:25)..... We learn why Epaphroditus was sent back to Philippi by Paul (Philippians 2:26,27). And we are also learning how Paul wanted Epaphroditus to be received? First of all with joy. But there is something else.

Paul wanted Epaphroditus to be received with an appropriate degree of respect (Philippians 2:29). Let us again read **Philippians 2:29 “therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard.”** The phrase **“And hold men like him in high regard ....”** is a second command. What does this mean? The word “high regard” (ENTIMOS) means “honored, prized, precious.” The Philippian church is being commanded to highly regard, to highly honor, to highly prize men such as Epaphroditus.

What had Epaphroditus done to cause Paul to seek this response from the Philippian church? Look at **verse 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.”** Epaphroditus and people like him should be respected because they are willing to put their lives on the line for the sake of Christ.

The only way for people to fully enjoy the benefits and blessings of the Christian life is to be willing to give themselves up for the sake of Christ. Hopefully you remember the words of Christ to His disciples in **Matthew 10:38-39 “And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. (39) He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.”** Timothy and certainly Epaphroditus had heeded the words of Christ. This is why Epaphroditus was willing to take some risks for the cause of Christ.

The word “risking” (PARABOLEUSAMENOS) is a term associated with gambling. Epaphroditus for the sake of Christ was willing to roll the dice when he committed himself to complete what was deficient in the Philippians service to Paul. Or in other words when he was willing to do what the Philippians could not do. Epaphroditus was a loving gambler.

Martin Luther was such a man. In the 16th century the Catholic church emphasized that men had to work out their salvation by adhering to the teachings of the Catholic church. Luther challenged this teaching by adhering to the biblical doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone.

His actions forced him to eventually be confronted by those who had the power to ultimately take his life. They asked him to recant his teachings. What was his response? His response was to tell them “Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason -- I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other -- my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe, God help me.”

## *Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript*

What was he doing? He was for the sake of Christ rolling the dice. His decision could very well have been very costly to his life but that risk did not dissuade him.

Are there any loving gamblers in our congregation? Are there people here who are willing to risk experiencing exhaustion and sleepless nights in taking on additional spiritual responsibilities? Are there people here who are willing to sacrifice personal comforts and earthly ambitions in advancing the cause of Christ in this world? Are there people here who are willing to risk experiencing disappointment, heartache, criticism and even personal attack while following in the footsteps of Jesus? Are there people here that would be even willing to risk their very life? I believe that there are.

I believe that there are people in this congregation who have put their lives at risk in their service to Christ. When you see these individuals such as Epaphroditus amongst us what are you to do? You are to hold them in “high regard.” You are to highly prize them. You are to highly honor them. But how can we do this?

This can be done in many ways but there is one way that I believe far exceeds all others. There is no greater expression of honor for another individual and the way they have lived their lives than by making them our role model. I believe when Paul called the 1 Corinthians to follow him as he followed Christ was a sense calling them to give him the high regard that he is asking the Philippians to give to Epaphroditus.

Who are your role models? I would hope that they are men like Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

### CONCLUSION

GOD HAS BLESSED US WITH VARIOUS ROLE MODELS AT VALLEY BIBLE CHURCH, BUT ABOVE ALL THESE MODELS THAT HOPEFULLY CHALLENGE US EVERY DAY IS OUR ULTIMATE ROLE MODEL .....CHRIST.....