***"Philos" Love

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-033***

Our top topic today is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," segment number 11, in Colossians 1:3-8.

**"Agape" Love**

We have seen that the apostle Paul was pleased to hear that the Colossian believers lived their lives in the sphere of Christian faith, which referred to the body of Bible doctrine. And they found that they could not be happy in their lives without the Word of God, and they could not perform the mission to which they'd been called without the Word of God. The apostle Paul was also pleased to learn of their love for all other believers. That was a mental attitude love, signified by the Greek word "agape" (ag-ah'-pay). This is the type of love which God the Holy Spirit produces in the soul of the believer who is in fellowship with God the Father. This is a special kind of love, and it is a love that precedes all other loves.

Now this is the type of love that is referred to in Galatians 5:22 as part of the fruit of the Spirit. And when you speak about the fruit of the spirit, do not make that a plural. It's not "the fruits of the Spirit," because, while there are several elements (nine, to be specific), it is all one fruit. You don't have part of the cluster, and not all of it. You have the whole cluster, or you don't have any of the cluster. So, it is *the fruit* of the Spirit. And one element of that cluster is this mental-attitude, goodwill love. It is love, therefore, which is esteemed for another, expressing your desire for their best, and for their wellbeing in every respect, and your absence of any bitterness on your part toward them. This spirit of esteem and goodwill toward one expresses itself in a spirit of willingness to sacrifice in behalf of that person.

So, to that extent, it is quite correct to define this word "agape" love as "a sacrificial love." However, usually that's as far as people go. They fail to make the connection, as we have previously, that from the Latin translation of the Bible, made in the early centuries of the New Testament, when they knew precisely what the Greek words meant, there was a great distinction between mental attitude love and emotional love. And this is clearly portrayed in the Latin. So, from Jerome's Latin Vulgate translation, as it's called, these words are clearly distinguishable. And that's one of the ways that we know that agape love is a head attitude rather than an emotional attitude.

This mental attitude love is the basis, of course, for all unity among believers in the local church community. When Christians do not have ill feelings toward one another, there is a basis of unity. When Christians have ill feelings toward one another, then the unity is fractured. Therefore, this love is fundamental. This is primary. This is what everything else is built upon.

**"Philos" Love**

However, we also find in the Word of God, as you'll remember it, there's another kind of love, and this is the kind of love that we usually mean by "love." It is an emotional expression. That word is the Greek word "philos" (fee'-los), P H I L O S. The Greek word "philos" was translated by one of the early church fathers, Jerome, whom we just mentioned, in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., when he translated the Greek New Testament into Latin, the Latin Vulgate version. And he used the word "amo" to translate this Greek word. The word "amo" is an emotional love. And anybody who read Latin understood that when they read "amo," that was an emotional love. When they read "diligo," which is the other Latin word for love that applied to "agape" love. And when they read "diligo," they knew that that was a mental attitude toward a person rather than the emotional attitude. So, they are quite distinct. "Amo" causes a *feeling* of love in contrast to this Latin "diligo," which is a mental attitude.

**Friendship**

Now, "philos" expresses a warm, friendly feeling of attachment. It connotes a condition of rapport, and that's a good way to express the meaning of "philos" love. It's a rapport, and it's a friendly relationship. It's a rapport which expresses a mutual trust and an emotional affinity with another person – a mutual trust, and an affinity with that person. "Philos" love, obviously, flows from compatibility which exists between two people. Therefore, we ascribe to this the word "friendship." You will not have an emotional attachment for everybody. There are plenty of people that you don't have any ill will toward them, and you don't think ill of them. You wish nothing but the best for them. You are ready to extend whatever aid and assistance they desire and want, but they're not people that you want to go out on a picnic with. They're not people that you want to go camping with. They're not people that you want to go out to the beach with. They're not people that you're emotionally attached to. Therefore, this love is distinctive for the concept of friendship. You're not just that friendly with everybody, and you don't have to be that friendly with everybody.

Since "philos" is an emotional type of love, the Bible, furthermore, does not command you to have it. Now, you have to have "agape" (ag-ah'-pay) love. You are told to love one another. You are told to love one another as Christ has loved us. He loved us with that kind of mental attitude. And we are commanded to have that kind of love. But notice in John 13:34: Jesus says, "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." That's "agape" love, and that is a love that Jesus is extending and calling upon us to exercise toward one another as believers – a mental attitude goodwill. We can do that. We can have that kind of an attitude. But he couldn't tell us to have an emotional attachment to one another, because that is something that you cannot legislate within yourself.

However, "agape" love has to precede this "philos" love. The mental attitude love has to come before the emotional love. You are not going to be emotionally warm toward somebody that you don't like, or somebody that you have a problem with on a mental level. Mental esteem is necessary to trigger the emotion of love within the soul. You cannot have "philos" love with any spirit of bitterness or ill will toward a person.

Now, it's true that both believers and unbelievers alike can experience this emotional love. Emotional love is the expression of that facet of the soul. One of the things that makes up the soul is emotions. And this is where the "philos" love comes in. In the unbeliever, "philos" emotional love is simply produced by his sin nature. And in this respect, he can have great emotions toward God, but it's not Holy Spirit emotions. He can have great emotions toward the person he's married to, but it's not Holy Spirit emotions. And he can have great emotions toward other people, but it's not Holy Spirit emotion. This is the world's kind of love – this kind of "philos" emotional love that spews out of the old sin nature. This is why you have all these tensions and conflicts between human beings. This is the source of all the great divorce rate, because you have people who are trying to relate to each other on their old sin natures. They're trying to relate to each other on emotions that come from the sin nature.

You might be disappointed to hear that Michael Jackson and Elvis Presley's daughter are going to have a divorce. And the paper said that "the emotion was all gone." That is right on – just exactly right. It was all built on kicks of the sin nature. And that kind of a thing will come and go. There was no "agape" structured love to begin with, which only the Holy Spirit can give.

So, there's no lasting quality in unbelievers, in their "philos" love. And that is why you are very foolish to trust the warmth (the emotional warmth) of unbelievers. You are very foolish to trust the emotional warmth of somebody who is trying to get something out of you. Please remember the dictum (the eternal true dictum) of Saint Bernard Rouch, who said, many years ago: "The finest moment you have with a person is the minute you meet him. After that, it's all downhill. The finest moment is when you first meet them. Then it's downhill. And if you'll think about it, that's the way it is, if all you have is the emotional exercise within you as the attachment point.

Now, in the believer who indeed can exercise emotional love, the "philos" love is divinely produced by God the Holy Spirit as part of the fruit of the Spirit, because he is in Christ and in fellowship with the Lord. Now you have an emotion toward God which is very genuine, and it will cause you to act within the will of God. The person who is not a believer, who has an emotion toward his God, will act accordingly. And his God will be one that he makes up in his own image, and he will have emotions that are like Satan's. Satan has emotions, but he's never loyal. Therefore, the emotions come and go as per the benefit of the person who is exercising it.

However, this Christian has Holy Spirit emotion toward God that is genuine; toward the person you're married to, that will be genuine; and, you'll have it toward other people. Now, this is why the Word of God says that those who exercise genuine love (both the "agape" and emotional type) will obey the moral laws of God. And, as the apostle Paul points out, that if you're going to love your neighbor as yourself, then you'll obey the rules of God's relationship between people. If there is a genuine emotional attachment, you will observe those rules, because not to do so opens that person to great injury, and, obviously, that indicates not love, but a sense of hatred.

Now, when a Christian is out of temporal fellowship, we have another problem. When you're living in a sin condition, where you're living disoriented to the will of God in your life, then you're no different than the unbeliever. You have no guidance of the Spirit of God, and your emotions will run amok. This is the product of the old sin nature. There's no greater tragedy in the life of a Christian than to be under the emotional domination of the soul. There's no greater tragedy in the life of an unbeliever than to be under the emotional domination of the soul. You cannot think with your emotions, and if your emotions govern you, sooner or later, you're going to have a crash-landing. "Agape" love can be expressed toward everyone, but "philos" love is an emotion that will only be expressed towards some people.

Now, here are some uses of this word "philos" (emotional love) in the Bible, to give us some sense of how it's used. Please notice Matthew 5:44, Jesus says, "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." I show you this verse to show you how it is not used, because you can see, by what Jesus says there, that he could not use the word "philos" there. He could not tell you to "phileo" your enemies because that's commanding an emotion. And you can't do that. So, you know immediately that that's "agapao" (mental attitude love). So, you can be literally on a field of combat, in mortal deadly combat, where you're going to take the life of the enemy without having any personal bitterness toward him, except the fact that you are performing your duty as a soldier on behalf of defense of your country; your people; your family; and, all that is dependent upon you. We, therefore, do not deal with those people on the basis of an emotional attachment.

Another example is to be found in John 21:15-17. The background of this passage is that Jesus Christ has been crucified, and He is now resurrected from the dead. Peter meets the Lord, and Peter is under great conviction. He's still shaken and humiliated by his pre-crucifixion denial of Jesus; by his total disloyalty to the Lord; and, by his willingness even to use curse words to try to deny that he was one of the followers of Jesus.

Now, the Lord has made breakfast for them. And they're up on the beach. And when they come up, they recognize that it's Jesus – their resurrected Lord. And in John 21:15, after they have eaten: "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?'" He was indicating the other disciples. Now, the word that Jesus used here was the word "agape." He said, "Peter, do you 'agape' Me more than these?" Now, this word "agape" means "goodwill." And certainly, at the heart of goodwill is loyalty. If you have a spirit of goodwill and esteem for a person, you are loyal to that person. And what Jesus was saying was, "Are you more loyal to Me than these other disciples?" And by implication: "Would you be more sacrificial in My behalf than these other disciples would be?"

Now that was a tough question for Peter to answer. And Peter says, "Yes, Lord. You know I love You." But Peter switches the word. You can't see it in the English. But in the Greek, Peter says, "I 'phileo' you, Lord." He says, "Yes Lord, I have an emotional attachment to you." This was after what he did to the Lord in demonstrating that he didn't have "agape" love, and he didn't have sacrificial mental attitude goodwill to the Lord such that he denied Him, and he was willing to desert Him. He just cannot get himself to say, "Yes, I would sacrifice everything for you." But he does know that he has a deep feeling for Jesus Christ. So quite properly he says, "Yes Lord, I have a great emotional attachment to you." And Jesus says to him, "Tend My lambs," meaning take care of the people of God.

Then after a moment, Jesus says to Peter a second time, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?" Again Jesus says, "Do you have an 'agape' attitude toward Me Peter? Do you have a great esteem for Me? Do you have great loyalty to Me? Do you have a spirit such that you would withhold nothing from Me, and you'll stand by me through the good times and the bad?"

Peter still remembers his great disloyalty, and therefore he responds a second time, "Yes Lord, you know that I 'phileo' you." And he switches the word again to emotional attachment. He says, "I have a really great attachment for you emotionally, Lord." And Jesus says, Okay, shepherd My sheep." First, He says, "Feed them." Now He says, "Shepherd them. Take care of them. Guide them spiritually so they won't get hurt."

Then, in John 21:17, Jesus turns to Peter a third time, and he says, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" But this time. Jesus switches to the emotional word. This time, he takes up Peter's word. He says, "Peter, do you really have a great emotional attachment to Me?" And Peter was really upset now: "Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?'" This time He said, "Do you have an emotional attachment to Me, Peter?" It was almost as if the Lord was saying, "You don't have a mental goodwill attitude. You're afraid to say that. You won't commit yourself to that. And do you really have a genuine emotional attachment to Me without having a mental attitude attachment to Me? You can't have a good emotional attachment to Me. You have to have esteem for a person before you can get emotionally excited over that person. If someone in your estimation is not a desirable person, but a dog, you're not going to have a great warmth emotionally toward that person."

So Jesus says, "Okay Peter, do you really have an emotional attachment to Me?" And Peter impatiently says, "Lord, You know all things. And you know that I 'phileo' You." He just couldn't get himself to say "agapao you." Jesus said to him, Okay, take care of My sheep, Peter. We'll work it on that basis." There are very clear, distinct differences between these two words, and very distinct difference as to whether you just have a good attitude toward a person, or whether you have a warm friendship with that person.

Go back over to the gospel of John 11 for another good example. This is the record of the death of Lazarus, the brother of Mary and Martha. His family was very close to Jesus. He often stayed in their home when he was traveling in the vicinity. And they knew him well. And indeed, they had a great mutual attachment. John 11:3, "The sisters, therefore, sent to Him saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.'" They sent word to Jesus that their brother, whom Jesus loved, was sick. The word they use is friendship – "phileo." The man to whom you have such great emotional warmth toward, your friend Lazarus, is sick unto death. And when Jesus heard it, in verse 4, He told those about them that: "The sickness is not unto death, but it is something to demonstrate the glory of God. And by it, Jesus, the Son of God, will be glorified."

So, the sickness was going to have a distinct, divine purpose. But notice verse 5: "Now, Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." And here, the word is "agapao." Here it's mental attitude love. Here it's telling us that there's a mental esteem on the part of Jesus for all three people in this family. It is used here to show the background of Jesus' action in verses 6-7. Notice that: "When, therefore, He (Jesus) heard that he (Lazarus) was sick, He stayed then two days longer in a place where He was. Then, after this, He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." He had a great esteem for this family. And He had a recognition that they were in something that was to serve a divine purpose. This sickness was for a divine purpose. And Jesus understood what it was. And in the best for their concern, and His esteem love for them, He acted accordingly, and he did not leave for two days. He acted with "agape" love in responding to them.

Now, the way he reacted seemed anything but mental goodwill. It seemed very unkind, because what it did was give Lazarus a chance to get so sick that he died. Notice John 11:21. When he did get there: "Martha, therefore, said to Jesus, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'" She was very clear that Jesus had not acted in what she considered the kindest way. She was actually suggesting that He did not act in a very loving way by not immediately making His way to save the brother.

Notice John 11:32: "Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at his feet saying him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.'" So Martha rebukes Him, and Mary rebukes Him. And they both come up with the same idea – that Jesus did not act in a very loving way when they sent that desperate call to Him.

But he had no bitterness for them. He had nothing but great fondness for them. And because of the fondness, he had a great emotional attachment to them. But because He had the great esteem for them, He did not want to stand in the way of the will of God for them. And He was not about to rob them of the great privilege of the testimony that God was going to make through them.

Notice John 11:35-36: Jesus, in verse 35, weeps: "Jesus swept". In verse 36, "And so the Jews were saying, 'Behold, how He loved them." And very understandably they used the emotional word, because Jesus is crying. He's weeping. And they said, "Notice how He "phileo" him," to express the emotion that caused the tears of Jesus over the death of His friend Lazarus.

So, these few passages demonstrate how, in the Bible, these two words for love are very distinct. And they have distinct uses and distinct meanings. But they are both produced, if they are genuine, by the Spirit of God. Your mental attitude love will be produced by the Spirit of God. Your emotional attachment will be produced by the Spirit of God. What Paul was rejoicing over for the Colossian Christians was that they had this mental-attitude, "agape" love, and were able to build upon that a genuine emotional attachment for those who were their friends in Christ.

It is a terrible thing to build an emotional attachment for people who do not deserve your emotional camaraderie. And you will do that very readily if the emotion that is being produced does not come from the Spirit of God. You can produce that from your sin nature, and get carried away for your own wounding. But if it's of God, because you're living in the Word of God, and in the loyalty to the principles of the Word of God, and in genuine loyalty to Christ, because you do have a mental good attitude toward Him, you won't be disloyal to Him by breaking His guidance (His laws), or the things that He wants you to do. You will put Him first. You will put Him first. You will not put anything of this world ahead of being with the Lord.

**Epaphroditus**

Now, to illustrate all this (this concept of having an emotional friendship attachment), one great all-time example of this is to be found in the book of Philippians 2. Please turn to Philippians 2:25. The apostle Paul wrote this book from his Roman imprisonment. This is one of what we call "the prison epistles." While he was there in prison, the Christians of the splendid church which resided in the city of Philippi, sent to him a representative named Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus came as the great friend of the apostle Paul. He had an intense emotional attachment for the apostle, so that nothing was too much for Epaphroditus to do for Paul. It was so deep that he would put himself out without limit in behalf of Paul who sat there as a prisoner. If there was ever a time the apostle needed somebody's help and encouragement, it was when he was sitting there, chained to a soldier, and sitting there, yes, in his own house; free, yes, to even write books of the Bible; and, yes, free to have people come in and speak to him, but nevertheless restricted from his personal freedom of movement.

So, to have someone like Epaphroditus come along to assist him was enormously significant. And nobody would want to do that who did not have, first, the highest esteem for Paul mentally; and, who had a great emotional attachment to this man. So, the ministry of Epaphroditus is a splendid example of a mental attitude which is willing to pour itself out in an emotional expression as friend-for-friend.

To do this, a Christian must not do something else with his life and time. Christian service is always not doing something else. Christian's service is always following the guidance of God the Holy Spirit to have a great zealous emotional attachment for what God wants you to do. Our physical energy, in behalf of the Lord's work, is part of the total capacity that we have. The younger you are, the more you think you can do everything. The older you get, the more you think that you have to be selective. You discover that there is no unending energy. Once in a while, you find your energy level is low, and you find yourself getting sleepy in the afternoon. Well, then you go, and you pick up the lemonade fast; you kick it into high gear for ten days', and pretty soon, you're not tired in the afternoon anymore. Pretty soon, you're jumping and jiving. And pretty soon, if you're really on it, it's hard to fall asleep at night. You have to stay up for Rush Limbaugh just to be able to get settled down to sleep. But eventually you run out of steam. Therefore, what you do with your capacity – it is very important that God be consulted.

Christian service with people, unfortunately, is generally what they have as left-over capacity. When they have little potential left, that's when they put themselves out to do something for the Lord. And there is a lot of tokenism in Christian service here in affluent, free America. A great many things are called Christian service, which are simply old sin nature service. A great many things are done in the Lord's name as serving God, which anybody else of the world system, or any institution, can do.

What we're talking about in the case of Epaphroditus is what no person of the world could do, because, first of all, he needed that mental love toward Paul – that high esteem. And then he had to have a deep, compelling emotion that God had raised in his heart, and propelled him to serve the apostle Paul.

So, Philippians 2:25 says, "But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus." He had been with Paul for some time, and as things moved along, Paul concluded that it was time for him to go back to Philippi. It was necessary. The word "necessary" stands first in the Greek sentence, indicating that it's the most important thought. It was absolutely essential, Paul felt, for him to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi. And he made this decision – to send him back to his home church.

Now, the name "Epaphroditus" is mentioned only here in the New Testament, and it means "devoted to Aphrodite." "Aphrodite" was the offspring of Zeus and Diana, and she became the goddess of love and beauty. She was called "Venus" by the Romans. Epaphroditus probably descended from a family which was devoted to the goddess Aphrodite. Aphrodite was widely worshiped in the ancient temples through acts of sexual immorality. This was the way you worshiped Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Jews and Christians in the New Testament, however, often used Greek names apart from the meaning of those names. These names had heathen significance. But because they moved in the Greek culture, to be more easily related to that culture, they would take on these Hellenistic names (these Greek names), apart from their meaning. But it may be that he indeed came from a pagan family that worshiped Aphrodite.

He had come to Rome as a representative of the Philippian church (Philippians 2:25), with an offering for the apostle Paul's financial support from that church (Philippians 4:18). We don't know what his position was back in the church that he came from in the city of Philippi. He may have been one of their leaders. That's quite obvious, I think. But he may even have been one of the pastor-teachers. In any case, he comes as a great friend with a great emotional love for the apostle Paul. And how does he relate himself then to this man?

**Brother**

He does this in three very significant ways. And they go in ascending order of importance. And the highest relationship (the highest quality – the highest blessing) you can have with another Christian is to be found in these three relationships. Paul says, "Epaphroditus, my brother." This is the Greek word "adelphos" (ad-el-fos'), A D E L P H O S. "Adelphos" indicates a relationship based upon a common origin of life. Here, it refers to their common spiritual origin from God the Father. Paul and Epaphroditus exercised totally different authority in the church, but they were brothers spiritually. They had a solid emotional love attachment to one another.

Please remember that not all religious leaders are your brothers. Not all religious leaders that you see on television are your brothers in Christ. Most of them are not, as a matter of fact. There is no such thing as the brotherhood of man, beyond the fact that we are all human beings. That does not make us one as a spiritual family. Service to God in common with unsaved ministers is mere religion. And there is a great deal of service to God that goes on with unsaved ministers and with unsaved (supposed) Christians teaming together. We don't go out to look to the world for assisting us as members of a team if they are not our brothers in Christ. Religion – that's all that that is. And religion is what the devil produces to substitute for a true relationship to Christ. And what do you have? You have misery. Historically, who has been more responsible for misery in the human race than communism; than the Spanish Inquisition; than the Roman Catholic Church; and, than the persecution of cults? All of these are Satan's religious systems, and they are not our brothers.

Can you work with the Roman Catholics in society? Yes. If they are against abortion, and we are against abortion, on a biblical basis, we can join hands with them for a common cause for victory. But when we do, we don't pretend that that is on the basis of a spiritual relationship. It is on the basis of one member of society with another. And it's not a spiritual enterprise. You could be related to some moral issue in society with the Mormons, without for one moment suggesting that they are our brothers in Christ. Do not be afraid to say that some religious groups are not your brothers in Christ. They are not your fellow Christians. You do not have the same spiritual father. God is not their father if they have not related themselves to Jesus Christ. So, any Jew who rejects Jesus Christ – God is not their father. Just because they're religious doesn't make you one in God.

But here's the first relationship. Paul says, "This wonderful man, he's my friend because he's my brother."

**Fellow Worker**

Secondly, he is my fellow worker: my "sunergos" (soon-er-gos'), S U N E R G O S. This means "worker together" – my fellow worker. And it is used here in the work that Paul was doing in the ministry: "Epaphroditus, my brother and my fellow worker." The ministry of the apostle Paul was a team ministry. In this local church, of which we're a part, our ministry is a team ministry. The whole divine purpose of the local church is that it is a spiritual feeding and training station. And that can only be realized when all the people are workers together. You don't get very far in a local church ministry if everybody is not on the team as a worker together. This mission was apart from whatever position or authority Epaphroditus held in Philippine. He was here – something that was very specially related to the apostle Paul.

Any lack of genuine progress and outreach in a church is largely due to the fact that we are burdened with non-working members – the inactive type. Within a congregation, there are the spectators; there are the deserters; there are the soreheads; there are the lethargic type; there are the procrastinators; there are the indifferent; and, there are those who do not understand that they come not to be entertained and not to have fun. They do not understand that we do not gather to watch the Super Bowl game. We come to honor Christ our Lord. And there are always inactive types which are simply carried along by those who are our fellow workers.

While in a particular local church, a believer is on the team, with a position to play, and a job to do, no one else can really do the job the way you can. You have your spiritual gift, and we need you to be functioning with that gift. Non-functioning members will cause a whole ministry to slow down and to limp along. And please remember that the Lord does not always replace the member who is not functional. He doesn't always bring in somebody that makes us operational. What we do is somebody else has to take up the slack, and we have to limp along. So, this is no small thing for Paul to say about Epaphroditus: "This man was my fellow worker because he was my 'phileo' friend in Christ." When any part of the human body does not function, you can overcome it to a limited degree, but it will never be ideal.

I saw a man on TV the other day who was riding a boogie board off one of the beaches in Hawaii. And all of a sudden, the boogie board was pulled out from under him, and there was a shark, and he saw his hand inside the shark’s mouth. And a shark's teeth are backwards, so they really tear. And finally, the shark shook the boogie board loose, and the man broke free. And when he came up, he saw that his hand was bleeding, and the end of it was gone. It'll never grow back. He had a nice mechanical device, and it worked very effectively, but he's incapacitated. He will not function as he could when all the parts were there.

That's the same with us, as a body of believers. If we are not all fellow workers with one another, we're the losers. Somebody does a splendid job among us, and has a splendid gift that blesses us all that nobody else can do. Suddenly, that person evaporates, and we're all the poorer for it. And that part that's missing; that service that's missing; and, that gift that is missing is not necessarily replaced.

Epaphroditus came to Rome with more than money. He came with a spiritual gift, and he used it to exhaustion, because he had an emotional, zealous attachment to the apostle Paul.

**Fellow Soldier**

And then the third thing that for which Paul was so grateful for this man was that he was a fellow soldier. The Greek word looks like this. It's a long word "sustratiotes" (soos-trat-ee-o'-tace) S U S T R A T I O T E S. "Sustratiotes" means a fellow soldier. This refers to a companion and spiritual combat in the angelic warfare. Paul and Epaphroditus served the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of vicious attacks from Satan and his demons and their human agents. They knew the principles of the spiritual armor that Paul enunciated in Ephesians 6. They knew how to use it victoriously. But they had to fight spiritual battles together.

**The Angelic Conflict**

Few Christians understand the doctrine of the angelic conflict. Few Christians understand the items of the Christian soldier's armor in Ephesians 6. And few Christians know how to use that armor victoriously. Few Christians, therefore, are really effective in spiritual combat. Most of them are not actively in that combat, because they themselves are spiritual casualties. Soldiers have an emotional camaraderie to one another on the physical realm in the physical world, because their lives are dependent on one another. And in physical combat, you look for the people that you can count on – those who are effective, and those that you know will stand in the battle. Those are the people you want next to you.

Now you run over in your own mind, among your fellow Christians: who are the people that you could count on? Who are the people that you would want, when God says, "I have a great and spiritual mission for you to perform?" Who are the people that you would say, "I want you on the team? I want you to sign up with me."

And if some Christian says, "I'll take you over someone else,” that is a great honor. And Paul had as much an emotional attachment for Epaphroditus as Epaphroditus did for Paul. They were fellow soldiers. They welcomed each other's mutual support. They had a great emotional rapport.

Furthermore, Paul says, "This great man was your messenger. He has brought word of encouragement from me. And he is a minister to my needs. He came here and he served me. This word "minister" in the Greek language is somebody who serves at his own expense. He paid his own way: "And he helped me in the ministry in Rome."

So here is the great example of friendship; rapport; and, love. Epaphroditus first was a brother in the Lord. No one has the right to be associated in God's work who is not a believer. Born-again people are to have this relationship with the pastor-teacher, whatever their spiritual maturity level is. All born-again people can be your brother in God's relationship.

Preachers, when the going gets tough, are very tempted to want to bring outsiders, especially a church with money. They'll bring unbelievers in, if necessary, to do the Lord's work.

There's only one cathedral in the United States: St. Louis Cathedral down in New Orleans in Jackson Square. And one time I visited the morning mass at the cathedral. And because everything was filled downstairs, I went upstairs into the balcony. There were not many people up there, but that's where the organ was, and that's where the choir was. And as I sat down near the choir, I was fascinated to watch, as periodically they would stand and perform certain parts of the service with their singing, that as soon as they sat down and they were not on, somebody had brought them the Sunday morning news, and they all opened up the newspaper, and they're sitting there reading while the priest is droning on down there with the mass. And then it came time for them to perform, and the director would tap on the stand, and they'd all put the papers down, and pick up the books, and they'd sing, like they do, in that Gregorian chant from the eighth century. And then they would finish, and the organ would stop, and they'd put their books down, and they'd start reading the paper, and they're lounging; they're sitting back; and, they're crossing their legs and just relaxing. These were hired hands.

This isn't what the apostle Paul is talking about – someone who is your brother in the Lord. This is the most basic relationship that we Christians have to one another. In a household of faith, this is true brotherly love – an emotional attachment at this level.

The second was that Epaphroditus was a fellow worker. Every Christian can qualify for this higher relationship to one another and to the pastor-teacher. But not all in the congregation rise to this. They do not all rise to be fellow workers. That's a select company. You've stepped up higher from "brother" now, to fellow worker. And this is a group that comes into closer association both with the pastor-teacher and with the Lord Himself. This is an area that can create competition and be in bitterness between Christians, because Satan is always trying to break up Christians from being fellow workers. He does not want us to work together. He does not want us to have this kind of worker-love for one another.

The third thing then that Epaphroditus was, we have seen, is that he was a fellow soldier. This is the highest relationship between a pastor-teacher and the members of his congregation. Not all brothers, and not all fellow workers, are ready to be fellow soldiers in the angelic conflict, to fight for the objectives of the Lord's cause. A lot of people will be your brothers in Christ. A lot of them will be your fellow workers. But they're not about to stand up against the world. They're not about to have a deep, abiding enmity toward the world that hates Christ, and therefore, they have no camaraderie with them. They have no goodwill toward them. They recognize what they are as the enemies of the Lord. And we treat them, therefore, as our enemies.

These Christians who will not be your fellow soldiers are not up to the sacrifice; the suffering; and, the resisting of Satan – the hurt that that will bring to you. This is the point where the battle really rages. Most Christians prefer to be in the quartermaster division. The quartermaster is the guy who sends up the supplies. He sends up the equipment for you to fight with. Most of the Christians would rather be quartermaster, in the back comfort area, sending up the money and the equipment, and not finding themselves face-to-face on the line of battle.

Christians recoil from the wounds which can be inflicted by unbelievers and by spiritually insane Christians. Many Christians simply don't dare stand by their church's leadership. They wouldn't dare stand by the pastor-teacher when you have to take sides over an issue of righteousness. They're the summertime soldiers of the world, and they're not about to have a camaraderie feeling of attachment to you. This is the area where people want to drift off. They're happy to be brothers, and they're happy to work with you, but they do not want to be separated from the world system, because the world will punish you for not being part of them.

So, check your own spiritual maturity structure against your stage of your relationship to your fellow believers. Are you their brothers? Are you their fellow workers? Are you willing to be their fellow soldiers as well?

That is, in Epaphroditus, a splendid classical example of "phileo" love: that friendship, that emotional attachment, and, that great rapport that is maximum loyalty and maximum productivity among the people of God. It's a great thing to have emotional attachment to one another based upon that "agape" love of your high esteem for each other. May God help us to rise to this quality which characterized Epaphroditus in such an exemplary way.

Thank you, our Father for this, Your instruction. And we thank You for the Word of God that You have helped us to pursue. We ask You to help us to have a great appreciation for the fact that we are the only people, as believers, who can be truly loving people. The world is a fake, and the love of the world is a source of great injury. We thank You for the believers at Berean Church who are born-again, brother believers in Christ. And we have a great feeling for them for that. We thank You for these who so faithfully perform services of one kind and another with their gifts; their abilities; and, their capacities. We are so grateful for them. And we thank You for those whose lives are invested without reservation in the spiritual combat, who are here with their treasures; with their talents; and, with their time. And we know that, when we go into battle, they will stand with us. They will not desert. They will be loyal to us because they are loyal to Your Son. Thank you so much for this happy time today. And may we look back upon it with great fondness in eternity future. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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