***Timothy the Proven Envoy - PH59-02

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:22-24***

Please turn in your Bibles with me to Philippians 2:23-24. Paul has written this book of Philippians from his prison cell in Rome. He is anticipating, he has indicated, being released and being able to return to visit the believers at Philippi.

**Timothy**

In preparation for this visit, Paul is sending Timothy ahead to survey the situation of the believers in Philippi, and to report back to him. Timothy will be indeed a welcome visitor because of previous associations which he has had with the Christians at Philippi. They have learned from their direct experience with him that he is a genuine and a true pastor-teacher. The apostle Paul will receive Timothy's report, and thus he will be guided, upon his release from Roman imprisonment, in his own plans, and in preparation for those plans.

Paul is an example of Christian service at the sacrifice of one's life itself, if necessary. Timothy is an example of Christian service which devotedly seeks the spiritual well-being of Christians without desiring personal recognition for it. We are going to begin looking at a third man this morning who is another example of Christian service. But first, we continue with Timothy for two more verse, beginning at verse 23.

Paul says, "Him, therefore, I hope to send presently as soon as I shall see how it will go with me. From extensive relationships with Timothy, the people in Philippi have become acquainted with the kind of a teacher of the Word that he is. They know that he has served with respect under Paul's authority. Paul says, "He is a unique person with me. I can send him as I could send no other associate of mine to see you."

So Paul says in verse 23, "Him, therefore, I hope to send." The word "him" is the Greek word "houtos." This is actually one of those words that is a pointing word in the Greek language. It means "this one." This word comes first in the Greek sentence. As you know, in a Greek sentence, you have a line-up of words, and the word that comes number one is a word of emphasis. When a Greek wants to lay stress on a certain word, he'll put it first in the sentence. Another position of emphasis is at the very end of the sentence. They can just juggle words around in order to use this little system to mark the point that they are stressing. Here, Paul puts this word "houtos" as word number one, in order to emphasize the idea that, "This very Timothy, whom you have had extensive relationships with and have learned concerning what a sound teacher he is, is the one I'm going to send to you."

The Greek Bible has another word here that we don't translate. It's this word "men." It is what we call a Greek particle. It's a signpost that indicates that a contrast is going to come up. This word "men" is usually related to a subsequent word "de." In this case, the "men" is in verse 23, and the "de" is coming up in verse 24. It is contrasting verse 23 with 24. So we may translate it as "Indeed, but:" "Him therefore indeed I hope to send presently," and then in verse 24, Paul says, "but I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." So what it is doing is contrasting what in verse 23 is a hope of the apostle Paul to send Timothy, and in verse 24 he expresses a confidence. So the "men" balances the hope to send Timothy in verse 23, with the "de," which indicates Paul's confidence of coming himself in verse 24.

The word "therefore" is the Greek word "oun," and it indicates simply "consequences." This word is stressing the fact that there is going to be a consequence in view of Timothy's visit with them. This is due to the fact that Timothy has the mental attitude, which is concern for where people are going spiritually, and that he's not trying to become a great famed public speaker with a lot of reputation in the process. Timothy is that splendid kind of associate who wants people to go on in the things of the Lord, and the glory all goes to the Lord.

So he says, "Him, indeed, therefore, on the one hand, I hope." The word "hope" is the Greek word "elpizo." "Elpizo" is a word that connotes "expectation" or "anticipation." Paul is informing these people of what his plans are. It is in the present tense which indicates it is his settled hope–it's his constant hope. It's active. It's his personal attitude. It's indicative–a statement of fact of his plan to send Timothy to them. The word "to send" is "pempo." It is in the aorist tense which indicates a point in time when Timothy will be dispatched to Philippi. It is active which indicates that Paul will make the decision as to when he goes. The infinitive indicates purpose. So this particular grammatical factor tells us that when he says "I'm going to send Timothy," it is a hope which is his purpose. This clinches the plan.

This is a plan that he describes as one he's going to put into operation presently. The Greek word is "exautes," and it simply means "immediately." He's going to do it very soon. This word "exautes" is the last in the sentence. Here again, we have a series of words. The sentence began with the word, "this very one–this fellow that you know so well and who has been so profitable to you spiritually." Then he says, "I'm going to send him immediately," and he puts that last in the sentence in order to stress the fact that this is going to take place very shortly. As a matter of fact, he says, "As soon as," which in the Greek is "hos an," and this simply means "whenever." This indicates the time factor–the temporal factor as to when he's going to send him. That will be specifically when Paul discovers how things have gone with him relative to his trial. In other words, he's waiting for the verdict from Nero: "Do I die, or do I live?" He says, "As soon as the verdict comes down, then Timothy immediately will be dispatched to you. But I'm holding Timothy here until I find out what they're going to do with me.

That's what he means when he says, "I shall see:" "Him, therefore, I hope to send immediately as soon as *I shall see*," which is the Greek word "aphorao." "Aphorao" is a specific kind of word. We have different kinds of words in the Greek for seeing. For example, we have this word "blepo." "Blepo" is looking at a thing and zeroing in and focusing your attention on a thing. You look intently at a certain thing. Then we have the Greek word that this word is made from–the Greek word "horao." "Horao" is what you do when you stand on the edge of the Grand Canyon, and you look out the whole panorama of the Grand Canyon before you. If you were a Greek, you would say, "I'm standing here looking at the Grand Canyon," and you would use the word "horao." If you were looking at a particular peak down there, you'd say, "Look at that." If you were a Greek, you would use the word "blepo" because you want a person to focus in on that particular peak. So the Greek was very expressive, even on how you looked at a thing.

"Aphorao" is made up of two words. The first one is "apo" which means "from" or "away." The second word is "horao," that panoramic view. So what "aphorao" comes to mean is "looking away from a panoramic view to something specific." Paul is going to look away from one thing, to look at another thing. That's what it means. Paul has his attention now focused on what? Well, on the outcome of this trial–whether he's going to live or die. Once he has that settled, then he says, "I can look away from this thing that I'm focusing on, to take the broader view of what I'm going to do now in the further ministry of the New Testament churches." So "aphorao" very aptly describes the fact that Paul says, "I'm really sitting here now waiting to get the word, and I'm concentrating on that issue." Just as soon as they tell me, then my mind is going to be free to dispatch Timothy; to take care of several other things; and, to go back to the work of the New Testament churches.

So that's what he means when he says in the aorist tense–at the point when the word comes down from Nero's imperial court. It is active. Paul himself will get this information so he can now look away to other things. It is subjunctive which is that mood that's potential, because he doesn't know what's going to happen. He has pretty good reason to believe that he's going to be free. But until it is official, it's only a possibility. "How it will go with me" means literally, "The things concerning me," or "how things will go with me. This is referring to the outcome of his trial. So verse 23 we may express in this way: "This very one, Timothy, therefore, I am hoping to send, on the one hand, at once. As soon as having seen how my case turns out, I shall be free to turn my attention elsewhere."

**Paul**

In verse 24, Paul says, "But I trust." In contrast to his hope, he now expresses a confidence: "But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly." The word "but" here is the word "de." We have been studying this word to acquaint you with the fact that sometimes it connects things, and sometimes it contrasts things. In this case, it's a connective, and it connects back to that previous "men" that we talked about in verse 23. It is the word to introduce the contrast now. The contrast is Paul's hope and Paul's confidence.

"I trust" is the word "peitho." "Peitho" actually means "to have confidence." "Trust" is not a good translation, but "I have confidence" is a better translation. It is more accurate? That is, he has a settled conviction on this matter. This is the perfect tense. The perfect tense is that tense that indicates to us that something began in the past, and you come to the present, and the thing is still happening. Our salvation is described as that. We have been saved in the past, and it continues right on forever. That's perfect tense. The Greek language could tell you that when it's talking about something that has taken place, and it's going to go right on, he uses the perfect tense.

So Paul says, I have a confidence which was established in the past and it's going to go right on. It's active. It's his personal confidence. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact. However, again, he qualifies the fact that his confidence is not some goofy, rosy, hope-for-the-best type of thing, but his confidence is actually based in what the Lord Jesus Christ has indicated to him.

So he says, "And in the Lord." The word "in" is "en," and "Lord" is that word "kurios" which I have shown you indicates deity. This is the reason the Christians would not call the emperor "Lord Emperor"–because the word "kurios" means deity. So he's pointing out to us that his timing of release is uncertain. But the Lord Jesus has indicated to him that he will be released. His confidence of being released is now based upon that. He doesn't have the official word yet. Until he has the official word, it's not official. But he says, "I will stand by. As soon as I have the word officially, I will send Timothy to you. My confidence is in the Lord.

Then it says, "That," which is the Greek word "hoti," and that indicates the content of Paul's confidence, which is what? That I also myself shall come shortly. "Myself" is "autos;" that is, "Paul, in person." It is emphatically stressing his personal presence in the city of Philippi. "Shall come" is the Greek word "erchomai." "Erchomai" simply means to arrive on the scene. It is future. Naturally, it is going to be in the future sometime. It is middle. That refers to the fact that Paul himself will benefit by this arrival. He will come personally. It is indicative–a statement of fact. This will be "shortly" ("tacheos"), which means "quickly."

So the apostle Paul has presented the second of the ideals for us to imitate in Christian service. First himself, as the man who said, "I will pour out my life, if necessary, as a sacrifice to God." That characterizes a Christian servant. Secondly, we have the example here of Timothy, who is willing to be in the obscure place–not the person who is the primadonna seeking the limelight in the local church, but who is intensely and zealously concerned for the spiritual well-being of people above all else relative to himself. That is Timothy, and Paul says, "As soon as I have word on what is happening to me, he will bring it to you. But I hope myself also shortly to appear on the scene."

**Epaphroditus**

Then we come to the next man, and that is this man Epaphroditus. Paul has made a decision immediately to send Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus is also with them in Rome. Timothy is going to come later when they get the verdict. But Paul has decided to send Epaphroditus immediately. Epaphroditus is also an example of Christian service. Epaphroditus exemplifies for us the Christian who is willing to pour out his physical strength in the Lord's work. This is the Christian who is willing to put himself out in his physical capacities for God's service. We're going to find some very interesting things about that particular feature of Christian service, not the least of which, in anticipation, is that this man, in the process of not restraining himself even physically in doing what the Lord's work required of him, picked up a disease and became sick even to the point of death. It is interesting that the apostle Paul, who had the gift of healing, was not able to heal Epaphroditus. This is a very important point of doctrine.

If you're going to pour out your physical capacity in the Lord's work, it means that you must not do something else with your strength. Only a fool thinks he can do everything. The physical strength for the Lord's work is part of your total capacity. You don't shoot yourself in your capacity and everything else in life, and then God gives you a great surge of energy to serve Him. We always have that particular type of thinking among Christians, more often than we like to admit, that we can do everything else in life until we are just sacked. Then we turn to serving the Lord because he's going to give us a great burst of energy now to devote to Him. That is not so.

Every one of you has an energy factor that looks like a square. It has a capacity of energy. It is a limited specific area of capacity. Then there's a little spigot here with a handle. All day long, you're turning that on, and you're pouring out your energy, and it's going down. After a day, it's gone. Then it has to be refilled by rest and recreation, and then you have capacity again. It is going down all day long. That is how it works for everybody.

Someplace along the line, a certain percentage of this capacity will either be devoted to the Lord's work, or it will not. You may go through every day of your life shooting your day's capacity of energy, and never once investing anything in eternal matters of the Lord's work. We're talking about a man in Epaphroditus who knew what it was to take his physical capacities and put it on the line for the Lord Jesus Christ to the very point of almost dying in the process. Christian service is generally, with most people, the left over-capacity which has little potential.

**Tokenism**

So we have what we may refer to as tokenism in Christian service. In affluent free America, we have a lot of tokenism when it comes to Christians serving the Lord. It is giving the impression that they have done something for the Lord in order to salve their own conscience. What they have done is simply thrown a bone to the Lord of their leftover worn-out capacities. They have not ever approached a service for the Lord in the fullness of their physical strength.

So we begin verse 25 with the word, "Yet." This is again our old friend "de." Here again, it is a connective use. We translated it as "but." He is making a connection here. He is doing a continuation. He is not contrasting something. He is just continuing what he has been saying about Timothy coming to Philippi after Paul's verdict comes in. Paul is expecting to come to Philippi himself. Then he adds another fact. That's what this word "de" indicates. He's adding one more fact, and that is that Epaphroditus is being sent immediately.

He says, "But I thought." The word "thought" is, "hegeomai." "Hegeomai" really means "to conclude," or "I've decided." It is the result of Paul having considered the facts which were involved in the particular situation, and reaching a conclusion. The aorist tense indicates that point of time when Paul reached the decision about what he was going to do with Epaphroditus. It is middle–the decision to benefit Paul's situation–the work of the Lord in which he was engaged. It is indicative. It's a statement of fact. What did he decide? Well, he decided that something was necessary. The word "necessary" is "anagkaios."

In the order of words of the sentence again, "anagkaios" is number one. So right away, as we begin reading verse 25, we know what Paul wants to stress. Paul wants to stress the fact that he is going to convey to us a decision which he considered of top priority (of absolute necessity)–something that immediately had to be done. So he puts the word "necessary" first in the sentence. As he considered the facts, he decided it merited this immediate action–sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi.

He expresses the word "to send" "pempo." It is aorist tense which is the point at which Paul will decide to send him, and dispatch him back to Philippi. It's active. It's Paul who's going to make the decision. It's infinitive which again indicates purpose. His purpose is to send him from Rome to Philippi.

We've had two words here. We have had "consider" ("I considered or concluded or decided"), and the word "send." Both of these are in the aorist tense. "Send" is in the aorist tense, and "I thought" (or "I considered") is in the aorist tense. These speak of something that took place in the past. These are epistolary aorist. That big word come from the word "epistle" which means "letter." The epistles were written sometimes from the point of view of the people who are reading it. So you might think it's odd that Paul is saying, "I have considered" and "I have sent Epaphroditus" when he's still there. But Paul is writing this the way it's going to be when they read this letter in Philippi. Then he will already have sent him. We don't want you to think that Epaphroditus was sent ahead, and somebody else carried the letter. Epaphroditus himself was the letter carrier. That was the point of sending him and writing this letter. He was the one who carried it. So this is a way that the Greeks sometimes had of writing. Where we in English would say, "I consider and I send," they write it from the point of view of the person when he gets the letter and he's reading it. So these are epistolary aorist. Some of you are interested in that grammatical thing.

He says, "I've considered and decided to send to you (that is, to the Philippian Christians). The word "to" is the Greek word "pros" which means face-to-face, so that he will be on the scene with you. Who's he going to send? Epaphroditus. Here's his name in Greek: "Epaphroditos," which we simply transliterate into the English.

Epaphroditus is a rather interesting name because it means "devoted to Aphrodite." Aphrodite was one of the Greek goddesses. She was called Venus by the Romans, and she was supposedly the offspring of Zeus and Dione. She became the goddess of love and beauty. So, actually, the name Epaphroditus could mean things like "loving beauty" or "charming," which doesn't necessarily describe something about Epaphroditus at this point in time. But it may tell us something about the fact that Epaphroditus may have come from a family which was devoted to the goddess Aphrodite.

Aphrodite was widely worshipped in the ancient world as the goddess of love. This worship was expressed primarily in the heathen temples through the act of fornication. Thus they had the priests and the priestesses in the temple for the fact of prostitution in order to worship Aphrodite. The name of "Epaphroditus" comes from "Aphrodite," meaning devoted to this particular goddess. However, both Jews and Christians in New Testament times often used Greek names, and they used them totally apart from the meaning. They didn't necessarily want to say something about their children when they selected a name for that child.

Epaphroditus came to Rome as a representative of the Philippian church. We have this in Philippians 2:25, and he came there with an offering for Paul (Philippians 4:18). Whatever his character was in the past, and whatever his name may imply about that character, he was now a very highly esteemed Christian worker. This is the only reference we have to Epaphroditus in the New Testament. We don't know anything more him than what we read right here. We have no indication of what his position was back in the church at Philippi. He may have been the pastor-teacher of that church. He may have been just one of the deacons of the church. He may have been one of the church members who was one of the leaders, and whom they esteemed so highly as to send him on this mission. He probably was some kind of a leader.

Paul describes him with three words. These three words are very significant concerning the relationship of a church member to the pastor-teacher–to the communicator of the Word of God.

**Brother**

First of all, he calls him, "My brother." The Greek word is "adelphos." "Adelphos" was a word that indicated a relationship between two people because they shared a common life origin. They were born from the same parents, and so they were brothers. Here, the reference is to a common spiritual life of two people from God the Father. Paul and Epaphroditus exercised, obviously, different authorities in the church. Because of the spiritual gifts they had, they had differing authorities. But they were brothers spiritually.

Not all religious leaders are the brothers of believers. As a matter of fact, we may suspect that most of the religious leaders in the United States could not be called "our brothers in the Lord." I don't know what the current percentages are, but when you know that at least 50% of the pastors in the United States do not believe that Jesus Christ was God, and do not believe He was born supernaturally, but that he was either the son of Mary, his mother, who worked as a prostitute, or Mary who simply was impregnated by a passing Roman soldier, then you may suspect that those same men are not born-again believers.

**Religion**

I realize that it is not beyond some very famed evangelists to call men upon the platform who have said those very things that I just described to you concerning the view of Christ–men who have written books and stated those very things as being their view of Jesus Christ, and to call them up on the platform in evangelistic meetings to lead in prayer, and to call these people "brother." The truth of the matter is that unless a person has entered the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ as the God man, and has received Him as the son of God and as the sinless One who came to die spiritually and physically for our sins, he is not in the family of God, and he is not thereby our brother. The word "brother" we often toss around very loosely in the English language, simply meaning a fellow human being. But when the Bible uses the word "brother" here, as applied to Epaphroditus, it means that he is in the family of God. Service to God in common with unsaved ministers or with unsaved people is not God's order. If you get into that, you have gotten into mere religion. It is a travesty upon the Word of God, and it is an insult to our Savior.

Religion is the outcome of this kind of relationship of calling people brother or sister who are not really in the family of God. The result of this is religion–and religion, historically, has caused more misery to humanity than even communism has. Don't ever forget that. Torquemada, the Spanish priest, came to Ferdinand and Isabella, and demanded that they punish the Jews who murdered Jesus Christ, and that began what we know historically as the Spanish Inquisition. The world had turned loose upon it, something that was more horrendous in the persecution of the Jews than even Hitler came up with, in case you are not aware of the historical facts. There were more Jews killed than could be imagined under the control of the Spanish Empire.

Later on, that inquisition splashed over to include those who refused to accept the heathenism of the Roman Catholic Church, and who returned to the Word of God in Christ, and those people were considered heretics, and they were included in the Spanish Inquisition. All of that was in the name of religion. So when you call somebody "brother" who is not in the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ, in the sense of the New Testament concept of being born again, just remember all of the religion that has flowed from that kind of a relationship of people calling themselves "brother" who are not in God's family, and of the misery to humanity that has stemmed from that. You may want to reconsider whether you want to use that word in that sense.

I know that Pope John XXIII said, "From now on, we are going to quit calling Protestants heretics." He passed the word down, and do you know what you are now called?" You are called "separated brethren." Isn't that interesting? We are now "separated brethren." We are "brothers" now. We're separated from the true church, but we are "brothers." There is no greater darkness than the darkness that resides in the Roman Catholic Church, who has had centuries of being able to develop darkness. This was since the time of Constantine when the paganistic Babylonian mystery religions were brought in wholesale into the church, and Christianity converted into a pagan expression such as is found in the Roman Catholic Church today.

So don't be deceived by some Roman Catholic, who probably is not even going to heaven because his trust is in the Virgin Mary more than in Jesus the Savior. Don't be captivated by the fact that he may call you "brother," and his human winsomeness may be attractive to you. Use the term "brother" sparingly, and recognize that it is a precious term. But it is the first term describing the relationship of a church member to his pastor-teacher. Paul found Epaphroditus a fellow member of God's family, of the born-again contingent of people. He did not find Epaphroditus as merely a person of religion.

**Companion**

Then we have a second term here. He says, "I thought it absolutely necessary at this point in time to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and companion in labor." "Companion in labor" is the Greek word "sunergos" "Sunergos" means "fellow worker." It is made up of the words "sun" and the word for "work:" "ergos." So the word here is somebody who is a companion in the Lord's work. It is used here of someone who is a fellow worker in the ministry of the local church.

**The Local Church**

The ministry of the local church is obviously a team effort. The whole divine purpose of the local church is that it is a feeding and a training station, and you can never fulfill the mission of feeding and training believers unless the local church is a team effort. The local church has fallen upon evil times in our day because Christians view themselves as spectators sitting in the grandstand watching the preacher do his stuff, and cheering him on. Some churches never tell people anything else but the gospel–service-after-service. Whole congregations gather just to hear the preacher do his stuff on coming up with a variation of the gospel in the hopes that somebody will be saved. The lack of genuine spiritual progress and outreach of the church is obviously quite evident to us. Why? Because it's a pulpit-oriented operation. Whereas the local church in God's concept is a team operation.

Everyone in the local church is in it because he's a member of the team. If you are a member of any church, or if you associate regularly with a church, it is because God has led you to that place as a member of a team. If you're coming in and out and saying, "This is certainly a very wonderful church down there that they have," you've used the wrong word, friend. It's a wonderful church down there that *we* have, because you're a member on the team. Maybe you're a benchwarmer, but that's something else again. But if you are a member of a local church or you attend a local church, it is because you're on the team.

I recognize we had the inactive types. We have the spectators; we have the deserters; we have the soreheads; we have the lethargic; we have the procrastinators; and, we have the indifferent. We have all those different types in the local church, but every one of them is still on the team. They are a problem for us to win with, but they're on the team. In a particular local church, a believer has a position to play, and that's the job to do. If you don't do it, I'll tell you something else. The Lord doesn't override it. The Lord doesn't step in and do it for us.

If you're a member on the Dallas Cowboys football team, you will be aware of the fact that if you decide to lay out on your position that the team is going to lose. That's all there is to it. It's insanity for you to suggest that you can get out there and not play your position. You're going to get in trouble.

God has given you to us in this local church. If you don't play your position, the team is going to be hurt. It's going to be as if the football coach couldn't replace a man on the team. He got 11 men, and that's all. If they won't allow you to make any replacements, and somebody doesn't do his job, then what are you going to do? Is it all going to be well anyhow? No, it's not. You'll get your brains beaten in. Many a local church has its ministry tremendously hindered because the people who are there don't realize they if don't do their job, it's not going to be done. If they don't give their money, it's not going to be given. If they don't do the work that needs to be done, it's not going to be done. If they're not reaching out for souls, they're not going to be reached for. To have a part of your human body not functioning can only be overcome to a limited degree. If a vital part of your human body stops functioning, it will not be overcome at all. You die.

The same thing happens to local churches. I forget what the latest statistic is on how many local churches go out of business every month and close the doors. Every now and then you can drive down the street and see a tremendous building which was once a local church, and now it's a warehouse for rugs or something. You can realize that there was once a congregation that was meeting in there, and maybe it was a congregation that respected the Word of God, but people on the team did not play their positions; they came to a point where there was no return; and, God put them out of business and closed the doors. You may expect that a local church can be closed if the people who are on the team don't do their job.

So Epaphroditus came to Rome with more than money. He came with a spiritual gift, and he came ready to use it without limitations to the extent of his physical exhaustion. A church does not do well if part of its body is not working. Sometimes your physical body feels good, doesn't it? Do you know why it feels good? It's because all the parts have been working. You've been laying off of the pig meat, for example, maybe.

By the way, somebody told me the other day that I've got to get this article. I'm still coming to our nutrition sermon, but here's a preview. Somebody told me the other day that they're considering outlawing bacon. They want to take it off the market because they have now traced cancer to it. Maybe you've been knocking off the wrong stuff. You've been laying off that ham, and now you just feel good. Why do you feel good? Because all of the parts of the body are clicking and functioning. That's why. When things feel good in a local church ministry, it's because all the believers are doing their job. They're expressing their spiritual gifts.

**Soldier**

Well, Paul gives another title here to Epaphroditus. He calls him, "My fellow soldier" ("sustratiotes"). That comes from "sun," which means "with," and it comes from "stratiotes" which means "soldier." So it is "with soldier," or "fellow soldier:" "My companion in spiritual combat in the angelic conflict." Paul and Epaphroditus served the Lord Jesus Christ in the face of the vicious attacks of Satan and the demonic angels, and of the human agents that Satan and the demons use. These two men knew the spiritual armor of Ephesians 6, and they knew how to use that armor victoriously. Few Christians understand the principle of the angelic conflict–how to fight in this demonic spiritual warfare that surrounds us, and how not to become casualties. Most of them try to fight it in the terms of the flesh as if it were human combat. That's the origin of a lot of squabbles that you have in the local church operation. Few Christians can enter into combat, such as Paul and Epaphroditus were engaged in.

Soldiers have a certain camaraderie because their lives depend on each other. What Christians do will affect you. Christians who do the job in combat are Christians that you welcome. Soldiers don't fight each other in combat, and yet Christians often fight each other in the midst of the spiritual warfare that we're in. Both Paul and Epaphroditus knew that they were high priority targets because they were communicators of the Word. Nobody is higher on Satan's list than communicators, and therefore they knew that they needed the support of the believers, as well as associates that could mutually support each other in the combat that they were engaged in.

In a local church, you have this three-fold relationship to the pastor teacher. There is something that I want to point out to you–that this relationship is a relationship that goes in an ascending fashion. The first basic relationship that you have to your pastor-teacher is as a brother–using the word we have here which means a believer. The second relationship that you have to your pastor-teacher is as a fellow-worker. Then the third relationship you have is as a fellow-soldier. Each of these relationships goes in decreasing numbers. Everybody is related to the pastor-teacher as a brother. This is involved with everybody who is on the team. Everybody is his brother, and everybody who is born again is involved in this way. No one has a right to be associated in the Lord's work who is not born again. Yet, pastor-teachers sometimes fall into the trap of inviting people who are not born again to participate with them in the Lord's work. Preachers are tempted to use unbelievers to get the Lord's work done. This is the most basic relationship that you have in the Lord's work. First, you are a brother.

Then, a pastor-teacher will discover that, out of this pool of brothers, there is a smaller group who are fellow-workers. Not all your brothers will be workers with you in the Lord's ministry. Satan, of course, is trying to detach these people. Then you will find that up here at the top are fellow soldiers–those who are ready to take the gaffe of the combat. You discover that those people are the fewest of all. Those people are the fewest of all that are in the local church–who will stand by a pastor teacher.

So what Paul is telling us here is that he found Epaphroditus (in the ascending order as things went up from brother to fellow-worker to soldier) a complete perfect companion in the Lord's work. This was his relationship to Paul: brother; fellow-worker; and, fellow-soldier. Then he says, "But there's a different relationship to those of you who are in Philippi." He uses the word "de," a connective again. It is translated as, "And your messenger." The word "messenger" is the Greek word "apostolos." This is the usual word for "apostle." However, it is not used here in the technical sense of the spiritual gift of apostle. Paul had that gift. Epaphroditus did not have that gift. What it is used here as is in the general sense of someone who has been sent on a mission. It is what we would call an "ambassador," a "delegate," or an "agent." So, he uses "apostolos" here in the general sense of someone who is sent on a mission. Epaphroditus was sent on a mission. He was sent with money for Paul, and he was sent to provide services for him to help him in the work in Rome in behalf of the church at Philippi.

We have another Greek word "aggelos" which does mean "messenger." Normally, if you wanted to say "messenger," somebody who is just carrying a message, you would call him "aggelos"–not an "apostolos." An "apostolos" indicates that he has a mission. "Aggelos" simply means he has a message.

So we have: "Fellow-soldier and your messenger (your delegate on a mission), and him that ministered to my need." "Him that ministered" is one Greek word, "leitourgos." "Leitourgos" is the Greek word that was used to describe a man who would perform a public service at his own expense. It also was used of the religious service of a priest, and you could see how Epaphroditus was very fittingly called a minister, and that's what this means. This is a noun. It is not a verb. It may look like a verb and sound like a verb, but it's actually a noun. They sent him as their agent with a commission, and they sent him as a minister. At his own expense, Epaphroditus came to serve Paul, and to serve him in spiritual things. This is the same word that Paul used in Philippians 2:17 to describe his own ministry. He said, "He came to minister to my need, which in the Greek is his "chreia," and that simply means his various physical, spiritual, emotional, financial, and church ministry needs. He came in order that he might serve in this capacity.

So we may translate verse 25: "But I considered it absolutely necessary to send face-to-face to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister of my need." We shall look further at Epaphroditus at the problem that he got into as he was willing to exhaust himself physically in the Lord's service, and the problem that this confronted the apostle Paul with. We shall look at that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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