***Epaphroditus - PH64-01

Advanced Bible Doctrine - Philippians 2:25-30***

Please open your Bibles to Philippians 2 as we conclude the second chapter. In Philippians 2:14-16, Paul has called upon the Philippian Christians to be lighthouses in a world of darkness–lighthouses of divine viewpoint, and lighthouses that come from the intake of doctrine. Paul himself will have cause either to rejoice or to be disappointed in the Philippian Christians whom he has taught the Word of God. Their response will make the difference of his rejoicing or his disappointment.

Paul's whole life has been spent in teaching people God's viewpoint and orienting the thinking of people to God's mind. It is very important to him as to how people respond to the teachings that they receive. The basis of all Christian service is your own personal spiritual maturity. All of your testimony is based upon how mature a believer you are. The depth of your testimony (the effectiveness) is structured upon personal spiritual maturity. You do not gain spiritual maturity by jumping into some area of Christian service. The only way you get to be a spiritually mature Christian is by a long, extended period of taking doctrine into your soul and accepting it, and starting to function upon it. That's the only way that a person goes to spiritual maturity.

**Spiritual Maturity**

Most believers in our day are complete spiritual do-dos. They haven't begun to make the first step toward spiritual maturity. They are a bunch of babies because the preachers are not doing their work or feeding the flock. So the apostle Paul does his desperate best at the end of the second chapter of Philippians in verses 17-30 of trying to give us examples of what constitutes real hardcore, genuine Christian service. He does this by presenting three men. He presents, first of all, himself. Paul himself exemplifies the quality of readiness to give one's life in order to make doctrine known to people. We may describe Paul in one word: sacrificial. That is a quality of spiritual maturity.

A second quality of spiritual maturity he exemplifies through Timothy. Timothy exemplifies the quality of devotedly seeking the spiritual development of Christians without seeking recognition for it. The quality of spiritual maturity represented by Timothy may be described in the word "self-effacing." He was not seeking to receive honor or credit for what he did. The third quality of spiritual maturity demonstrated for us is in this man, Epaphroditus, whom we have been considering for the last few weeks. Epaphroditus exemplifies the quality of serving Jesus Christ with unbounded physical energy. We may describe this quality of maturity with the word "untiring."

**Epaphroditus's Illness**

So picking the story up in verse 27, we have Paul's concern for Epaphroditus. You'll remember that Epaphroditus was sent by the church at Philippi to minister with Paul in Rome to Paul's needs, and to help him in the work while Paul was in prison. While he was in Rome, something happened to him physically so that he became ill, and the illness was a near fatal illness. So the apostle Paul says in verse 27, "For indeed, he was sick, near unto death. But God had mercy on him." Epaphroditus almost died. But Paul, says, "But," and he uses the Greek word "alla." "Alla" here is a sign of strong contrast to the near-fatal illness of Epaphroditus. "Instead" is the idea: instead of his dying, something very wonderful happened. He who had what appeared in all intents and purposes to be a fatal illness, recovered, and he lived. Paul says, "Instead (but), God came in and did something." The word God is the Greek word "theos." But in the Greek, it is *the* God, indicating God the Father specifically who is in view here. Paul says, "God the Father made a direct intervention in the situation."

Notice that this was not the exercise of the spiritual gift of healing which Paul very definitely possessed. We've already shown you that. For some reason, something has happened to Paul's capacity to exercise instantaneous, miraculous healing. Instead, Paul here indicates that he was very much concerned. And for a while it looked like it was touch and go as to what was going to happen to Epaphroditus. Instead, the problem was solved by God directly sovereignly intervening and healing this man.

**Mercy**

So Paul says, "While he was near death's door, God the Father had mercy." The word "mercy" is the Greek word "eleeo." "Eleeo" means "to feel sympathy with the misery that another person is going through." What you do as the result of your sympathy for that person's misery is an act of grace. It is mercy in action. It is grace in action expressed as mercy. So here, God had pity for the situation that Epaphroditus faced, and that Paul faced. Here is this man sent out by a church, the Philippians church, one of the best churches of New Testament days, one very dear to the heart of Paul. They pick one of their prime members, and they dispatch him as an agent to help in their behalf with the ministry of Paul in Rome. And what happens? They get word back that he's dying. This raised great concern for them, as it did for Paul.

But God stepped in and had mercy. It is in the aorist tense, which means at the point of Epaphroditus's illness, God stepped in. It is active which means that God the Father Himself exercised the mercy, not Paul, through his gift of healing. It's indicative which indicates a statement of fact. This mercy was on him ("autos"). "Autos" is a personal pronoun, and in the grammar here, it is actually what we call the direct object of this word "mercy." So actually, we may literally translate this as, "That God *mercied* him." It makes a very beautiful translation really. It says that God actually *mercied* Epaphroditus in the course of His saving him from death. This is indeed what God does to us all the time. Mercy is God's grace in action. It is a great joy to realize that many times during the day, if we keep our eyes open, we may actually say, "There, God has just *mercied* me."

Furthermore, Paul says, not only did He *mercy* Epaphroditus: "And not on him only, but on me also." This is a series of little words, all of which are tied together with a strong expression, because Paul is writing a little excitedly here. In verse 27, he says, "But God have mercy on him, and," and it's the word "de" in the Greek. This is a little particle indicating an addition. Paul says, "And I'll tell you something else as well" (which is the way we would say it). "Not only." Remember, there are two Greek words for "not." There's a weak, so-so word, and then there's the real strong, "Boy, I mean *not*." That's the one he uses here. He uses "ou," the strong negative. He says, "And boy, I want to tell you something. It was not on him (on Epaphroditus) only. But," and this is the Greek word "alla" again, which is stronger than this other "but" ("de"). He's talking all the way through here with strong terms. He says, "But I want you to know: on me also."

In other words, God's mercy toward Epaphroditus was also a mercy for Paul. Paul was already in great sorrow over the fact that this friend of his was in such a grievous illness. Paul himself needed the mercy from God of not seeing this man die. So, again, you see, we have very strongly suggested to us that Paul was unable to use the gift of miracle healing, which he had previously possessed. The New Testament gift of healing was temporary. And that's the reason. This is near the end of Paul's ministry. It was shortly after this book was written, that he was released from Roman imprisonment. He had maybe another year of ministry before they snagged him in again. They passed the new law in the Roman Empire. This time they said, "If you are a Christian, you are a member of an unauthorized religion, and therefore you have broken the law. This is a criminal act," and the penalty was death. So the second time they pulled Paul in, Nero had him, because Paul was, of course, practicing an unauthorized religion in Christianity. So there was no question this time that he was guilty.

So here Paul is near the end of his ministry. Apparently, it seems quite clear that he did not have the capacity any longer to use the gift of healing. Before this, all you had to do was touch some item of clothing or a piece of cloth that he had a handled, and you could heal with that. The point of all this was that it was a temporary gift. It had done its work of authenticating the Word of God, and it doesn't exist anymore.

If you have been in on our previous session, I think you have had it well proven to you that the gift of miracle healing at the hands of an individual no longer exists. So as long as God has a plan for your life as a believer, you may come, as did Epaphroditus, right to death's door itself. But you will not die. I care not what the illness will be. If God has a purpose for your life, you're going to come through. Until He is through with you, you will not die.

A miracle healing, in this case, was performed on Epaphroditus directly by God, not through Paul. All healing today is performed by God directly, not through any human agent as a divine channel of power. All those who claim today to be healers, who claim to be channels of God's healing power, are apostates. Remember that. All who claim the gift of healing, of instantaneous miracle healing today, are apostates. They are either sincerely deluded, or they are outright fakes. But in any case, they become channels of Satan's work. All healers today are apostates. All who claim the gift of miracle healing are apostates. All are channels (instruments) that Satan manipulates and uses.

Therefore, your associations and your involvements with healers should be nil. Otherwise, you will perhaps bring upon yourself the delusion that they are in, and you will bring upon yourself great spiritual destruction. And the place you will find out how bad it is is when you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and discover all the rewards that have been lost to you because you became involved with an apostate thing, not realizing that sincerity is not the thing that makes a thing right. It is doctrine that determines whether it's right or wrong.

Paul could not heal. Nobody today can give your blind eye sight. Nobody today can put together your broken bones. Nobody today can remove the cancer that encroaches upon organs of your body. Nobody today can perform that kind of instantaneous healing.

However, we do have a technique for healing today. That technique is the same one that Paul had to use at the end of his ministry. He just had to look to God as a Spirit-filled believer, with all known sins confessed. Paul went to God and said, "Father, please heal Epaphroditus. I'm in a terrible sorrow over what has happened to this man who has come as the representative of this great church. Please don't add to my sorrow by letting him die. Then he had to wait upon the sovereign decision of God to heal or not to heal. You and I are bound up to that same limitation today. But I want to remind you that we do have that capacity. There is no such thing as a special gift for praying for the healing of people. However, we do have the capacity and the right to pray for healing. I know that the healing sometimes is a miracle. I could spend the rest of this session relating to you the cases of miracle healings that I have observed. But they have not been because some healer had brought the miracle, or because some individual was the channel of God's miraculous working.

Furthermore, when God heals sovereignly today, it is a healing which follows a normal progression, of course, of healing. A person gradually reverses, and becomes well. He doesn't instantly find that his broken arm has been put together. Gradually it heals, or gradually turns to gangrene, and they had to remove the limb. But God does do some very miraculous healings. So these follow a normal procedure, and God is our resource in our time of illness–His sovereign mercy, not some self-deluded apostate human healer. I think we have clearly established, if you have studied our last few sessions, that all claims to that kind of miracle healing at the hands of individuals is completely a fraud. Do not be tempted by it.

At this point in time you might say, well, "I know that that. That doesn't impress me." But I want to remind you that, in your desperation, you'll be tempted to go the way of the apostates toward the miracle healers. May God preserve you from that, but He will not unless you get this straight now. Understand that God will give you grace to die when your time is up, just as He has given you grace for living. But you have to get prepared for that ahead of time. If you go to healers, and if you try that routine, I'll guarantee you one thing. When you stand before the Lord, you're going to be ashamed for what you did. And now that I've told you and explained it to you, it's going to be even worse for you, because the Bible holds you guilty for what you know.

**Sorrow**

Paul says, "And not on him only, but on me also, lest." And the word "lest" is the Greek word "hina" with the negative "me." It literally is, "That I should not have sorrow upon sorrow." "Have" is the Greek word "echo." It is aorist–at the point of the death of Epaphroditus, should he die. It is active. Paul himself would feel this sorrow. It is subjunctive in mood, which means it was potential. "If he lives, I'm going to be happy. If he dies, then I'm going to have sorrow." You will notice that this sorrow is something that the apostle Paul says he himself is actively going to experience. The word "sorrow" is "lupe," and it literally means "grief." It signifies a pain of the body or of the mind.

I remind you that Paul had a fully developed spiritual maturity structure in his soul. If you don't know what a developed spiritual maturity structure is, then I suggest you get the studies on spiritual maturity, and immediately learn what that is, and how to get it. But one of the things that it involves is having the quality of inner happiness. That's one facet of spiritual maturity. Paul had inner happiness. Yet, it was not illegitimate for him to say, "If this man that I love, who represents the Philippian church, should die, then I'm going to have sorrow over it. I'm going to shed some tears." It is proper and in order, if God so moves you to, to express your grief at the death of a loved one in that way.

However, it becomes wrong if you don't stop it. It becomes wrong if you go through an excess. It becomes wrong if you start hugging the corpse in the casket. It becomes wrong if you start throwing yourself on the floor in a faint. And don't smile at that. I've had too many funerals, and I've sat there and stood there and watched all this happen. That's why I again ask you that when you die, please arrange a memorial service that I can conduct for you where you are not there. Just let them close the casket; quietly bury you with a small personal service with the family; then we'll have a memorial service; and, we'll honor the Lord in a very magnificent way. I'll be here to say appropriate remarks to those who gather, who usually are ready to think about some eternal things. We will not be distracted by your smiling presence there in the casket before us. Now, that's a Christian funeral. If you want to keep doing it the way the pagans have done it, with the casket open and all that, OK. I'll still be there helping you out, but I'll be happier the other way.

So my point is that sorrow is not a contradiction of your inner happiness. Paul says, "I would have sorrow upon sorrow," and it's the word "epi". What he means is, "I've got sorrow here, and I'm piling sorrow upon sorrow upon sorrow. He says, "Lord, I'm already in enough grief over this man being sick. Don't add the sorrow to me of seeing him die, and for me to have to bury him here in Rome as well.

So we come to verse 28. Paul says, "I sent him, therefore, the more eagerly." The word "sent" is the Greek word "pempo." "Pempo" simply means that he dispatched Epaphroditus from Rome back home to Philippi. This was aorist. It's the point when they shook hands, and he said, "Goodbye." It is active. It was Paul's personal decision that the man should go back. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact. This is aorist. It's written in the past tense, and aorist is a past, like, "I have sent him." If we were writing a letter, we would ordinarily say, "And so I am sending him home to you." But in the Greek world, they would write with what they call an epistolary aorist, or a letter aorist. They would write in terms of how the thing was when the person read the letter. So when the person read the letter, he was already sent, and that's why he uses this past tense. He says, "I have sent him." That's the condition that existed when they actually read the letter.

"Him," of course, is Epaphroditus, who is now well enough to travel. It's our word "autos" again. And "therefore" is the Greek word "oun." "Oun" introduces Paul's conclusion about Epaphroditus. Paul said, "I took everything into account. I know why you sent him. I know what has happened to him. He has become sick. I know that you heard that he's dying here in Rome. So I put all this together, and I have made a decision, and my decision was that I should more eagerly." The word "more eagerly" is "spoudaios." "Spoudaios" simply means "more quickly." Rather than "more eagerly," the idea is "more quickly." It connotes an urgency. Paul is saying, "I would not have sent him home as quickly as I did had it not been for the fact that he had been ill, and that you knew it. But since you did. I've decided to send him quickly back to Philippi."

For what reason? He says "That." "That" is our Greek word "hina" which introduces his reason. And he says that his reason is, "So that when you see him, you may rejoice. The word "see" is "horao." There are two Greek words. One means looking at a thing specifically–focusing. But then there is a different kind of word, and it means looking at the whole panorama. That's what this one is–this "horao." Paul says, "I want him to walk into the congregation, and the first thing you're going to do is look at him and say, "He doesn't look too pale. He doesn't look too thin. He's got good color. He's got a spring in his step. He looks good, doesn't he? He almost died, but he looks OK now."

And Paul says, "I want you to take an overall view of this man and see how well the grace of God has made him." "Horao" in the aorist tense, which means when he returns to Philippi. It is active. The Philippians are going to do the looking over. And it's a participle. Now, because it is an aorist participle, we know that that means that this action comes before the main verb of this sentence (of this verse), which is "rejoice." The main thing he wants them to do is rejoice. But they're not going to rejoice until they're able to see him. When they see him, then they will be able to rejoice. "See him again (back in Philippi), that you may rejoice."

The word "rejoice" is "chairo." "Chairo" is aorist–when he returns home. It is passive. That's interesting. They're not going to have to kick up their emotions. Automatically, they're going to rejoice when they see him. It is subjunctive. It's potential. When they see him, then they will rejoice. This joy is going to be heightened because he's going to bring this letter of Philippians back from Paul. Furthermore, it's going to be heightened still more because he's going to be able to sit down and teach them something–the things that he has now learned from Paul. So it's even going to be better.

So in verse 28, Paul says, "I sent him, therefore, the more quickly, that when you see him again and I look him over and see how well he is, you may rejoice, and that I may be less sorrowful." "Less sorrowful" is the word "alupoteros." "Alupoteros" really means "free from grief." I may be relieved of the grief that I now experience. Paul is to be relieved of his concern of the anxiety about the Philippian Christians. I think this is a rather tender note about the apostle–that he was concerned about these Philippian Christians who are worried about their man Epaphroditus. Mind you, he wasn't sure himself that he wasn't going to be executed. He was there on trial for his life, and he could have said, "Well, I don't care what their problem is back in Philippi. Mine is worse. I'm going to keep Epaphroditus here. I need his help." Instead, Paul was the kind of magnificent person such that he said, "I'll feel a lot better when I know that he's back with you, and your mind has been put at ease concerning him." It is very touching to see this sensitiveness in the feelings of others when he himself was facing a possible death.

**The Reception for Epaphroditus**

So verses 29 and 30 (closing this chapter) are the reception that Paul says they should give him in Philippi. So he says, "Receive him." That's the word "prosdechomai." You will recognize "pros." This is our little Greek preposition, which means "face-to-face." The word "receive" indicates a willing reception. Here it is a willing reception face-to-face, or we would say, "Welcome him with open arms." This is present tense. This was to be their constant attitude. It is middle, but this is a middle here that means an active. So they are personally going to do this. But it's an imperative. Paul is commanding them to welcome this man with open arms. "Receive him, therefore." This is, again, the Greek word "oun," indicating consequence of his coming home. "Receive him in the Lord." "Lord" is the word "kurios," indicating the deity of Christ. He says, "Receive him in the sphere of Jesus Christ as God"–the love of God for a good soldier, Jesus Christ."

Please remember that one of the things that Paul said in describing Epaphroditus back in verse 25 is that he was first my brother, and all Christians are that. Then there's a step up for a Christian, and he becomes your fellow worker. Then there is the pinnacle where he becomes a fellow soldier. And Epaphroditus had become the fellow soldier of Jesus Christ with Paul. So in effect, when Epaphroditus comes back home, what you have is a Christian soldier who is coming home again.

This is a very significant (and apropos) comparison here, as you'll see in a minute. View Epaphroditus as a fellow soldier type returning home. Notice that when soldiers return home from war, it is always a lot more fun when they come home alive than when they come home dead. They expected that Epaphroditus was going to come home, but they expected to have him in a box. The word they had was that he was gone–he's dying in Rome. Instead, they had joy. It's like hearing that somebody is missing in action, and you've written them off as dead, and then he walks in the door on you, and he's alive. There's a lot more happiness when a soldier returns from combat alive than when he comes home dead. Now, that's exactly what we have here. He says, "Receive him in the Lord (with the love of the Lord) and in the sphere of the Lord' service with all gladness." That means "with total rejoicing of every kind," which is very naturally what they would have done.

**Honor**

Then he comes up with something else. First of all, he points out, "Not only do you receive him with gladness, but I want you to something else. I want you to hold him." "Hold" is the word "echo." Here it means "to view him" (present tense)–constantly view him in this way. It is active–"You Philippians yourself." But it's in imperative mood. It's a command: "I command you to view him." It is actually "to view such a one" here. It's the Greek word "toioutos," which indicates "such a kind" or "such as this." "This is a particular type of Christian leader who is coming home. You expected him dead. He has come home alive." We would say "such men" (men of this category)–"A person such as Epaphroditus, and you are to hold him," it says, "in reputation." This is an important Greek word: "entimos." "Timos" means "honor." "Entimos" most means "in honor"–honored; prized; highly valued; or precious. In other words, Epaphroditus, as a Christian soldier, should be recognized as the Congressional Medal of Honor type of leader who has gone above and beyond the call of duty.

You can buy a little book. In it are listed the names of all the American military service personnel who have won the Congressional Medal of Honor. Every one of them, since this medal came into being during the American Civil War, has received this medal for having performed their duty as soldiers above and beyond the call of duty. They have performed in combat above and beyond the call of duty. In other words, they came to a certain point where they had done all that was expected of them, and all that their duty required of them, and they could have quit. Instead, they kept on. Maybe they were wounded. They continued. Maybe the odds were insurmountable, and they continued. Very frequently, the Medal of Honor is awarded posthumously. It is awarded after the person has gone above and beyond the call of duty and paid the highest duty, his life itself.

So actually, this little word "entimos" is a very fantastic word here in the Greek. The apostle Paul is saying, "When Epaphroditus walks into the congregation back in Philippi, I am commanding you as an apostle, that you recognize him of a certain type of spiritual leader, which is to be classified as the Medal of Honor type. He is therefore to be treated as such. Since the Philippians were not receiving a corpse back from Rome, but a living Medal of Honor type, they should let loose with a celebration. That's what he means. Rejoice with all joy. Pull out all the stops.

Paul does not want the Philippians to fail to recognize what they had in Epaphroditus as a spiritual leader. There are plenty of public relation clowns in the ministry. There were then, and there are today. There are plenty of clowns who run big churches, who carry impressive roles, but who have ignorant congregations who can't put together two things from the Word of God in proper order, and can enter in but minimally into doctrinal implications. Yet, there are men of courage of the Epaphroditus type (men of devotion, and men of insights) which are ignored. Paul says, "I'm telling you, as an apostle, that that's not to be your case. You are not to be guilty of that. When my fellow soldier, Epaphroditus (who has gone above and beyond the call of his duty as a Christian) comes home, I want you to treat him as such."

Why did Paul insist on such honor for Epaphroditus? He says in verse 30, "Because," and he uses the word "hoti." This introduces the act of Epaphroditus which was above and beyond the call of his duty as a Christian soldier. If you had the United States government's book on the Congressional Medal of Honor winners, you would see the man's name, and then under it you would have a full statement of what he did in battle (in combat). You would have a full description of how he went above and beyond the call of duty which merited his being awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Paul says, "I'm going to tell you why Epaphroditus is the Christian Medal of Honor type. For this reason: "Because, for the work of Christ." The word "for" here is the Greek word "dia" which means "on account of." It connotes "for the sake of." "Because, on account of the work of Christ, because of his Christian service in Rome." What's the work of Christ that he was doing" The work of teaching the gospel to the lost. And you notice that I said, "*Teaching* the gospel to the lost." I didn't say "preaching" the gospel to the lost. You don't preach the gospel to the lost. You teach the gospel to the lost. The whole game of Christianity is a teaching game. So it's teaching the gospel to the lost.

The work of explaining Bible doctrine to believers was part of what Epaphroditus was doing–the work of standing by Paul in the face of the opposition of Christians who were negative toward Paul in Rome. We've already studied them–who were giving Paul a hard time. This included the work of associating with Paul, who is on trial for his life before the Roman authorities. For Epaphroditus to be so closely associated with a man who was under suspicion of having been guilty of a crime looked bad for Epaphroditus. He was hazarding himself and his own life. It included the work of resisting the false teachers (the religious operators), and Rome was full of them. Epaphroditus was standing with Paul in resisting those people.

The result was, of all of this service for the Lord, Paul says, "Because on account of the work of Christ (all that that connoted) he was near unto death." The word "near" is "eggizo." "Eggizo" means "to approach." It's better than "near." He approached something. It's aorist–in the course of his service in Rome. It's active. He himself did it. It's indicative–a statement of fact. What he approached unto was "mechri" which means "even to." It connotes the degree of his service. What he approached to was "thanatos" (death)–separation of the soul and the body. Epaphroditus served the Lord's cause to the point where he almost died physically. Why did he get sick? What was his illness? We don't know. But he approached the point in his Christian service where he almost died physically.

The Lord is not asking you to serve him in such a way that your life is in danger–that your life is hazarded. God is not asking you to serve in such a way that your life is to be taken. If He is to do that, the service in which He puts you may result in that, but He is not asking you to go out and to see if you can just kill yourself for the Lord. In the early church, people got the idea that if they were gobbled up by a lion in the amphitheater of Rome, and they died as martyrs, they would go straight into heaven, and they would stand with a special martyr's crown, above all the other believers. So there were a bunch of kooks in the New Testament church who were struggling to stand in line for the arena. If they had to go under the persecution, they wanted to go as a great martyr there in the arena. They thought if they died as martyrs, there would be special special blessing. That is not so. God does not want you to go around seeing if you can kill yourself in His service. Most of you, I think, will have no problem on that at all. However, some of you may be so inclined to be that enthusiastic.

In any case, Paul says that Epaphroditus went to the very point of his putting his physical life on the line. Furthermore, he says, to this extent: "Not regarding his life." The Greek word is "paraboleuomai." "Paraboleuomai" comes from the Greek word "ballo," and "ballo" means "to throw." "Para" comes from the word "aside." So what we have in this word literally is "to throw aside." It connotes exposing oneself to danger or to hazard. This is the word that they used in the Greek word for gamblers. Gamblers who would throw aside all caution would take a chance. They would gamble.

Well, certainly any soldier who is in combat knows that he is hazarding his life. He is gambling with his life. He gets the odds in his favor the best he can, by the training and by the way he conducts himself, but once you're in combat, you've hazarded your life, and it is a gamble as to whether you will survive or not. So this word describes exactly what Epaphroditus did. He hazarded (he gambled) his very physical life in the Lord's work. He wasn't just serving the Lord on Sunday in a nice comfortable way, and once a week teaching his class. This man was an example of untiring Christian service.

I want to tell you something else. He didn't just, all of a sudden, start hazarding his life overnight. There came a time when he didn't feel well. Whatever the illness was, he just didn't feel well. He could have cut out and said, "Now I have to retire from serving for a while." Instead, he kept serving until he could not go on any longer. He got up and kept on teaching until he just had to give in, and he just couldn't hunker down and carry through, in any event. He cast aside his own physical well-being. This is aorist. It's the point when he was serving with Paul in Rome as the agent of the Philippian Christians. It is middle. He did this to himself. That's interesting. It's middle voice.

**Hazarding His Life**

Epaphroditus chose to hazard his life in this way. It's a participle–a principle of Christian service. What he hazarded, it said, was his life. The Greek word says his "psuche", which is, as you know, "soul." So it's telling us what he was hazarding was his very self (his soul, or himself)–that which could have left that body, and thus to have left him dead. He hazarded his life, to begin with, by facing the identification with Paul in the eyes of the Roman authorities, and then serving in such a way because of what needed to be done and the demands that were upon him, that it then resulted in a physical drain on him. Every good soldier hazards his life in order to do his duty. Epaphroditus kept going.

"Because for the work of Christ, he was near unto death, not regarding (hazarding his life as a gambler) in order." Why did he do this again? Again, we have "hina," that little code word to indicate purpose. "In order that he might supply your lack of service toward me. The word "supply" is "anapleroo" which means to fill up adequately. It is aorist–at the point of his service. It is active–Epaphroditus filled up. But it is subjunctive. Potentially, he could have done his job, or not done his job. And what he was filling up is called in the Greek the "husterema," and that means the deficiency. In other words, the Christians at Philippi lacked something toward Paul that they felt they should do, but could not do because they were separated by miles and miles away from him. So they sent this man and they said, "You do for us what we cannot do for Paul. What they wanted him to do is called in the Greek Bible their "leitourgia." "Leitourgia" is the Greek word for service. It is service of a sacred nature–service of a priest.

This very aptly describes the nature of a Christian soldier's service. A Christian soldier serves as unto the Lord, whether he's on the field of combat, or whether he's on the field of spiritual combat. Epaphroditus acted as the official servant of the Philippian Christians to give Paul the help in the Lord's work, "That they could not do toward me." "Your lack of service toward me;" that is, toward Paul. The word "toward," by the way, is the Greek word "pros" which means face-to-face–the work that you could not do for me face-to-face. For such hazardous service, Epaphroditus performed his duty as he was sent by this church to perform it. He not only performed it, but he went above and beyond that call of duty that they had placed upon him, to the extent that he had hazarded his very life. For that, we have awarded to Epaphroditus, at the orders of the apostle Paul, the Christian Medal of Honor.

**Honor Christian Leaders**

So let's tie this up by looking at the nature of honor to Christian leaders. How do you honor a Christian leader who deserves the Christian Medal of Honor? It is not a matter of heaping material rewards upon him. While you may give him material rewards, that's incidental. Secondly, it is not a matter of praising him or giving him public recognition. That recognition is nice, but it's really not important to him. It's secondary. Honor is recognizing his spiritual authority as a pastor-teacher or as an evangelist in the teaching of doctrine. Honor is positive response to the Bible doctrine instruction which he gives; that is, being teachable, so that you are building a spiritual maturity structure in your soul. Honor is being present regularly for instruction in the Word of God when the congregation gathers.

Next, honor is a mental attitude toward the leader from your spiritual maturity structure, which you have built in your soul through doctrine. You are genuine in your relationships with the mental attitude love, which means no bitterness. You also honor a spiritual leader by avoiding spiritual reversionism as a member of his flock. In other words, you stay faithful to the Lord. Honor is objectivity in listening to the teachings of the leader. You can sit there and not be sidetracked by the fact that you have a limited frame of reference. That requires objectivity and listening to your spiritual leader.

You are also not to be sidetracked by his old sin nature. You may not like your spiritual leader's old sin nature. He's not too crazy about yours, as a matter of fact. But that has nothing to do with your learning the Word of God. So honor of a spiritual leader involves objectivity and listening to him; not being sidetracked by his old sin nature; not being sidetracked by your limitations; and, not trying to make him fit some professional image. Don't make him try to talk or act like some great and wonderful preacher that you knew back in the country when you grew up.

Honor is also respecting the privacy of the spiritual leader, just like you honor all other believer priests by respecting their privacy. Honor is helping to finance the ministry of the leader in the Lord's work. You don't just leave it all up to him to raise the funds.

Finally, honor is recognizing that a spiritual leader's expression of maximum love for a congregation is the HICEE instruction in doctrine. So all of this was in the background in one way or another in Paul's mind when he said, "When Epaphroditus walks back into the church in Philippi, you've got a Medal of Honor winner among you, and treat him accordingly.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1973

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