

PHILIPPIANS

LESSON EIGHT JOY IN FAITHFUL BRETHREN (2:19-30)

Overview

- I. The Context
 - A. Paul is in prison for preaching the Gospel of Christ
 - B. He has written to them of the joy that comes from being in Christ
 - C. He has reminded them of the things that are truly important in life
 1. Joy in Christ
 2. Joy in the preaching of the Gospel
 3. Joy even in death
 4. Joy in unity
 5. Joy in imitating Jesus
 6. Joy in obedience
 - D. Though Paul had many reasons to be discouraged, he continued to focus on his joy
 - E. While there were those who were unfaithful and even enemies of the Gospel, Paul found joy in those brethren who remained faithful

- II. Timothy – Tried and True
 - A. Likeminded with Paul
 - B. Concerned for the church
 - C. Selfless in service
 - D. Proven to be a loyal servant
 - E. To Paul, Timothy was like a son

- III. Epaphroditus – an Energetic Encourager
 - A. Brother, coworker, fellow soldier to Paul
 - B. Diligent messenger from the church at Philippi
 - C. Faithful servant to the imprisoned Paul
 - D. Great love and concern for the church
 - E. Proven faithful – reputation above reproach
 - F. Sacrificial servant, even in sickness

- IV. The Philippians – Faithful and Focused
 - A. Knowing their state would bring joy to Paul
 - B. They had sent a faithful servant to Paul
 - C. Paul would send a faithful preacher to them
 - D. The two men mentioned in this chapter (along with Paul) serve as illustrations of what it means to have the same mind as Jesus (vs.5)

2:19 **But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state**

- A. Even though Paul had just written of the possibility of his own death, he still hoped ("*trust in the Lord*") to continue his work.
- B. Paul's desire was to send Timothy to Philippi.
 - 1. Paul first determined to have Timothy travel with him at Derbe or Lystra (Acts 16:1ff).
 - 2. It seems that Timothy had been converted by Paul in his earlier work in that region (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:10-11).
 - 3. Timothy was a young man, for 10 years later Paul still writes of him as a youth (1 Timothy 4:12).
 - 4. Yet, he had been brought up with a knowledge of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15).
 - 5. As he set out to travel with Paul, he was ordained by the elders of the congregation (Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6).
 - 6. Thus, Timothy traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey.
 - 7. He also accompanied Paul on his third missionary journey, though he is not mentioned until they reached Ephesus.
 - 8. While Paul was imprisoned in Rome, Timothy served him in various ways.
 - 9. One way would have been by traveling to Philippi on Paul's behalf.
 - 10. Following this, Timothy worked with the church at Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).
 - 11. He is mentioned last when Paul requested his coming to Rome during Paul's second imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:9-11, 21).
- C. There was a twofold purpose to Paul's wish.
- D. First, Timothy would be a comfort and encouragement to the congregation in Philippi.
- E. Second, Paul would be encouraged and comforted by hearing from Timothy about the welfare of the Philippian Christians.

2:20 **For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state**

- A. Paul could have confidence in sending Timothy (and the Philippians could have assurance in receiving him) because they were likeminded.
 - 1. This word literally means "equal is soul; of similar spirit."
 - 2. This idea is seen in Deuteronomy 13:6 – a close kindred of spirit, thought and understanding.
 - 3. This is a powerful recommendation of Timothy and a compliment to his character.
- B. Furthermore, Timothy would naturally care for their situation.
 - 1. The word "naturally" actually means "genuinely, really, sincerely, or faithfully."
 - 2. Timothy was not just going through the motions of serving the church.
 - 3. He genuinely cared about the circumstances of the church.

- 2:21 **For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's**
- A. In Paul's day, most were concerned primarily about their own self-interest.
 - B. Sadly, the same is true of most Christians and congregations today.
 - 1. Compare the money spent on buildings with that spent on evangelism.
 - 2. Compare the time spent on recreation with that spent on Bible study.
 - C. When brethren place their own selfish desires first, the things of Christ suffer.
- 2:22 **But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel**
- A. In contrast with the selfish, Timothy had proved himself to be concerned genuinely for the welfare of the Lord's church.
 - B. In fact, he had labored with Paul in the Gospel as a son would work alongside his father.
 - 1. Preaching / Teaching
 - 2. Debating
 - 3. Traveling
 - 4. Suffering (persecution, hardship, etc.)
 - 5. Sacrifice / Self Denial
 - 6. Faithfulness
 - C. On the missionary journeys, Timothy had been through all the things that Paul had – and had remained faithful.
- 2:23 **Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me**
- A. Therefore, because of the character of Timothy, Paul hoped to send him soon to the Philippians.
 - B. Yet, Paul was waiting to send him until he could look away from the present and determine what would happen concerning his imprisonment.
- 2:24 **But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly**
- A. Again, notice that Paul's trust is "in the Lord" (cf. James 4:15).
 - B. He still felt that he would be acquitted and freed from prison – at which time, he would come to see the Philippians himself.

2:25 **Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants**

- A. The name Epaphroditus means, “charming, lovely, fair, graceful, handsome.”
 - 1. It is related to the goddess Aphrodite (or, Venus).
 - 2. It was a common name during the time of the New Testament.
 - 3. In its contracted form, it is Epaphras (cf. Colossians 1:7; 4:12; Philemon 1:23).
 - 4. However, it seems that the Epaphroditus and Epaphras mentioned in the New Testament were two different men.
- B. Epaphroditus is mentioned only in the book of Philippians.
 - 1. He had been sent by the church at Philippi to the imprisoned Paul (4:18).
 - 2. Paul deeply appreciated their sacrifice and help.
- C. Now, Paul sees the need to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi.
 - 1. To relieve their concern over his sickness
 - 2. To comfort and encourage Epaphroditus
 - 3. To (apparently) carry this letter to the church there
- D. Yet, Paul sent him back with the highest of praise and honor.
 - 1. *Brother* – indicating their common fellowship and sympathy
 - 2. *Companion in labor* – indicating their common work and cause
 - 3. *Fellow soldier* – indicating their common fight, danger and suffering
 - 4. *Messenger* – one sent out by the church with their approval and confidence
 - a. The word for “messenger” is the same Greek word for “apostle.”
 - b. Epaphroditus was an “apostle” of the church.
 - c. This simply means that he was sent out with the authority of the local congregation to represent them in ministering to Paul (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:23).
 - d. It does not mean that he was an apostle of Christ (one of “the twelve”).
 - 5. *Minister* – indicating his willingness to serve others
- E. Epaphroditus is being set forward as an example of one who lives according to the same attitudes and thinking of Jesus (cf. 2:5).

2:26 **For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick**

- A. While in Rome, Epaphroditus became gravely ill.
- B. Thus, he longed for his close associates in Philippi.
- C. However, it seems that his longing was not merely selfish, but primarily out of concern for his brethren.
 - 1. They had heard of his sickness.
 - 2. The indication is that Epaphroditus did not want them to be overly anxious about him.
 - 3. Thus, he wanted to see them to comfort them!
- D. The Greek word for “full of heaviness” is used only one other time in the New Testament – of Jesus in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37; Mark 14:33).

2:27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow

- A. Epaphroditus' sickness was serious – he was close to death.
- B. However, God had mercy upon him and allowed him to recover.
 - 1. Note that his healing was not miraculous.
 - 2. Yet, God still had a hand in it.
 - 3. God heals through providence just as he did by miracle in the past.
- C. This was an act of mercy for both Epaphroditus and Paul, who cared for his friend.
- D. There is an important lesson about miracles in this passage.
 - 1. Even though Paul had the ability to work miracles, he could not do so on a whim.
 - 2. Miracles always served a greater purpose – to confirm the word preached and the authority of the preacher (cf. Mark 16:15-20; Hebrews 2:1-4).
 - 3. Miracles were not performed for their own sake.
 - 4. They were not performed for the sole purpose of helping one who was sick or afflicted.
 - 5. There was always a spiritual purpose and goal – something many in the modern religious world need to learn.

2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful

- A. The word “carefully” means “diligently or earnestly.” It may also mean “quickly or speedily.”
- B. In other words, Paul sent Epaphroditus to the Philippians as soon as it was possible.
- C. His purpose was to bring joy both to himself and the congregation.

2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation

- A. They were to accept him back into their fellowship.
- B. They were to receive him “in the Lord” – as a brother in Christ.
- C. They were to welcome him with joy.
- D. They were to hold him in high esteem and honor him for his faithfulness in the work of the church.

2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me

- A. Such a sacrificial attitude as displayed by Epaphroditus deserves the honor of all men.
- B. Imagine if the church were filled with Christians who took their responsibilities as seriously as he did!