

Philippians Lesson 5 Articles

Obviously Timothy had a significant role in the work of Paul. Although he represented Paul in delicate situations, Paul reluctantly allowed him to do so. Two statements in the text reveal Timothy's importance to Paul and the work of the gospel. First, Paul needed Timothy a while longer (v. 23). When he knew "how things [would] go," Timothy would be free to come. No one knows why Paul felt that way. What is certain is that Timothy uniquely sustained Paul during the uncertainty of his trials, and Paul felt he could hardly get along without him.¹⁹⁴ Later, as Paul knew of his impending death, he called for Timothy to stand with him (2 Tim 4:9–11). Second, Timothy replaced Paul, who desired to come when he could. In sending Timothy, Paul sent the best he had—an extension of himself—and a costly gift to them. After all, they had sacrificed for him as well.¹

The Example of Epaphroditus (2:25–30)

A. *He was a balanced Christian (v. 25).*

He was a brother, which means he knew the fellowship of the Gospel; a companion in labor, which tied him to the furtherance of the Gospel; and a fellow soldier, which means he knew how to battle for the faith of the Gospel. How easy it is for Christians to get out of balance! Some Christians think only of the fellowship, the brotherhood, and have no time to win souls or fight the enemy. Others are so wrapped up in service that they forget fellowship. This was the mistake Martha made (Luke 10:38–42). Still others are always fighting, so much so that they neglect fellowship and service. We need to be balanced Christians.

B. *He was a burdened Christian (vv. 26–27).*

He had the submissive mind and thought of others, not self. Though he was sick, and almost died, his burden was for Paul and the church back at Philippi. We need more Christians who are burdened not only for foreign missions, but also for their own local churches.

C. *He was a blessed Christian (vv. 28–30).*

What a blessing Epaphroditus was to Paul! How he must have encouraged Paul in those difficult days as they prayed and labored together. He was also a blessing to his own church. He made it possible for the Philippians to share in Paul's important ministry. Moreover, Epaphroditus is a blessing to us today! Here we are, centuries later, studying his character and benefiting from his life and ministry!

Faithful servants of Christ ought to be honored in the right way. "Receive him in the Lord" is Paul's admonition. See 1 Thes. 5:12–13. "Hold such in reputation" (v. 29) in no way contradicts 2:7, "made Himself of no reputation." The phrase in 2:7 literally means that Christ emptied Himself. Paul told the church to show proper honor to their leader because he "gambled his life" (v. 30, "not regarding his life") for their service to Paul.

¹⁹⁴ The physical difficulties combined with a natural anxiety regarding the long awaited trial. Paul was sixty to seventy years old and had known physical problems. Additionally, the church at Rome was divided regarding his worth as an apostle and preacher (1:12–18), and few were there to comfort him.

¹ Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 119). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.