**God’s Mercy on Us**

**by Pastor Fee Soliven**

**Philippians 2:19-30**

**Wednesday Evening**

**March 2, 2022**

**Philippians 2:19-30**

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. 25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;

26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

**19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.**

Saints, Timothy was with Paul in Rome when Paul wrote this letter, although Timothy was not imprisoned. He had traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey when the church at Philippi was begun, so the Philippians knew Timothy.

Paul could not visit the Philippians, thus he hoped to send Timothy on his behalf. Timothy had traveled to various churches as Paul’s representative at other times (see 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:2).

**1 Corinthians 4:17**

“For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church”

**1 Corinthians 16:10**

“Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do”

**1 Thessalonians 3:2**

“and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith”

Saints, Epaphroditus would leave immediately and deliver Paul’s letter; then Timothy would arrive later after Paul learned the verdict of his trial. Paul hoped that in the meantime the Philippians would take to heart his call to unity in their church and would iron out their difficulties.

Timothy would be able to see their progress and then could come back to Rome with news that would bring Paul good cheer.

**20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.**

Saints, Timothy genuinely cared about the Philippian believers because he had traveled with Paul on his second missionary journey when the church at Philippi had been begun (Acts 16:1-3, 10-12.

**Acts 6:1-3**

1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business;

**Acts 6:10-12**

10 And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. 11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God." 12 And they stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council.

Saints, the phrase no one else like him literally means “no one of equal soul.” These words of praise reveal that Timothy had become a dependable coworker and friend.

**21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.**

**1 Corinthians 10:24**

“Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being”

**1 Corinthians 10:33**

“just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”

**2 Timothy 3:1-6**

1 But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,

4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!

Saints, while many believers might express concern, too often they are too preoccupied with their own activities to act on that concern. Timothy was concerned for the Philippians’ welfare, and he was willing to act on the concern by dropping what he was doing in Rome to make the lengthy and tiring trip to Philippi.

Once in Philippi, he might have to deal with problems in the church—certainly not an enviable task. Timothy’s willingness to go to Philippi reveals a spirit of selfless service. Here was a man who exemplified what it meant to put others’ interests ahead of his own.

**22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.**

Saints, Timothy had been with Paul during Paul’s ministry in Philippi. The Philippian church well knew Timothy’s value, sound character, and worthiness.

The church knew that Timothy’s coming would be equal to that of the arrival of Paul himself, for Timothy had served with Paul like a son with his father.

Paul and Timothy had developed a special bond; Paul had led Timothy to Christ during his first missionary journey. In the first century, the Greeks valued highly the service a son gave to his father. Yet Paul realized that both he and Timothy were servants of Jesus Christ; thus he wrote that Timothy had helped him in preaching the Good News across the empire.

**23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.**

Saints, Paul was in prison (awaiting his verdict) for preaching about Christ. He planned to send Timothy to Philippi and hoped to do so when he learned of the court’s decision. Even if Paul were to be released from prison, he would send Timothy to Philippi with the news, and then Paul would come to see them soon after.

**25 Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need;**

Saints, Epaphroditus had come from Philippi to Rome, acting as their messenger to deliver a financial gift from the Philippians to Paul and to care for Paul on the Philippians’ behalf. Epaphroditus may have been an elder in Philippi.

Epaphroditus had come not just to deliver money, but to minister to Paul’s spiritual needs. He may have been sent to Rome to remain with Paul indefinitely, ministering to and encouraging the imprisoned apostle. Like Timothy, he put another’s need ahead of his own (see 2:4).

Epaphroditus came to serve Paul, but Paul felt it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter to assure the Philippians of Paul’s well-being after his severe illness Paul wanted the Philippians to know how highly he regarded Epaphroditus,

so he characterized him with three names:

(1) true brother, meaning fellow believer;

(2) faithful worker, which means he too was working for God’s Kingdom;

(3) courageous soldier, referring to the solidarity among believers who are fighting the same battle.

**26 since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.**

Saints, communication happens so quickly in our world, but Epaphroditus couldn’t just pick up the phone or send an e-mail saying all was well.

The Philippians had heard that Epaphroditus was ill, and word of their concern about him had gotten back to Rome (again, weeks elapsed as the news traveled the forty-day journey between the two cities).

When he recovered, Epaphroditus was longing to see his friends and family in Philippi so they would know he was well. So Paul figured the best way to do that would be to send him home again.

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

Saints, The Philippians’ concern about Epaphroditus’s illness had been well founded, for he had been so ill that he almost died. While the apostles had been given the ability to heal, it was not a permanent gift to be used at will, otherwise, Paul would surely have healed his friend.

Saints, God is Sovereign. So instead, Paul could do nothing but pray. Epaphroditus recovered because God had mercy on him as well as on Paul, who would have faced unbearable sorrow at the death of his friend. What illness Epaphroditus had and how he regained his health are unknown.

**2 Corinthians 12:6-7**

6 For though I might desire to boast, I will not be a fool; for I will speak the truth. But I refrain, lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me to be or hears from me.

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

Saints, to Paul, these details were less important than the significance of the healing. God had mercy on both his servants—on Epaphroditus by healing him and returning him to ministry; on Paul by not adding the sorrow of bereaving a friend’s death on top of other sorrows rendered by his imprisonment.

**28 Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.**

Saints, With Epaphroditus’s unexpected return, the church might think that his mission to minister to Paul had failed. They might be concerned that Epaphroditus was leaving Paul alone in Paul’s most desperate time of need.

Instead, Paul took full responsibility for Epaphroditus’s return to Philippi and encouraged the believers to rejoice that he had come back to them.

As he planned to do with Timothy, Paul willingly sent away those closest to him, if their ministry were required elsewhere. Epaphroditus had certainly been an encouragement to Paul, as Paul’s description of this brother indicates. Yet Paul knew that the Philippians needed to see Epaphroditus for themselves. This would ease Epaphroditus’s distress (2:26) and lighten Paul’s cares.

**In Closing:**

**29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30 because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.**

Saints, while Epaphroditus had not been able to remain in Rome to encourage Paul as the Philippian church had hoped, Paul wanted the believers to welcome him back and give him great honor for what he had done.

Paul let the Philippians know that Epaphroditus had not failed in his mission, and that he should be given great honor. Epaphroditus had risked his life for the work of Christ by helping Paul on behalf of the Philippian church. Paul needed personal encouragement; the church couldn’t give it because they were far away.

But Epaphroditus had taken that responsibility and had risked his life to help the apostle in his time of need. Epaphroditus had done his work so well that he could report back to Philippi and bring Paul’s letter of thanks and encouragement along with him.

Saints, Soon and Very soon, Jesus is about to appear, we are almost out of here!

**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**

13 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

15 For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. 16 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore comfort one another with these words.

**1 Corinthians 15:50-54**

50 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed-- 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. 54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

**Short Movie Slide>**

**Acts 2:38-39**

38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

**Let’s Pray!**

**Benediction**

**"May The LORD bless you and keep you, May The LORD make His face shine upon you, May The LORD be gracious to you, May The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you His (Shalom) peace.” In Jesus Name!**