



KING'S CHAPEL

Daily Devotional - Philippians Study

Week 3 - Day 5

Approaching God

Psalm 133 - *How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard, down on the collar of his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.*

"The unity of God's people brings opposites together, symbolized by the tall Mt. Hermon in the rural north of Israel, and the little hill of Zion in the urban south. For Hermon's dew to fall on Zion would be a miracle - and so is the supernatural bond that brings people far divergent in culture, race, and class together in the Lord. The unity and love he gives us is like precious oil in ancient times, making people fragrant and attractive to us who otherwise we would dismiss or reject. So, Paul says, 'make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.'"

Tim Keller

Opening Prayer: Teach me through my study and prayer today to see how I can help the church become the Body it was meant to be through powerful, gospel-centered relationships. And help me to do this in a non-self-righteous way. Amen.

Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Philippians 2:25-30

Slowly & carefully read the passage 2 or 3x's before taking notes & answering questions

Paul's sense of gospel unity and partnership with Epaphroditus is so strong that he speaks of him as a "brother," "fellow worker," "fellow soldier," "messenger," and "minister"—all in just one verse (v. 25. Paul's affection for Epaphroditus was so potent that his death would have caused "sorrow upon sorrow" (v. 27).

Philippians 2:25-30 - **25** I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, **26** for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. **28** I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. **29** So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, **30** for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Start with Engaging the Text: Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words. Which words or phrases stand out to you as significant?

Daily Study Questions

You may find it helpful to read through the commentary in “Resources for Further Study” at the end of today’s study to answer these questions.

- Look at some of the qualities in Timothy’s life in yesterday’s passage. What qualities do he and Epaphroditus share in common?
- Epaphroditus had carried the Philippians gift to Paul (as we will see in Phil. 4:18) What had then happened which caused anxiety for everyone involved?
- How does Paul show his own vulnerability to the Philippians in vs. 25-27?
- How does Paul demonstrate that he was looking after the Philippians’ interest and not only his own? (vs. 28-30)

Meditation & Reflection Questions

- What key truth are you taking away from today’s study? Why might God be showing you this truth today?

OR...

- What are 2 or 3 big ideas you are taking away from this week’s study of Philippians chapter 2?

Close in Prayer:

Rejoice: - What 1 or 2 things can you praise and rejoice in from today’s study?

Repent: - What 1 or 2 things do you need to confess and ask for forgiveness?

Request: - What 1 or 2 things do you want to ask God for today as a result of your study?

Summary Notes on Philippians 2:19-24

This passage gives us a window not only on Epaphroditus - his journeys, his mission, and his nearly fatal illness - but also on Paul. He was truly glad to have Epaphroditus with him, and he was truly horrified at the thought that he might die. Vs. 27 is most revealing: God took pity not only on Epaphroditus (in other words, he recovered from his illness), but also on Paul, so that he wouldn't have one sorrow piled on top of another. 'Well, Paul,' we want to say, 'What was the sorrow you already had?' Presumably he would reply: 'Being in prison, and being unable to see my brothers and sisters in the Lord.' 'Why could you let go of the sorrow and simply rejoice, as you're telling us to?' we might ask. 'And how can you say that if Epaphroditus had died you would have been overwhelmed with that as a second sorrow on top of your first one? Wouldn't you have wanted *us* to rejoice that he'd gone to be with the Lord?'

Again he might reply: 'I do rejoice, and I am rejoicing. I know that God has won the victory over the powers of evil, and that he will one day fill the world with his love and justice, raising us to new life in his final kingdom. That sustains me, and I celebrate it day to day. But at the same time I love my friends, especially those who work and struggle alongside me in the prayer and witness of the gospel. We are bound together by ties of real human affection and love.' (Look back at vs. 2:1 and think what that actually meant in terms of Paul's bonding with his "family" in Jesus.)

'I'm not a Stoic,' he would say. 'I don't believe that our human emotions are silly surface noise and the we should get down beneath them to a calm, untroubled state. That's not what I mean by "joy." The joy I'm talking about goes hand in hand with hope; it doesn't mean that everything is already just as it should be, only that with Jesus now enthroned as Lord we know it will eventually get there. But if, while we're waiting for that day, we pretend we don't have human emotions - we pretend that we don't *need* human emotions! - then we are denying part of what God has given us.'

We should not imagine, then, that the call to rejoice, which does indeed sound through the second half of this letter, is a call to ignore or forget the multiple human dimensions of our daily lives. After all, part of Jesus' own path of humble obedience (2:6-8) was his weeping in agony both at his friends' graveside (John 11:35) and in Gethsemane (Hebrews 5:7). Would we dare rebuke Jesus himself for failing to have a pure, untroubled joy at those moments?

Paul's description of Epaphroditus, then, reminds us of the vital truth that we are all of us, whether first-century apostles, or 21st century disciples, expected to be fully human beings, facing all that life throws at us and being honest about the results. Paul didn't need or want to hide from the young church - from his own converts in the faith. He was not afraid to admit his now vulnerability; that, indeed, is part of the whole point of 2 Corinthians, written most likely not very long after this letter. He believed, after all, in the Jesus who "was crucified in weakness, but lives in the power of God." (2 Cor. 13:4)

As for Epaphroditus himself; he, like Timothy has followed the path laid down in vs. 1-11. He, too, has not sought his own well-being, but that of others. He, too, has been prepared to lay down his life for the gospel. He, too, is a visible reminder of Jesus the king, the Lord. Christians need biblical teaching on godly self-sacrifice, but we also need models of those who have placed their faith and hope in Christ. He is the primary model of humble service. But let us also look around ourselves today for men and women who, like Timothy and Epaphroditus, set an example of humble, sacrificial service because they are living in gratitude for God's grace. People like Timothy and Epaphroditus should be honored (vs. 29), commended, and unleashed for ministry (vs 19, 25, 28) even as we rejoice in God for their lives. Living for Christ is not easy. It requires humility, service, and dependence on God's grace. A redemptive perspective on others that views them as examples not in place of Jesus, but for the sake of Jesus, encourages us in this grace.