

PHILIPPIANS

Rejoice In
The Lord!

A Great Friend

Lesson Twenty-Eight

Philippians

Rejoice In The Lord!

Lesson Goal: To assist students to know about being a good, trusted helper.

Scriptures: Philippians 2:25-30

For Memory: “Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him.”
Philippians 2:29

A Great Friend

Paul, as we know, was in prison in Rome ready to die. The people of the church in Philippi heard of this, and sent Epaphroditus (E-paf-ro-die'-tus) with gifts and with instructions that he should serve Paul in any way that was needed.

As we said in our last lesson, Paul was sending Timothy to Philippi to assess the situation and bring him a report. He was also sending Epaphroditus back home. We know very little about this man who became such a friend and supporter of the Apostle. He must have been trusted by the church in Philippi. After all, they sent him with gifts and asked him to stay with Paul. He was a gift to Paul from the church to help him with whatever he needed. He could run errands, be a listener; sort of a personal servant to the imprisoned Apostle.*

Now, Paul was sending him back. The full story must be pieced together from just a few words in these verses. Since Epaphroditus had been sent on a specific mission, and since that mission would not be fulfilled if he left Paul, it must have seemed to Paul that he needed to justify sending Epaphroditus back home to Philippi. Some people might see Epaphroditus as a quitter. Paul didn't want that.

So, Paul described the importance and Christian commitment of this great friend. He said three things right up front. Epaphroditus was a brother. He could have said he was a friend, or comrade, but instead he referred to him as a brother. Second, he said Epaphroditus was a fellow worker. Paul equates the ministry of this friend and brother with his own ministry. They were both servants of Jesus. And, third, Paul said that he was a fellow soldier. Epaphroditus was on the front line of the battle with Satan and all the enemies of Jesus.

One Bible commentator, named Lightfoot, put it, “Epaphroditus was one with Paul in sympathy, one with him in work, and one with him in danger.” What a powerful compliment! It is obvious that Paul loved and appreciated Epaphroditus.

Next, he reminded them that Epaphroditus was their *messenger* and that he had been sent by them to take care of Paul. To get the full meaning of these words, it is important to understand that the word messenger is the word, which in the New Testament, is translated *apostle*. Paul says that, in ministry, Epaphroditus was an apostle sent to

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serve God and Paul. Epaphroditus, in Paul's mind, stood with the giants of the church.

Then, he calls Epaphroditus a *servant*. Though it is translated, "take care of my needs," the word means "one who serves." It was a word used in those days to identify a person who made a financial contribution for the good of everyone. Sometimes a wealthy person would pay for the building of a navy ship and pay the sailors who served on the ship in war. In other words, it's someone who makes an unselfish contribution to help.

Epaphroditus was, without a doubt, a great friend to Paul. He stuck with him, served him, encouraged him, and fulfilled his assignment completely. As we shall see in our next lesson, he got sick while he was with Paul and, even then, carried on. Paul just wanted his fellow church members back in Philippi to understand that and appreciate it.

For you and me, we need to see that our Christian life is the same as that of Epaphroditus. We should want to always be good partners with other Christians in serving one another as we serve God.

*Underlined statements in this Teacher's Guide appear in the Student Worksheet with blanks to be filled in by the student during the lesson. Words in the Student Worksheet may not appear exactly as printed in the Teacher's Guide.



Teaching Tips:

1. For an interesting Biblical message on friendship, read I Samuel 19. Also, Proverbs 17:17a; 27:6a; John 15:13-15
2. The literal translation of the word *apostolos*, apostle, is one who is sent out on a mission. It came to refer to a spiritually elite group of men. Paul considered himself an apostle "born out of season." I Corinthians 15:8
3. Songs that emphasize God's grace, voluntary sacrifice and service, joy in Christian living, and Christian fellowship are appropriate.
4. Pray with your students: Thank God for people like Epaphroditus who willingly give themselves to serve others even though it may be dangerous and may require sacrifice such as leaving home to serve in a distant land.
5. Ask your class to think about what it was like to be the person who helped Paul when he was in prison. Ask them to imagine serving God far from home.

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Student Worksheet

For Memory: “Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him.”
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=Epaphroditus was a gift to Paul from the church to _____ him with whatever he needed. He could run errands, be a _____; sort of a personal _____ to the imprisoned Apostle.

=Some people might see Epaphroditus as a _____. Paul didn't want that.

=Epaphroditus was a _____. He was a _____. He is a fellow _____. Epaphroditus was one with Paul in _____, one with him in _____, and one with him in _____.

=Epaphroditus was, without a doubt, _____ to Paul. He stuck with him, _____ him, _____ him, and fulfilled his _____ completely.

=Paul wanted his fellow church members to understand that and _____ it.

=For you and me, we need to see that our Christian _____ is the _____ as that of Epaphroditus. We should want to always be good _____ with other Christians in _____ one another as we serve _____.

How to begin a Personal Relationship with God:

First, believe that there is a God.

Second, believe that Jesus, God's Son, was sent to earth to die so that you can have a relationship with God.

Third, ask God to forgive your sins in Jesus' name. Jesus' death on the cross paid the price of every sin you commit.

Fourth, ask Jesus to be your Savior and the Lord of your life.

Fifth, believe that He has answered your prayer, and be determined to live for him all the rest of your life.