

Philippians 10-07-02a

This is Friday, the 2nd of July, 2010. We're in the Book of Philippians, finishing up chapter 2. We will resume tonight in verse 25. We'll pause at the outset to go to the Lord in prayer and ensure that our time together is well spent.

Father, we're grateful once again to have the opportunity to gather and to spend time together in the study of your Word. We thank you for its preservation. We thank you for the message that it contains and the power that it provides for our lives.

Each of us faces challenges. Each of us has testing from within and from without. And we know that this is the source that you have provided for us of strength and encouragement and direction.

And we pray that as we study tonight, that each of us will come away with a better understanding of how we should live and the strength to draw upon internally to fulfill that goal. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Well, the Thessalonian letter that we have been looking at was directed to a community of believers who had grown in grace and knowledge for some time. They are not rookies. They are not new believers.

They are well-versed and well-taught. But even in groups that have that advantage and are possessed of that sort of teaching and knowledge, they had some problems. And we infer by reading between the lines that the main problem there wasn't a lack of knowledge and it wasn't a lack of desire or interest, but it was disharmony.

It was a lack of single-mindedness and communion. And so we saw Paul carefully insert in a beautiful and tactful way his exhortation that provides the solution to that problem. And the solution is to remember the approach of the Lord Jesus Himself who had a lot more to lose, who had a lot more reason to be put out with those around him when they failed and when they misunderstood and when they opposed him and antagonized him.

But he understood the greater goal and he pursued it and exemplified selfless love and selfless devotion to the plan and purpose of God. Paul himself echoes that same attitude and that's kind of what he led with, what Paul led with in the first chapter was his own example. He says, don't worry about me, I'm doing fine, even though he's in prison and on trial for his life and so on.

And he says, look, I look at this as a good thing and here's how and here's why. He gave us the example of the Lord and he returned to his own situation and said, I hope to send Timothy to you shortly so that he can check on you. And it is subtle, but if you look at this section we just covered last time, verses 19-24, Paul again is indicating.

He doesn't say, I'm going to send Timothy to you so that he can tell you all about my problems

and tell you what my needs are and deliver a laundry list of things I'd like to come back to me and I need my cloak and my manuscripts and my this and my that and perhaps you can send some medicine and some ointment for my eye. And if you know any friends there that have influence in the Roman government why you can put in a good word for me and maybe his interests are not in view. Look at what he says, I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly so that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.

You all have had this experience many times where you go to visit somebody in the hospital and you say, well hopefully I can go and kind of cheer them up they're in a bad way here and by the time you finish talking to them they have made you feel better and you say, hey, wait a minute, that was backwards. I was supposed to be helping this person and they have cleverly reversed that situation and I'm coming away with the blessing. I've utterly failed in my desire to be the blessing.

I've taken away a bigger blessing than I gave. And you can see Paul doing this very same thing. The Philippians have inquired after Paul's affairs and he assures them that he's fine.

Even if he gets killed, don't worry about me, I'm fine. If they kill me, so much the better. I'm face to face with the Lord.

But I kind of think I'll be around and I hope to join you soon. But in the meantime I'll send Timothy so that I can know what your state is and that will encourage me. And he brags on Timothy a little bit about his like-mindedness and his sincere care for those people and he's sending the best guy for that.

And he says, you know, there are a lot of others around here that seek their own and not the things which are of Christ Jesus but you know Timothy's proven character and he's like a son to me and he has served with me in the gospel and I hope to send him at once. As soon as I see how it goes with me. And that's just really a very tiny reference back to himself.

You know there's a few reasons why I can't send him right now. I.e. I may need him to arrange the services after I get executed but you know as soon as I find out that I'm going to be okay I'll send him along. And I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

Why is that? Is Paul just feeling like it would be fun to have a visit with the Philippians? He is consumed with concern for their spiritual welfare and their progress and their forward movement in the gospel and that's why he's sending Timothy. That's why he wants to come himself to be there to provide answers to their questions and good teaching of the word of God. So we continue tonight beginning in verse 25 and we'll read this short section here 25 through 30 that is labeled in your New King James Epaphroditus praised.

Paul says, 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, since he was

longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 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. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful.

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in esteem 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. So there are going to be two emissaries one immediately and one later Epaphroditus first and Timothy afterward yet when Paul tells the Philippian church about this he puts Timothy first and he says I'm going to send Timothy and eventually hope to come myself but immediately now I'm going to send Epaphroditus and we have some qualifications here for Epaphroditus he is called my brother my fellow worker and my fellow soldier well how does this pertain what do we know about Epaphroditus from this description his recommendation here is sort of builds on itself you start with my brother and this is his sort of familial relationship to Paul in other words this is kind of an ascending scale he's first of all a brother he has a common sympathy he has a common view most people in a family look at things kind of the same way not always but often he's a brother he has a shared feeling a shared sympathy with the apostle Paul secondly he is a fellow worker a soon ergos and this is a sharer in the work it's one thing to have a common sympathy or to have a bond of love with another person that's a great thing but in a scale of Christian usefulness in terms of furthering the plan of God it's one thing to be a brother it's another thing to be a fellow worker and so the forward progress of the gospel is in view here he is a fellow worker soon ergos we're going to take a look at this word ergos a little bit later in our passage because it becomes in the course of Paul's career a term unto itself it's not just any old work when you talk about the work in certain circles it's kind of like in Acts when he talks about the way the way isn't just any old way it becomes the way capital W well this is ergos becomes the work capital W this is the work of teaching spreading the gospel ministering to the needs of the scattered saints in Asia Minor and in Macedonia and wherever else Paul may travel so it's the work so when you find someone who is a soon ergos a fellow worker this is someone who has found a similar commission from God a similar opportunity to participate in the teaching of the word the meeting of the spiritual needs of people for information from God this new dispensation this new age these heretofore unrevealed truths how do you get them? well there's not a new testament somebody's got to come and teach them and Paul can only be in one place at one time so Timothy and Titus and Epaphroditus and many of these other individuals that Paul trains Apollos and Barnabas and so on spread the word and then there's going to be a second generation that will spread it even more but that work is important and Paul says not only is Epaphroditus a dear brother to me but he is a fellow worker and then the third description is my fellow soldier this is the word sus-stratiote here it's in the accusative sus-stratiotane and you can see the the with idea there s-u-n means with in Greek and when you put it in front of a word that starts with an s the n kind of disappears and so you get sus instead of suns-stratiotane so sus-stratiotane and stratios this is where you get strategy stratigo wasn't that a game we used to play? stratigo stratagems and so on all of this has to do with armed warfare so he is a brother he

is a fellow worker and he shares the dangers and the intense toil involved in prosecuting the spiritual battle against all of the opposition that Satan has mustered against the spread of the early church Paul uses this same word over in Philemon and he uses it of archippus in the greeting part when he is writing to Philemon he says greetings to you and yours and to Aphia, our sister and to Archippus, our sus-stratiotane our fellow soldier and to the church in your house so you get the idea that this is a great compliment and it is a great description of someone who has done more than sit on the sidelines and cheer this is someone who has put himself in harm's way who has endured suffering it is one thing to be a fellow worker it is another thing to be a fellow soldier and so you can see this sort of amplification with each successive description so Epaphroditus is not a casual associate of Paul's he is one of the mainstays he goes on to say he is your messenger and the one who ministered to my need and this reads much more smoothly and much more clearly in Greek than it does in English of course if I read it to you in Greek you are not going to think that but he says your messenger and the one who ministered to my need now you all know kind of how a lot of the common words in Greek they get translated into English so what is the word in Greek for messenger? Angelos that is what you would expect however that is not the word that is used here and the reason I make a point of this is it is a reminder that words vary their meaning based on context this is Apostolos Epaphroditus is called your apostle he is your sent one so what did the translators decide here? well we don't want anybody getting confused thinking that we have more than 12 apostles so we are going to call him a messenger all messengers are sent ones but not all sent ones are messengers you can send an assassin I suppose you could say he is a messenger of death but he is not going to be delivering any succinct little singing telegrams he is delivering something else but this is Apostolos and it is really interesting because what we find out here is that Epaphroditus comes from Philippi and is commissioned and supported by the Philippian church to be an aide and a fellow worker with Paul they sent him to be an assistant to be a co-worker to be a fellow soldier to Paul they have sent him he is your sent one in the same way that the Lord Jesus sent forth his disciples that is why they are apostles the church in Philippi sent Epaphroditus and so he is their apostle not the Lord's apostle but he is their apostle but you can see the flexibility of the word and we want to note that for reference when we are looking at other words that have a lot of theological baggage like Soteria, salvation or Pistis, faith or Elpis, hope context is everything even Apollia, destruction or loss got to condition the scope and the limits and the meanings of some of these words by context and context helps us here we know that Paul is not saying that Epaphroditus should be up there in St. Peter's next to John and Peter and Andrew and James and the rest he is an Apostolos he is your sent one and the one who ministered to my need now this is really awkward he is your messenger and the one who ministered in Greek this is much more classy it is much more elegant in Greek this is Apostolon Kai Latourgon that's it Apostolon Kai Latourgon the sent one and servant of my need and Latourgon is the word that is used for ministering meeting a need and that is what ministry is a lot of people say talk about full time Christian service or so and so is in the ministry ministry Latourgon biblically speaking is simply meeting a need spiritual gifts that are distributed in the body of Christ are there to meet a need I have a communication gift

why? to meet a need there are people hungry for the word of God who don't have the time or the tools to organize and assimilate information and I do have the time and the tools and the assignment to do so and so it meets a need other people in our group are uniquely gifted with perception and sensitivity in a lot of different areas to meet different kinds of needs you don't even have to be able to put a name to it your spiritual gift meets the needs of other people in our group every single one of you there is nobody hearing the sound of my voice that does not have a spiritual gift that functions and is designed to meet the needs of other believers you remember the emphasis that we have seen in the last several weeks about the importance of fellowship the importance of assembly of having at least one other person preferably at least one other with whom to assemble and one of the reasons for that is not only to receive blessing but to be a blessing and to meet a need you have a ministry to the body of Christ there is something you have been gifted with that is a benefit and a blessing not just a nice to have it is a need to have and that is why your faithfulness in assembly it is hard for a lot of us it is usually not hard for me to come to Bible class because I have this pressure that builds up all week long as I look at the passage and as I am finding things and it just it builds up and I have a hard time not coming because I just think I would probably explode on weeks that we miss I have this pent up and I usually just talk to somebody in my vicinity about something not always Bible class but it is a build up kind of thing but it is always hard if you are trying to go and there is schedule conflicts and there is health issues and there is a million other things going on and it would sure be nice if I could just... and yet here is Bible class on the schedule but just remember when you are wrestling with that equation even though you know you are going to go if it is just an attitude thing just remember you have something God has given you that meets a need equally as important as I do your gift is not any less important than mine and that might startle you it startled me the first time I thought about it I thought Bible class that is mainly the Bible class guy he has got the big job everybody else can just kind of sit and listen and try not to look too distracted and get through the thing and then go off not so no gift is less important or more important than another gift mine is more visible mine is more audible but it is not more important and if you think about it you think well but the time is brief that is not my problem I am just telling you what the Bible says in Ephesians if you read that section no part of the body can say to another part of the body I have no need of you and the mouth might be up there talking and the brain might be up there feeding it words but it has got to be standing there on feet attached to legs attached to knees everything has to be there to hold that up and I don't know what all the functions are I don't know how God uses any given Bible class in the present or in the future what I do know is that every spiritual gift is invested with divine power and God the Holy Spirit takes it and uses it in invisible ways as well as visible ways and you can't say well I was there but I am positively sure that nothing useful came from me I didn't bless anybody my gift didn't function you can't say that you don't know you have no idea what just a smile or a pat on the back or just your presence or a casual item of conversation or a listening ear or a thought and a prayer that you send up because you have heard somebody else struggling with something or you perceive that somebody is not doing as well as they usually do and you send up a prayer you meditate you start thinking in your mind

about well next time maybe I will do this or do that there is an infinitude of ways and so when Paul says Epaphroditus ministered to my need he doesn't say how he doesn't say he is the guy that oils my sandals or arranges my meals or provides me with blank pieces of parchment or whatever we don't know exactly what Epaphroditus did he met needs might have been a need for companionship might have been a need for encouragement might have been a need for communication with other people maybe Epaphroditus is a go between maybe he is a go and fetch it kind of guy listen that is one of the most useful things in the world when you need a thing and somebody gets it I have been under a car so many times and you know one of the girls brings me a thing it is a huge help when nobody is out there I was sore for three or four days working on the van a few weeks ago because everybody else was busy or out of pocket and so every time I needed a thing I had to do a sit up I had to scooch my way out from under and do a sit up well I haven't been doing sit ups and by the end of the day after I had done that about 20 or 25 times it crippled me up and somebody that is just there to hand you a thing it is great we don't know what Epaphroditus did you don't know what you do I don't know what happens with Bible class I do my best to prepare it I offer it to you sometimes I go home and I think that was the worst presentation that was the most poorly organized I didn't get through half of what I prepared I rambled I spoke too long I repeated too much I am depressed I don't even want to talk when I go home and half the time somebody will be talking to me a day later or call me up or they will hear the tape months later and they will say I have been wondering about that I am so glad you went off and explained this and I am thinking I thought that was a grounder and you are saying it went out of the park I just totally don't but that is the power of God don't think that your gift is not functioning just because you don't know what is happening if you are present if you are willing if you are filled with the Holy Spirit be assured you have a gift that meets a need every member of the body of Christ is gifted by the Holy Spirit don't sell yourself short don't sell the Holy Spirit short don't fail to be ready to assemble and to bear the fruit of the Spirit love, joy, peace long suffering gentleness, goodness faith, meekness and temperance you have no idea is the way you bless other people in many cases that is what Epaphroditus is he is an apostle he is an apostle from the church to the real apostle he is an apostle to an apostle and a blessing the church didn't have any idea they probably didn't know if Epaphroditus could do any good or not they might not even be able to find him Paul might be dead by the time he gets there but they sent him and he turns out to be a great blessing he is the one who ministered laetourgia to my need since, verse 26 he was longing for you all and this goes back to I considered it necessary to send to you I consider it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick Epaphroditus has evidently worn himself out in this service he has served to the point of illness did he just catch something that was going around you get the idea that that's not the case because of what follows here for indeed he was sick almost unto death but God had mercy on him not him but me also lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow if you look down in verse 30 where it says 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 there is something about his presence and his service for Paul that put his life at risk and that got him in

the condition where he almost died and Paul says it down in verse 30 esteemed men like this he came close to death not regarding his life to supply what was lacking in service to me so this is not an accidental flu now when it says he was sick this is literally weak asthenia is the Greek word asthenia is to be weak or to be weakened and then you have paraplasion fanato fanato of course is death but paraplasion is an interesting word because it means it's used for your next door neighbor para is alongside and plasion means to dwell or to be in the company of so paraplasion means to be almost the same as a thing they say cleanliness is next to godliness something is next to impossible well he was next to dead next to death he was weak next to death but the God showed mercy and this is I-a-o-e-l-e-e-o we get the noun for mercy from this as well God was merciful to him and not to him only not to him monon but also to me in order that I would not and literally it says in order that not lupine upon lupine I-u-p-e-n lupus the wolf and lupe is the word for sorrow wolves with that mournful howl that's why they're called canis lupus it means to be sad to be sorrowful and he says God was merciful to him and also to me so that I would not have grief upon grief sorrow upon sorrow so there are two different sorrows Paul already has a sorrow and to lose Epaphroditus would have been an additional sorrow and we know this because he says I more diligently or more eagerly sent him so that once you have seen him you will rejoice and he doesn't say and I can rejoice too he says I can be less sorrowful because he's still got sorrow number one what do you suppose sorrow number one is? what in the recent context would qualify as a sorrow? remember when he was talking about Timothy in the previous paragraph I have no one else like minded who will sincerely care for your state all seek their own not the things which are of Christ Jesus that's a sorrow and it would be a double sorrow if one of the two guys that are with Paul that do have that heart and that mind were to die that would have been sorrow upon sorrow and Paul is going to send one of these two guys back to encourage the Philippians and he says that you will rejoice and I'll be less sorrowful but he's still going to have sorrow because he's running out of like minded guys and he has had to send one of them away for him it's a personal sorrow but for them it's a benefit what does that remind you of? remember when Paul was talking about his own death and he said it's not so hot for me to remain here but it's needful for you it's a benefit to you if I remain I would prefer to go be with the Lord but I will sacrifice the fulfilling of that desire for your sake and Paul says I've got this really great help he ministers to my needs he's my right hand guy he's been a wonderful source of encouragement but I'm going to send him to you so that you can rejoice and I'll be less sorrowful but still sorrowful so Paul will be comforted by the knowledge that he has given something up to benefit them so it's an interesting reminder and reinforcement of what he's been saying over and over again in this letter and it's an example I am willing to be discommoded inconvenienced put to extra trouble if it will benefit you I'll send him to you and I know you'll rejoice he has longed to see you it's going to be a great blessing for him and on that account I'll be less sorrowful he's just as gone as if he had died if Paul sends him away Paul's not seeing him Paul's not having his needs met and that would have been sorrow upon sorrow but instead of losing him to death he's losing him to the benefit of the Philippians well that's less sorrow he was sick unto death but God had mercy on him therefore I send him the more eagerly by the way

these are Aorist tenses because Epaphroditus is with Paul now and he is the bearer of this letter so when Paul is writing it he hasn't sent Epaphroditus yet but he is writing in the letter as though he has because he knows by the time they read it he will have sent so he says I sent Epaphroditus it's what they call an epistolary Aorist when you read this letter the Aorist will make sense even though it doesn't make sense while I'm writing it type of thing and same thing here when you get to sending him the more eagerly this is *pempo* which is another word for send it's not the same as *apostello* but *spoudazo* is a verb and we get an adverb called *spoudaios* which means to be very earnest or to be eager for a thing and he says I more eagerly more earnestly sent him therefore in order that having seen him that's your Aorist participle preceding the action of the main verb having seen him again you might rejoice and I might be a *lupoteros* *lupo* is in there and there is an alpha privet in front of it I'll be unsorrowed I'll be a *lupoteros* I'll be less sorrowful well, what is the upshot of all this? we've kind of hacked through the meaning of these words but Paul is sending eventually both of his best men he promises both of them Timothy, I've got nobody like him he's like a son to me, I'm like a father to him I'm sending you now Epaphroditus this is sacrificial on Paul's part and Paul is in prison and he's only waiting long enough to be sure that he can get by without Timothy before he sends him, he's sending Epaphroditus right away on behalf of the Philippians this is a guy that's in prison normally you would say, oh, we need to have a vigil we need to bake some food, we need to send some clothing how can we help the guy that's that's having trouble in prison and instead Paul is meeting their needs, Paul is thinking of them, what can he do that will enable them to grow and prosper yea, even rejoice and he's looking at Epaphroditus his brother, his fellow worker his fellow soldier, and he says, you know what would really do Epaphroditus a lot of good is to go home he's homesick and that's really what the word means here, when it says he desires longingly to see all of you and is distressed when you heard he was weak you know how it is when you say, I know my family is worried about me I'd like to give them a call, I'd like to let them know I'm okay, when the barracks blew in Beirut back in 83 I've told you many times, I had to drive for half a day to get far enough north to find a place where we could get a phone circuit and call back and tell my folks that I was alive because a lot of Marines died that day a lot of guys I knew, guys from Fort Sill doing the very same thing I was doing, I was in one place and they were in another, they died and I didn't well, I wanted to let my folks know that I was okay, this is Epaphroditus' idea they've heard that I was sick unto death and they're probably thinking I'm all in a bad way here I'd like to go home and let them see me and be assured, lift their hearts it would do him good, do them good, and Paul says you know what, I don't care what it costs me you go, you go, be with them you comfort them, they'll rejoice they can comfort and encourage you and you'll rejoice and that's what this *Epipotho* word means when Paul says since *Epipotheo* he desires and it is a desire due to absence there is a desire because there is a lack so he desires and has this distress and you get down to the end of this and it says receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness now do the Philippians need a command to receive him with gladness if I commanded my daughter to receive some with gladness they could maybe feign gladness or imitate gladness or try not to show ungladness but you can't really generate gladness on command don't be sad be glad well,

sorry but a simple exhortation doesn't create gladness so is he commanding gladness this is sort of a rhetorical or grammatical figure Paul is basically saying I know you are going to receive him with gladness this is kind of like have a merry Christmas like you're not unless I tell you to it's an expression of wish and desire and confident expectation have a joyous Christmas and a prosperous New Year well, I fully expect that you're not going to be sitting around staring at a lump of coal all through the Christmas holiday most people so that's the idea receive him therefore in the Lord Paul is absolutely utterly confident that the Philippians are going to do this but he's just expressing his expectation now here's where the a little bit of exhortation comes in in the second part and hold such men in esteem this is an imperative from Echo hold such ones together hold the ones like this one in esteem *timae* is the word for honor Timothy gets his name from this treasure they don't just welcome them as fellow well met but hold such ones in honor recognize not just the person but the work the function that Epaphroditus has fulfilled and others like him and sometimes it is good to have a reminder that we can appreciate people at different levels you remember this I don't know why Barbara Streisand is not one of my favorite singers but there are several of her songs that have lyrics that stick in my mind and one of them is the one I always quote is I love the way he makes me feel well that is not really a very good basis for appreciating someone I like you because you make me feel good that is kind of a selfish thing but that is what is going to happen when they see Epaphroditus I am so relieved I am so comforted I am so happy to see you you are my relative you are my friend on a personal level it is very gratifying for me to see you Paul says that is great I know you are going to rejoice and receive him in the Lord but don't forget to hold him in esteem for something beyond how he makes you feel and this is a good thing to remember in personal relationships we have close family members, our spouses, our children our parents, our siblings our near and dear ones and in many cases we appreciate them because it feels so good to have them near we have known them forever we have so much shared history we have this great bond we have many things that tie us together but that should not obscure other things genuine objective accomplishments or value or functions especially in the spiritual realm and it is one thing to appreciate somebody because I love you and it is something else to say I recognize what God is doing in and through you and that is in a category by itself Paul divides that up here he says I know you are going to rejoice and I know you are going to receive him in the Lord but don't forget to hold him and others like him in a proper esteem recognize this is somebody that has yielded himself to the Lord's work and God is using him in a very effective way and appreciate him for that as well as the other it is a command it is in the imperative hold him and others like him in esteem because verse 30 for the work of Christ remember earlier I said it starts to get a capital W the work proper like the way or the cross standing in for all the work of Christ well one of the oldest manuscripts of Philippians that we have lacks the modifier *Christu* because for the work he came close to death and the reason I am pretty sure that *Christu* is not original here is one of our oldest manuscripts doesn't have a modifier it says because of the work and you can immediately see where early copyists and scribes and people who wanted to write in the margins of their manuscript would say what kind of work is he talking about the work it seems kind of bare you know it doesn't it doesn't

necessarily carry enough definition and so the other manuscripts are almost evenly divided between the work of Christ the work of the Lord the work of Jesus there are several fill in words that are equally distributed among all the later manuscripts and that's usually a pretty good clue that originally there was no term there and different people have filled in what they thought ought to go or someone accidentally incorporated a marginal note I'm reading through my bible and say that's the work of Christ and I write Christu out in the side well I die and the next guy comes along and says boy Sam had a great copy of this book let me copy it oh look he made a correction here it wasn't a correction it was a note to myself so feel free to leave it but it does make a difference and here's why because for the work he came close to death not regarding his life in order that he might fill up the husterema of service toward me the husteremas of your service to me and that's kind of an awkward thing in greek but here's the point if I just cut to the chase here it isn't so much the abstract work of Christ in general that is in view it is the specific work of service to Paul that is in view the work that he's already referred to the ministry specifically to Paul what does it mean to supply what was lacking in your service to me, we're going to have to come back and talk about that after the break but I'll give you a clue if you think there are several other places in scripture where Paul says I am going to fill up what is lacking or someone fills up what is lacking there's one very astonishing one in Colossians where he says I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ what? the work of Christ, the suffering of Christ is not complete, there's a hole in it and Paul is filling in that gap that's what it seems to say and this almost seems like a backhand here where it says there was a lack in your service to me and Epaphroditus came and filled it so you really ought to appreciate it because without him you've got a big hole in your service to me after all these nice complimentary things it hits a sour note what's that all about? we'll look at it after the break but what's the distilled summary of what we've looked at here how many different ways does this letter encourage us exhort us and exemplify for us an outward looking sacrificial toward self beneficial toward others view you can only exercise that in a fellowship of believers, you can only demonstrate it and manifest it and fulfill it in association with other believers it doesn't have to necessarily be in the same room Philippians are ministering to Paul Paul is ministering to the Philippians but you'll notice he's sending live bodies they're sending live bodies back and forth there is contact and they don't stay apart for long ministry is in the realm of assembly forsake not the assembly and it doesn't mean assemble for bible class it means don't forsake fellowship associate yourself with believers wherever you are find believing friends hang out where believers hang out it doesn't a lot of people apply that only to church or bible class no, assembly means spend your time to the extent that you can with believers look for Christian fellowship try to find it, be open to it watch for it, pray for it God will provide it at the right time and in the right way we all have our Brook Cherith Joseph in prison out in the wilderness episodes but it's typically of short duration for special purposes and generally speaking we need to seek out and cultivate Christian fellowship that's where the dynamic is that's where the spiritual energy flows that's where spiritual gifts function and blessing flows let's pause here and take a break