



INTRODUCTION

We have all heard the expression, “Failing to plan is planning to fail”. Truly Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit to follow *His* plan to make sure the church in Philippi had proper coverage during Paul’s absence. All men and women of God are given orders to follow. ***Psalm 37:23 (NKJV)***

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD, And He delights in his way. Not only are our steps ordered by the Lord, the Lord is delighted when we do what we are told. However, that doesn’t mean we aren’t going to run into obstacles along the way. Following the orders of the Lord may be by fleshy standards, the most difficult way, but God’s plans are better than anything that we can come up with on our best day! We’ll see in our text today, the devil was busy in his attempts to thwart God’s plan, but the devil can’t out-manuever God.

Philippians 2:24-30 (NKJV)

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.

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Paul was waiting to see what his fate was going to be for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, but he wasn’t idle. He wasn’t sitting around pondering his fate. He put his situation to the side and was more concerned about the spiritual health of the Philippian church. Epaphroditus came to minister to Paul and to give Paul some financial aid. Paul knew he couldn’t go to Philippi at that time so Paul asks Epaphroditus to return. Paul called Epaphroditus a fellow-worker, a soldier, a minister. These credentials would help squelch any doubts about Epaphroditus’ motives or abilities to carry on without Paul.

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No matter what field of endeavor you are in, it's always easier to assign someone a duty they are already eager to perform. The Bible says in **Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV)**

⁶ But without faith *it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*. We should follow the orders of the Lord despite our own physical abilities or disabilities and circumstances. When we have work to do for the Lord and we become physically unable, we know that God is Jehovah-Rapha, God who heals. We don't know what type of sickness Epaphroditus had but we know it was life threatening. Yet even while sick, he was more worried about those that heard he was sick than he was about himself. He remained faithful knowing that if God healed him, then all well and good...But if God didn't heal him in this life, the gospel and power of God would not be diminished.

It's real easy to get caught up in our misery so much that we can't see anything else. Everything in our flesh says we must see about ourselves, get well and then get back to work of the church or then get back to the concerns of others. The Bible says in **Matthew 6:33-34 (NKJV)**

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. So no matter what we've come up against in our service to the Lord, seek first the kingdom. Take your eyes off yourself and consider those around you that have suffered and are suffering far worse. Let God work out the details.