

What You Were Born to Do, Cont.

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[0 : 00] When the argument about what number to pick there, Linda was over there, said no to number 70.

All right, anyway, Philippians chapter 2 this morning, please, evening, wherever we are, find Philippians chapter 2 in your Bible. And when you find Philippians 2, come to the end of that chapter, and I want to read, to begin here, just one verse, and then we're going to work around and come back to it.

So verse number 29, Paul says this about a man named Epaphroditus. He's mentioned in verse 25. Verse 29, the Bible says, Receive him, therefore, in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation.

Now, if you want to talk about somebody that's worthy of honor and to be, whose faith follow, and when you talk about somebody to hold up in reputation, you generally would probably think from the scriptures of the position of the pastor, the one that feeds you and teaches you, that's kind of a common thing, you can do that.

But this guy is not that guy. His name's Epaphroditus. And Paul tells the church to hold such in reputation. Now, the word reputation only shows up five times in your Bible.

[1 : 38] And it's in the Old and in the New alike. And two of the five times is right here in Philippians chapter 2. Now, you commonly think of the word reputation like everybody, like you have a reputation with your friends, with your co-workers, you have a reputation.

We think of it as a good reputation, a bad reputation. But in the Bible, it is always a reference to honoring someone, to the positive side of it. It's not just how people perceive you or their opinion of you, the way we kind of think of it today.

But every time, all five of these times, it's always used to describe someone distinguished above others, somebody that's looked up to for one reason or another. And in all these mentions, I'll briefly mention and describe them to you.

They all have a different implication of why someone would be held in reputation or looked up to or honored. Now, you don't need to turn to these verses, but I'm just going to run through them quickly.

And the first time it shows up is in Ecclesiastes chapter 10 and verse 1, where the Bible says, dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor.

[2 : 46] So doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor. There's a man that has the expectation that he has wisdom and honor. And the teaching there, a little folly in him, just like the flies, it causes his reputation to stink.

Now, the man here in the context is royalty. In the context of Ecclesiastes 10, it's princes, it's rulers, it's kings.

And that's the one that has that expectation of wisdom and of honor, the expectation of reputation. And that guy is the reason why he would have reputation or be held in reputation is because he's born into it.

So that's the first way or reason why you would be considered to be reputable or held in reputation because you're born into it. You're the king's son. So you're popular all your life. And that's the case today with certain men and certain women.

People respect them because of their last name. And you could be your father, your mother could be a prominent person, could even be royalty or just very powerful or successful. And because you're their child, everybody treats you one way.

[3 : 54] Everybody knows you and there's expectations for you. So you could just be born into it. And that's true. It's not very many, maybe, but it exists. The second time the word shows up is in

Acts chapter 5.

And it's in verse 34 talking about a Pharisee named Gamaliel. He is a doctor of the law. And the verse says that he has had in reputation among all the people. And in the passage, he puts out a decree about something and they follow his advice.

So this man wasn't born into it, but this man worked for it. This man has an earned degree. He displayed devotion to the law. And as a result, he earned the respect of his peers and he earned the respect of the people.

And there are many today the same way. They have worked for it and they've gotten themselves to a place of reputation. They've displayed devotion to their vocation. They've labored.

They succeeded. They've excelled. And now they're reaping the fruit. They're held in renown and respected and popular. And maybe not everybody that works for it like this is an international star.

[4 : 59] Maybe they're just a co-worker that's worked harder than everybody else and they've risen to the top. And now they're held in reputation for their hard work and their ethic and their demeanor.

And so you can work for it. Then there's a third category. And the next time the word shows up is in Galatians chapter 2. And in this passage, Paul is talking to the disciples or the apostles of the Lord, Peter, James, and John.

And he says this, that he communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them who were of reputation, lest by any means I should run or had run in vain.

And so these disciples or apostles of the Lord were called pillars in the early church in Jerusalem.

And Paul had some truth and doctrine, some revelation of the Lord that he was going to unveil and discuss with them.

And he decided to do it privately because they were of reputation. Why were they of reputation? Well, the third category is that they were chosen to it. These men walked with the Lord Jesus Christ.

[6 : 04] They were self-appointed of Jesus Christ to be apostles and to be leaders of the church that Christ would build. In Jerusalem, among all the believers, these men were respected.

And the background that they had, they were just fishermen. They were looked on as unlearned and ignorant. They were not standouts in the seminary.

They were chosen to this position. So you can be born into it. You can work for it. You can be chosen for it as the three cases thus far.

But then the last two mentions is where we're going to spend our time in this chapter in Philippians 2. And show you a different way to achieve reputation or to be held in reputation.

And I want to study this and seek to learn something that hopefully we can apply to our lives where we are today. So let's pray and then we'll continue in the chapter. Now Lord, I pray now that your word would have free course.

[7 : 04] That it would work a work in each of us. That we'd have open hearts to receive your word. That you would clear any distractions and anything that's unclean in this room. And that your words and their purity could go forth in power.

And could quicken our minds and teach us some things. And may Jesus Christ receive the glory for the work he's done. And we pray this in his name. Amen. All right, now look at the fourth mention of the word in Philippians chapter 2 and verse number 7.

It's speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ. And it says, But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.

Making himself of no reputation, he took upon him the form of a servant. So Christ relinquished his position, his lofty position at the right hand of the father.

To take upon him another form. It was a form that was of no reputation. It was a choice to be meek and lowly. It was a choice to be despised and rejected of men.

[8 : 12] A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. It's called the form of a servant. So a servant is to be considered of no reputation.

Now that should make sense. Because what we've studied already is these apostles that were positioned by the Lord Jesus Christ. Or this doctor of the law that earned his degree and he's held in reputation. Or these princes and these rulers, they're in reputation.

But then the opposite of that is a servant. And that's no reputation. So this all balances out. It sounds right. It makes sense. Nothing confusing about any of this so far.

But nobody's aspiring to be a lowly servant. I think it's in our nature is to climb. Not to stoop. It's in our nature to conquer.

Not to concede. Who wants to take upon them a form of a servant? Who wants to be a servant? So a servant's considered of no reputation. Now keep your place in Philippians and flip over to Mark chapter 10.

[9:18] And in Mark chapter 10, this mind that the Lord Jesus Christ had was a teaching that he spread to others.

Specifically to his leaders, to his apostles. He taught his apostles that they were to be servants. Mark chapter 10 and verses 43 and 44 and 45. But I'll back up to 42.

But Jesus called them to him and saith unto them, You know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you. But whosoever will be great among you shall be your minister. And whosoever of you will be the chiefest shall be servant of all.

[10:18] For even the son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. So the Lord Jesus Christ taught his followers that to be servants and to be ministers is the chiefest position.

It's the highest calling. And yet it's the lowest position. And to be held in reputation, one must become lowly and humble.

And a willing servant is backwards. It's very much backwards. But that's the Christian life. It's called irony. It's what you expect isn't actually the way it's supposed to be.

Now come back to Philippians 2. And I want to now look at this man, Epaphroditus. Having laid that little bit of groundwork there of being of no reputation and of being a form of a servant, yet that servant, that minister, is the chiefest of all.

Now Philippians chapter 2, and let's begin in verse 25 and read a few verses here about this man, Epaphroditus. Remember that the apostle Paul is in jail at this writing.

[11:35] And he sends his brethren, he sends those that he's trained, those that he's served with, and he sends them to churches because he himself cannot go.

So verse 25, Paul says, Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you, Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor and fellow soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

I sent him therefore the more carefully, that when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such in reputation, because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

So Paul calls for this church to consider this man, Epaphroditus, to honor him and to hold him in reputation.

[12:51] Why would he do that? He was not born into this and deserving this because of his parents or his stock or pedigree. On top of that, he did not strive for it with earned degrees and years of labor, and on the third case, he wasn't chosen to it, and therefore everybody needs to respect him, and everybody knows his name because Jesus put him on some pedestal.

That's not the case with this man at all. So how is it that he's to be held in such reputation? And the reason is because he lowered himself to it. And there's the irony again.

There's certain characteristics, a few quick things I want to pull out of this passage that is mentioned about him, that reveals to us why he is to be held in reputation. The first one, look back at verse 25.

Verse 25, Paul says, Yet I suppose it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion and labor and fellow soldier, but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants. In these multiple descriptions that Paul gives about this man, you can discern that Paul's pretty fond of him. He calls him his brother. Not just my brother in Christ, but he's my brother.

[14:07] Like, we're tight. He calls him his companion in labor. He's a friend to the Apostle Paul in the ministry that Paul's performing for the Lord. He's also called a fellow soldier.

So much can be inferred about this man. He's a true friend and he's a fighter, fighting the good fight of faith with the Apostle Paul. He's not only laboring in the ministry and fighting the good fight of

faith, but he's also traveling.

He's your messenger. And he's a full-time Christian. He's given his life to this ministry. He's on the go. He's dedicated his life to God.

But it's that last phrase, the last phrase that stands out to me. It says, He that ministered to my wants.

Because the Epaphroditus was the man that personally ministered to the Apostle Paul and to the needs that he had when nobody was caring for him while he was in prison.

[15:10] The Apostle Paul himself was called a minister. He says, I'm a servant of Jesus Christ. And now Epaphroditus is a servant of the servant of Jesus Christ. What Epaphroditus did not do is say, well, Paul, we're companions in labor, side by side.

We're fellow soldiers. Paul's not the captain and he's the under. No, we're fellow. He could have said, you know what, Paul? You're locked up. You can't do anything.

I guess it's up to me now. I guess it's up to me to take this bull by the horns and be the man for Jesus Christ and preach the gospel and do it among the Gentiles.

He never said, Paul, it's my turn to steer the ship. It's my time to step up and take over. No, because Epaphroditus didn't view his ministry and his service for Jesus Christ as a stepping stone, as another rung in the ladder, a way to climb the ladder.

But rather it was, Paul, what do you need? Paul, is there anything I can get for you? I'll get it. I'm here to help you, Paul. What can I do for you? Now, I don't know how well you realize this, but it's a real thing in churches today and in the ministries today around the world is that men are seeking positions.

[16:25] They're looking for an opportunity to take a step up the ladder. I may have told you this, but I was talking with Dr. Gipp when he was here and he was mentioning somebody by name that I won't mention, but he's like, that guy, he's just like the rest of them, all he's doing is looking to move himself up in the ministry.

Just hobnob as high as he can go so that he can get higher and further and known and invited and all that. He said that's all he is. And that's not Epaphroditus.

Epaphroditus is not looking to grow and to take a shot at a position. Sometimes in some camps, the preacher is so highly exalted and even worshipped that others get envious of that supposed prestige.

And they just want the limelight. They want the spotlight on themselves. And there's no place for that in the local church. And there's no place for that in the ministry of Jesus Christ. That's just pride. That's just vanity.

It's vain glory. And it's conceit. And that's not Epaphroditus. And as a result of that, Epaphroditus is to be held in reputation because he wasn't looking for honor.

[17:32] He wasn't looking to step up and take a shot at being the man. He wasn't looking for a position or for recognition. He was just a servant. And he ministered to Paul's wants.

Look at verse number 30. It says, Because for the work of Christ, he was nigh unto death, not regarding his own life to supply your lack of service toward me. So Epaphroditus learned, I want you to learn, he went the extra mile.

He went the extra mile to his own peril and his own health's decay to supply the lack of service that others, they're responsible to do something, they weren't doing it, so he did whatever it took to make sure it happened.

He was a true servant, a true minister. He wanted to make sure that God's servant and God's man, Paul, was fed and cared for and provided for and supplied for, as it says in the verse, to supply your lack of service.

So Epaphroditus wasn't looking for a promotion or for honor and as a result, he is to be held in reputation because he's a true servant. That's what we're called to be, servants.

[18:42] Secondly, I want you to notice in verse 26, it says that he longed after you all. Well, that's nice, but there's more to it.

Look back at chapter 1. Look at chapter 1 of Philippians. And notice Paul's care and concern for these believers.

In verse 4, he says, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making requests with joy. So Paul's praying for this people. And in verse number 7, he says, even as it is meet for me to think this of you all because I have you in my heart.

I have you in my heart. These people, these believers, these converts in Philippi are in his heart. They're in his prayers. And then in verse 8, Paul says, for God is my record how greatly I long after you all.

So Paul longs after them, prays for them, has them in his heart. That's his attitude toward this church. And then what we see in chapter 2 about Epaphroditus, he's got the same attitude and the same concern for these saints at Philippi.

[19 : 51] In verse 26, for he longed after you all and was full of heaviness. You say, well, what's the big deal? Well, the big deal is this church had afflictions.

And they had some adversaries and some problems. And look back at chapter 1. It's the clearest. It's in verse 28. He said, He's saying, He's saying that's evidence that they're lost.

You're saved. You're doing the work of God. You're getting persecuted for it. Verse 29, for unto you is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. Now, even earlier in the chapter, Paul, he's, this is kind of a, it's a thought that carries through underneath his message.

In verse 7, at the end of verse 7, he says, Ye all are partakers of my grace. He's not talking about the gospel of the grace of God. He's talking about, you're partaking in the same stuff I'm partaking in.

He doesn't call it my afflictions. He calls it my grace because God's grace is sufficient in those times. But in verse number 12, he wants them to know something. I want, you need to understand this, brethren.

[21 : 06] He says, But I would, you would understand, you should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me, meaning the imprisonment and all that took place along those lines, he says, Things that happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel so that my bonds in Christ are met.

So he's telling them, look, the trouble that you think this is the end of the world, it's not. Actually, this is working out together for good for the gospel's sake. And he's telling them that as an example to them.

Look, you feel like you're getting beat. You feel like these adversaries are harming you, but it's okay. Look, look at me. I'm in prison, but the gospel is going forth because of it. And God's using it and he can use it in you too.

And so the underlying tone is in there is that they're persecuted, that they're in afflictions, they have adversaries, they're suffering. And Paul's showing them that the Lord can use this thing.

But because that's going on, he longs for them. He longs to know of their affairs, to know how they do. And he sends Epaphroditus.

[22 : 08] He wants to check on them. He wants to see that they're strong in the Lord, that they're not giving in, that they're walking in the same mind. And he says some of these things earlier in the chapter.

He warns them about dogs in chapter 3 and evil workers. And he warns them about them that are enemies of the cross of Christ and things like that because he's afraid, he fears for that church.

So understand, it's in Paul's heart and it's in Epaphroditus' heart the same. Now, let me contrast this with something else. Look in chapter number 2. And what Paul says in verse 4.

He says, Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Why would you need to say that, Paul? Look a little later in this chapter and look at verse 20 and 21.

He's talking about Timotheus and he says, For I have no man like-minded who will naturally care for your state. Why? For all seek their own, not the things which be Jesus Christ's.

[23 : 13] The contrast is that men naturally care about themselves and Paul's teaching them within themselves not to look on their own things but to care for one another especially in times of persecution and afflictions.

And then he sends Epaphroditus because Epaphroditus cares for him and he doesn't care for himself. He's so much so that he's not even caring for his own health. But Epaphroditus cared for the converts.

That's what he's doing here. It's not about him. And he cares about the spiritual welfare of these believers and their walk with God. He cares about Paul.

He cares about the brethren, the saints at Philippi because he's a true minister and he's a true servant. And the third thing I want to say is that while he cares about them he doesn't care about

himself.

And you see that in verse 30 because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death not regarding his life to supply your lack of service.

[24 : 14] The work of Christ and the people of Christ that needed to be ministered to were of far greater importance to this man Epaphroditus than his own health and his own life.

Have you met one person in America in the church of Jesus Christ that you could say that's true of? They care more about others and more about the work of God than their own health than their own life.

That's become a foreign thing but Epaphroditus is such a minister such and one that should be held in reputation. He doesn't care about himself. Now let me show you a contrast that's very drastic but turn all the way back you can lose Philippians here if you'd like and go to the small epistle of 3 John all the way near the back of your Bible before Jude and before Revelation third epistle of John and here's a man that we know by name that loved himself more than he loved the ministry and more than he loved God's people.

in verse number 9 we're introduced to a man named Diotrephes third epistle of John verse 9 I wrote unto the church but somebody got in the way I wrote unto the church but Diotrephes who loveth to have the preeminence among them receiveth us not wherefore when I come I'll remember his deeds which he doeth prating against us with malicious words and not content therewith neither doth he himself receive the brethren and forbiddeth them that would and casteth them out of the church what a man what a what a testimony it's a testimony of pride he loves to be in charge he loves to make it all about him the ministry which isn't a ministry at all but the ministry the church to him it's all about him he is the God of that church he's the one that needs the preeminence and so much so that he casts people out of the church and says horrible things against the apostles of the Lord and it looks like

John writes to that church and he's intercepting it and not letting them get the word of God but that's not Epaphroditus that's not a man that's to be held in reputation Epaphroditus doesn't care about himself as far as he's concerned he's just a servant and that sounds just like the passage in chapter 2 of the Lord Jesus Christ he took on him the form of a servant now to conclude these thoughts when Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation I'd be back you could look at it if you're still there I told you to lose your place but in Philippians 2 verse 7 he made himself of no reputation took upon him the form of a servant in verse 9 wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father when Jesus Christ made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant

[27 : 55] God blessed that thing and exalted him above everything James in James 4 and verse 10 we're told to humble ourselves and God he will lift you up in 1 Peter chapter 5 and verse 6 humble yourselves therefore unto the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you in due time when you humble yourself and seek to serve and be a lowly servant and a willing vessel for God to use he'll like that and he'll exalt you in due time but most people desire to be noticed and most people desire to be appreciated and most people desire to be commended for what they do they almost expect it and if you don't say thank you well I'm leaving the church because we're so fickle and some other people seek worship and they seek attention and they seek everyone's affections to be upon themselves and Paul said in Galatians 5 and verse 26 let us not be desirous of vain glory so the way to be held in reputation

Christian is not to seek it at all is but rather seek to be a servant to seek to be a minister for Jesus Christ and to genuinely care about the work of the ministry and about the work of Jesus Christ and to put the Lord Jesus Christ will above your own and above your own desires and the fruit of that attitude within a church it'll start to show you'll be deserving of reputation you'll be held in reputation when I think about my life and some of the people I've known in the church and the different places I've been in if I had to tell you who were the best people in the church it wouldn't be the person that talked about themselves all the time it'd be the person that I would say was the godliest probably the ones that are just the most humble the ones that you know when something's wrong you can call on them to pray for you and they'll do it the ones that when you need to do something get something done need a hand in some ministry you're gonna call on them and they're not gonna give you six reasons why they can't but they'll do their best to be there for the work of God because

they're servants their heart is to serve their heart is not puffed up about what am I gonna get out of it who am I but rather what can I do for the Lord Jesus Christ and so there's Epaphroditus he was a minister a genuine minister that cared about the apostle Paul that cared about the believers at Philippi and didn't even care about his own self and Paul says when he shows up you receive him in the Lord with gladness when he shows up you receive him you hug him you all make a fuss over him you let him know that you love him you take him out to eat you take care of him you do everything you can for him you hold him in reputation that guy's a servant of the Lord he's given his life to the ministry you show him you love him and appreciate him you want to be held in reputation there's the path down become a servant

Jesus Christ said that's the chiefest of all it's not the way we think is it it's not the way we're trained in this world it's probably not the way you're programmed inside but if you'll let the word of God reprogram your mind renew your mind you'll come out a little lower as a matter of fact you'll realize I need to be lower because what I am is filthy and worthless and full of sin and pride and but by the grace of God I would be burning in hell tonight so praise the Lord what can I do for you it might change your attitude so let's consider those thoughts and take that with us as we seek to be servants of Jesus Christ serving one another and there's a lot of scripture on that I didn't even give you but how to be held in reputation let's close in prayer Father thank you for thank you for