

## **Men of Faith**

Philippians 2: 19-30

Following a great discourse on the obedience of Christ to the will of the Father, and our obligations to possess the mind of Christ, Paul offers yet another example of faithful Christian service. In our text he makes an announcement that Timothy and Epaphroditus will soon be making visits to Philippi. Like the Lord they served, these men were great examples of committed Christian service. As the Philippians read this letter, they must have realized they would soon have devout men to model a lifestyle of committed obedience.

While our culture and needs are somewhat different, we too are blessed with those who live out their faith before others. They provide a godly example of how Christian service should look. While living faithfully for the Lord, these provide a means of discipleship that cannot be underestimated. Every mature believer ought to share this desire, striving to present a godly example for young believers to follow. I am truly thankful for those who have mentored me in the faith.

As we conclude this chapter, I want to discuss the [expectations](#) of Paul for the church as we consider: [Men of Faith](#).

**I. Timothy – A Committed Servant** (19-24) – No doubt the church was familiar with Timothy. He had served faithfully among them with Paul. Paul reminds them of the commitment Timothy possessed, and encouraged them of the benefit of his presence. Consider:

**A. The Arrangement** (19) – [But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state](#). Here Paul reveals the arrangement he was working toward. Notice:

**1. The Plan** (19a) – [But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you](#). Paul had every intention of sending Timothy to serve among them as soon as possible. He knew Timothy would serve them well and be of great benefit to the church. They were encouraged to anticipate his coming in the near future.

- We are blessed to have those of like faith serving alongside us, especially those who provide a godly example for others to follow. I appreciate your faithfulness to the Lord and our labor together.

**2. The Purpose (19b)** – [But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.](#) Paul is not implying that he doesn't trust the reports he is receiving from Philippi, but having Timothy present with them, will further affirm their prosperity in the Gospel and continuance in the faith. He would have one he loved and trusted working among them, encouraging and leading them in the faith.

- Paul wasn't planning to send Timothy because he had no other avenue of service. He was sending him with purpose. I was reminded of the need for every believer to be active and contributing to the work of the Gospel. We have been placed within this local body with purpose. There is a work for each of us to perform, and the body will suffer if we are not faithful.

**B. The Agreement (20-22)** – Here we find the agreement Paul and Timothy enjoyed, which would serve to further benefit the church. Paul speaks of:

**1. Timothy's Character (20)** – [For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.](#) Paul loved the church at Philippi and longed to be with them, but he was hindered at the present time. Such devotion called for careful selection in his replacement. Paul could think of only one who shared his heart and vision for the church. Timothy and Paul were likeminded, sharing the same burden for the church and the same approach in ministry. If Paul was unable to come to them, he could not think of anyone he desired there more than Timothy.

- Finding a fellow believer who shares your heart and burden for the church is special. I am thankful for those who are burdened for Fellowship and share the vision God has given us. We need to celebrate those relationships and nurture them for the advancement of the church.

**2. Timothy's Commitment (21-22)** – [For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.](#) <sup>[22]</sup> [But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.](#) Paul knew he had to be careful when selecting someone to lead the church. All did not possess pure motives, seeking their own desires instead of the will of the Lord. Paul was confident in Timothy. He knew he was committed to the Lord and the church. He also knew that Philippi was aware of Timothy's care and devotion. He had proven that among them as he served alongside Paul.

- Our churches are filled with those who are content to attend, but do not have the well-being of the church in mind. Others desire to obtain a position of authority, but they desire that position to advance their agenda instead of the will of the Lord. Those who are committed to the Lord and the church are of great benefit to the church. We need those who continue to serve faithfully, proving their commitment to the Lord and the church before others.

**C. The Announcement (23-24)** – Here Paul reveals his plans for future visits to Philippi. Notice:

**1. An Immediate Plan (23)** – *Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.* At that time Paul was making preparations to send Timothy to Philippi as soon as possible. This was all contingent on his personal needs, but Paul clearly had the welfare of the church in mind, and he was doing all he could for their benefit.

**2. An Optimistic Plan (24)** – *But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.* Although Paul faced an uncertain future, being bound in Rome, he never lost his desire to return to Philippi. His love and devotion for the church never wavered.

➤ There is much we could discuss here, but I was reminded of the value of vision regarding the work of the church. Paul faced great difficulty, but he had not lost his vision for the church. He continued to make plans for the immediate future, as well as continuing to consider the long term needs of the church. We too need to prepare and implement an immediate plan for ministry, while making long term plans as well. Churches that lack vision will never be prosperous.

**III. Epaphroditus – A Compassionate Friend (25-30)** – Following his reminder of Timothy's faithfulness and future plans for his ministry, Paul speaks of Epaphroditus. Consider:

**A. The Agreement (25)** – *Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.* Prior to Timothy being sent unto them, Paul was going to send Epaphroditus right away. He too was a man they knew and trusted. He was a brother in the faith. He had labored alongside Paul, being faithful to stand with him when others were unwilling. He had ministered to the church at Philippi, apparently preaching the Gospel unto them as their messenger.

▪ While Timothy and Paul's presence would have been beneficial to them, there was no reason not to use Epaphroditus and his spiritual gifts. He was not Paul, but he had much to offer the church. We must never assume that the church's ministry rests solely in the gifts and contributions of one individual. The work of the Gospel is greater than any of us. I am thankful to share in the work, but it will go on without me or you. We must never depend on individual contributions more than the working of the Spirit.

**B. The Affection (26-27)** – For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. <sup>[27]</sup> 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. Paul speaks of the affection Epaphroditus had for the church. He had become seriously ill, and was more concerned with the discouragement of the church due to his illness than his infirmity. He literally put the church's needs above his own. He was also very beneficial to Paul. Had the Lord not brought healing to Epaphroditus, Paul would have suffered great distress. He was loved greatly by Paul.

- It is probably safe to say that the majority of Bible students are not familiar with Epaphroditus. Most are familiar with Paul and Timothy, but not him. He served in obscurity, but his life presents an example all should follow. His love for the church was without question. His commitment to Paul and others is evident. His life made a significant impact on the church, even though he is little recognized. We need to be that type of servant for the Lord and the church. Those contributions will endure and enrich the church. People will eventually forget the message we preached, the lesson we taught, or the song we sang, but they will not forget our contributions to their lives. Let us live to make a positive and lasting impact!

**C. The Appeal (28-30)** – In the closing verses, Paul makes a final appeal regarding Epaphroditus. Consider:

**1. The Rejoicing (28)** – I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Paul knew the return of Epaphroditus to Philippi would result in great rejoicing for them. Although he would miss him greatly, his return would also provide encouragement to Paul. His return would be beneficial for all involved.

- Never underestimate the value of being obedient to the Lord's will for your life and being found in your place. You may never receive the gratitude you desire, but I can assure you that your faithfulness provides more than you realize. The church benefits greatly from your contributions and your faithfulness encourages me more than you will ever know!

**2. The Reception (29)** – Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation. Paul admonished them to receive Epaphroditus with gladness. Apparently some may have developed hard feelings due to his absence. There was no room for resentment or anger. Paul literally expected them to receive Epaphroditus the same as they would him. He had been a faithful servant as had earned their support and devotion.

- This serves as a challenging reminder to each of us. Sadly churches are often divided into specific and separate groups. Some are held in high esteem, while others are neglected and avoided. We must see every believer as part of the body of Christ and beneficial to the church and her work. God is no respecter of persons and we must not be either. We need to value every member the same, receiving them as we would anyone else. The ground is level at Calvary, and we are all needed in the work we are striving to accomplish.

**3. The Reasoning** (30) – [Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.](#) Paul is not seeking to make them feel guilty or convey that they have somehow failed in their obligations. However, he does remind them that the illness Epaphroditus suffered was due to his neglecting his own physical needs to care for Paul. He had given sacrificially of himself for the good of the ministry, and that must not be forgotten.

- Epaphroditus lived out the sacrificial model that Christ portrayed on the cross as He suffered and died on our behalf. We too need to develop and present such a commitment. I'm not advocating you neglect your physical health intentionally, but we need to develop a servant's heart. Far too many demand to be served of others, seeking their own benefit, instead of living sacrificially for the Lord and others. I want to follow the example Epaphroditus left. I want to be willing to give of myself for the good of the church and honor of my Lord.

**Conclusion:** Early in the chapter Paul spoke of us developing the mind of Christ. He revealed the obedience of Christ and our obligation to do the same. He closes with an example and reminder of two devoted men who modeled that life of obedient surrender. I was greatly challenged by these verses. There is room for improvement in my life. What about you? Do you sense the need for more devotion and commitment? If so, seek the Lord to enable you to better serve Him and the church. If you are unsaved, I urge you to respond to the call for salvation. Come to Christ in repentance and faith.