

WHEELERSBURG BAPTIST CHURCH

Life Application Sunday School Class

Philippians - Session 11

July 15, 2001

READ Philippians 2:19-24

Philippians 2:19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

Paul was going to send Timothy to encourage the Philippian church until he could personally get there.

1. Who is Timothy? Verse 22 - Paul called him his son in the faith. He also referred to Timothy as his son in several other passages (I Tim 1:2; II Tim 1:2) Timothy was Paul's fellow traveler, and close companion. He is first mentioned in Acts 16, where it is apparent that he lived in Lystra, and had a greek father and devout Jewish mother, Eunice. II Timothy addresses that Timothy had been instructed by him mother and grandmother in the scriptures from childhood. He and his mother and grandmother had become followers of Christ during Paul's first missionary journey. Timothy was ordained into service by the laying on of hands, and accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their journeys to Philippi and Thessalonica. He also helped them in Berea. Here he was left behind with Silas to help in establishing this new church while Paul went on to Athens. Paul then requested Timothy to leave Berea and come to meet him at Athens. Afterward, Timothy was sent back to Thessalonica to strengthen that church. Both Silas and Timothy then joined Paul at Corinth. On the third missionary journey, Timothy was with Paul during the lengthy ministry at Ephesus. From there, he was sent to Macedonia and to Corinth. When Paul came to Macedonia, Timothy re-joined him, and went with him to Corinth and then on the return visit to Macedonia. He then waited for Paul at Troas, and was probably with Paul when he was in Jerusalem. During Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, they were in close contact, and this is where Paul says he hopes to send Timothy to the Philippians. Timothy is next found in Ephesus, where Paul joined him. When Paul left Ephesus, he left Timothy behind. This is where Timothy received the letters of I and II Timothy. In II Timothy, Paul wanted Timothy to come to Rome to see him before winter. We don't know if this ever happened.

2. How did Paul feel about Timothy? He loved him, as a son. *I Cor 4:14 I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. 15 Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*

He obviously trusted him and depended on him. He had a close, kindred spirit with Timothy. Verse 20 in the KJV says : *20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.* Likeminded means of

equal soul. - they had the same passion and goal, that of the spiritual growth and development of the believers. Paul called him a fellow servant, one who had given up his life for the gospel, in contrast to others that were just looking out for their own interests. Paul is saying that Timothy genuinely and sincerely cared for their spiritual well being. This is why Paul wanted to specifically send Timothy, because he knew that he truly cared for the Philippians and had their best interest at heart, just like Paul did.

Applications from this passage:

3. Do we take a genuine interest in those that we minister to? Is our ministry to others self serving, or other serving? If we were with Paul, would he say that we would be like-minded in our service, or would we be one of the many that is just looking out for our own interests, and not those of Jesus Christ?

4. Read and reflect on II Timothy 2:1-2, *II Tim 2: You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ² And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

and then discuss this question: Do you have spiritual mentors in your life that are passing on the faith to you, so that you in turn will be able to equip others to pass on the faith? The question for consideration is this - Are you involved in the process of passing on the faith to others? Are you receiving and giving and preparing others to do the same? Is it a priority to know "the things that you have heard me say" referred to by Paul in this passage? If we are to fulfill the calling that God has for us, His agenda so to speak, it is this process of passing on the faith to the next generation. This is why God has established family, and church, and has brought His people together, to accomplish this task. And the Biblical pattern is that this work is accomplished in the context of relationships. Relationships take time and effort. Are you making it a priority to develop mentoring relationships - toward someone you can look to as a spiritual father, and to others that you nurture and bring along. This is God's method of spiritual growth and reproduction.

5. What does the phrase "in the Lord" mean in verse 24?

James 4: ¹³Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; ¹⁴whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. ¹⁵Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." ¹⁶But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

Acts 18: ¹⁹ They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews. ²⁰ When they asked him to spend more time with them, he declined. ²¹ But as he left, he promised, "I will come back if it is God's will." Then he set sail from Ephesus.

Rom 1 ⁹ God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you ¹⁰ in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Rom 15: ³⁰ Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me; ³¹ That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea; and that my service which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints; ³² That I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and may with you be refreshed.

I Cor 4: ¹⁹ But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these

arrogant people are talking, but what power they have.

I Cor 16: 7 I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.

Do we have an attitude of submission to God's will in our plans? Faith and trusting God is not dictating to God what we are going to do, but rather, trusting God to fulfill His will in our lives as we submit our plans to His sovereignty. True faith is trusting God even when things do not go as I expect or plan. It is not wrong to plan, or anticipate the direction or outcome of circumstances, but all expectations should always be in submission and recognition that God is in control, and that His desire and will will prevail.

READ Philippians 2:25-30

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

First, let's just piece together what has happened, who this Epaphroditus is, where he came from, and what the situation is. It seems that this person had been sent by the Philippians to Paul, and that he had brought Paul word about the Philippians, had brought him financial help, and had stayed with Paul to help him. He evidently had a deep affection for the Philippian believers, and they must have deeply loved him. This person became ill and almost died because of his service in the Lord. Paul said he was concerned for the Philippians, that they would be distressed when they heard that he was ill. But, in the words of Paul, God had mercy on him, and not only spared Epaphroditus's life, but spared Paul and the Philippians the grief and sorrow they would have experienced if Epaphroditus had died. Paul feels that since he or Timothy could not come to the Philippians immediately, that he should send this one that they loved back to them. He was making it clear in his letter that Epaphroditus is to be joyfully welcomed and received - he was not being sent back for any negative reason, rather, he had been of great service to the point of death, and for that reason should be honored by them. Paul said that he would have less care and anxiety once Epaphroditus had arrived. Now, let's look closer at each verse.

In verse 25, what descriptions does Paul attach to Epaphroditus, and what can we learn from those descriptions?

Brother - (not physical, but in the Lord)

Fellow worker - he worked side-by-side

Fellow soldier - he fought side-by-side

Messenger - (word apostle) one who was sent from them representing them.

Brother speaks of relationship in Christ. Even though Paul was the premier apostle and leader of the church, he refers to this believer as a brother (no big I little you). As a fellow worker, Paul communicates that fact that they both worked together, that the Lord's work is a team effort. Fellow soldier communicates that we are fighting together for a common cause, against a common enemy, with a common message. The Christian life is many times portrayed as war - We are pulling down strongholds of the enemy, and setting captives free through the truth of God's message, the gospel. Finally, the description "your messenger", or your apostle, communicates a number of ideas. Epaphroditus was a representative of the church of Philippi. I think this

carries implications concerning the doctrine of the local church. Epaphroditus was clearly bonded to and associated with a particular, local church - the church at Philippi. He was their messenger, sent from them, to help Paul. He was being sent back to them. I think it is biblical to see our identity as a member of a specific, local church. The Lord has established local churches for the purpose of accountability, encouragement, nourishment, growth, and ministry. Local church is His design. The very word for church, ekklesia, means assembly of people. It is through membership in a local church that we express our identity and gifts. In a very true sense, Epaphroditus was an extension of the Philippian church to assist the Apostle Paul. It is evident from this passage that Epaphroditus was deeply loved and that he deeply loved those in the Philippian church. I think that we can see that there was certainly a bond and special relationship that he had with that particular church. I recognize that there are differences of opinion concerning the necessity and administration of formal church membership. On one end of the spectrum, some churches have no kingdom view of ministry. Such churches would practice total separation from all non-local church ministries, and refuse to pool resources or work together with other Christians ministries. The other extreme is that local church identification and membership is unimportant; in fact some would say is divisive, and that we should be free to move about from church to church, and that churches should fully accept all those who profess faith in Christ, regardless of their church membership or affiliation. My personal conviction is more toward the first extreme. I believe the clear emphasis in the New Testament is identification with a local church. It seems that the popular trend today is moving away from accountability and responsible commitment to a local church. God has designed the local church to be a place of protection, not only of its members, but of its message. It is where God has placed pastors to shepherd the flock. It is where members are held accountable, and where church discipline can occur to restore those who falter. It is where we can obtain encouragement through long term relationships - family relationships.

Do you think membership in a local church is important?

What insights can we gain from this passage concerning the affection we are to have for fellow believers?

Epaphroditus - even in his sickness, his concern was that the Philippians would be distressed about his situation (vs 26). Such is the attitude of a selfless Christian.

When a person dies that we love, it brings sorrow. Although we do not sorrow as the world, it is normal and appropriate for us to grieve when one that we loves dies. Death is a consequence of the fall, and separation from loved ones brings sorrow. Some would say that grief is not an appropriate response for a Christian when he loses a loved one. I don't see Paul rebuking anyone here for their love and concern for one another that would have been expressed as sorrow. In fact, Paul said that God had spared him from the sorrow of losing Epaphroditus, and that the preservation of his life was an expression of God's mercy.

Another insight we gain from this passage, specifically from verses 29-30, is that it is appropriate to honor those who sacrifice for the work of the Lord. The scriptures clearly teach that our motive for serving the Lord is not to be for monetary gain, or to gain a personal following or popularity or the applause of people. But the Bible also clearly teaches that we are to honor those to whom honor is due. Paul tells these Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus with great joy, and to honor men like him. This means that such servants are to be highly esteemed and valued. Such honor is to be expressed by friendship (welcome, or receive), treating them with respect, and appreciation.

A final observation from this passage is this - these people really cared for each other. An area that is lacking in modern church life is intimacy. We are called to be family, to weep with those who weep, and laugh with those who laugh. When one of our brothers or sisters hurts, it should pain us also. And this type of relationship doesn't develop quickly or in a vacuum. One or two hours a week sitting next to someone in a worship service or Sunday School class will not produce the kind of closeness and intimacy expressed in this passage. We need to make it priority to build into each other's lives for God's glory. This should be our banner, our identification tag, a deep love and affection for one another. Christ has made it possible, but we

need to take our responsibility to take the time and effort necessary to cultivate these types of relationships.

What are some practical steps we can take to develop intimate relationships with other believers?