

Message #14**Philippians 2:19-24**

One of the best known college football coaches in all college football was Bo Schembechler. He became head coach of the University of Michigan in 1969 and remained in that position for twenty years until 1989. When he decided to retire, the university went on a major search to find his replacement. Big name coaches wanted the job. But the job ended up going to an unknown named Gary Moeller.

Gary Moeller became Bo's assistant in 1969. He stayed with him until 1976. He went to the University of Illinois from 1977-1979. But in 1980, he decided to go back as an assistant under Bo. When Bo retired, Gary was Bo's choice. Gary knew Bo's philosophy and Gary turned out to be the right choice. He was Schembechler's choice to replace him.

Back in the days of the early church, there were no pulpit committees, no steering committees, no congregational polls or resumes of men lining up for preaching jobs. Many men wanted to be up in front of people, but very few actually knew the truth and could communicate it.

New Testament churches relied on handpicked replacements by those who were known to be gifted men of God. For example, Jesus Christ, the God/man, handpicked the men who would represent Him over three years before he left. Then even after He left, He came back two or three years later and handpicked Paul.

Paul was a church planter. He went all over the known world planting churches in the truth of the grace of God. Paul was a man who cared about his churches and he did not want just anybody in those pulpits.

When he was locked up in jail, the church that was on his mind the most was the Philippian church. Paul loved this church and that church loved Paul. Paul wanted a well-taught, proven, reliable man in that church. He was not impressed with resumes or big names or oratorical skills; he wanted a man who knew his Apostolic philosophy and teaching. **The man he wanted in that church was Timothy.**

The point that Paul expresses to the Philippians is this:

PAUL WOULD BE GREATLY COMFORTED IN JAIL KNOWING THAT HIS HAND-PICKED REPLACEMENT, TIMOTHY, WAS MINISTERING IN THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH.

Paul had just challenged the Philippians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. A key to that happening is having the right minister in the church that is gifted by God to teach the Scriptures. You need a man in the church who loves the Scriptures, loves the people and reverences God. Paul's choice was Timothy.

When Mr. Miles retired from the school, some on the board pretended that they wanted him involved in the selection of his replacement, but behind the scenes they were snakes and in the end the school was ruined. They were not really interested in Mr. Miles philosophy or recommendations and, as a result, God brought that school down.

Paul did not want that happening to the Philippian church so he decided to send his handpicked man to Philippi. Now to pave the way, he communicates three messages to them, two of which we will examine today:

MESSAGE #1 – Paul hoped to send Timothy to the Philippian church. 2:19-23

Paul's hope in wanting to do this was "in the Lord Jesus" before whom every knee shall bow. That word "hope" (ἐλπίζω) is one that speaks of one's expectation and hope that looks for something (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 147). Paul was very concerned about this church and he was looking or trusting in the Lord Jesus to enable him to send Timothy to that church.

That is interesting. Paul was not trusting in the political leaders or the Elders or Deacons, nor was he trusting in a pulpit committee or congregation; he was trusting in the Lord Jesus to accomplish the goal of getting Timothy to that Philippian church. That is who Paul wanted there.

Churches need to see this and note this. When it comes time to find a replacement for a minister God has greatly used in a church, that replacement will be found by trusting in the Lord and by praying to Him. Unfortunately, so many search committees lose sight of this and handle things like some business deal.

Now Paul wanted Timothy in that church for three reasons:

Reason #1 - Paul's personal reason. 2:19b

Paul had a personal reason for wanting Timothy in that church. The reason was he would be greatly encouraged himself, knowing Timothy was there looking into things and looking out for things. In fact, Paul would be greatly encouraged when Timothy could get there and then report to him how things were going.

He wanted Timothy to go to Philippi, analyze the church and then report to Paul. Sometimes our own assessment of ourselves needs to be validated objectively by another. A godly man like Timothy could go to that church, analyze it and report to Paul and it would bring him encouragement.

That Greek word "encouraged" is rare. It is only used here in the New Testament. According to the grammarians Moulton and Milligan, who have completed an exhaustive Greek usage vocabulary, this word has been found used most often on tombstones.

It is a word that speaks of having good courage in the face of death (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 191). It is very probable that Paul actually chose this word because he realized that he could soon be in his grave.

His point was if Timothy is there and is overseeing things in Philippi, it will enable me to have courageous joy and encouragement even in the face of my own death.

This is really an odd thing. Most of the time when Paul sent someone it was for their benefit to straighten out some mess. In this case it is for Paul's benefit.

Reason #2 - Paul's pastoral reason. **2:20-21**

There was another reason Paul wanted Timothy in Philippi and that was because he had no man of equal mind who would genuinely care for the Philippians like Paul would. He could find "no one else." Of all the people Paul knew and were available to him, there was no one like Timothy. What that means is he is one of a kind, you cannot replace him and you cannot find someone better.

Now Paul knew many people. He had known many faithful people. At the top of the class was Timothy. This was the best man Paul knew to care for this church and teach it Grace Truth.

The Philippian church was a wealthy church. It is not easy finding someone who would minister to this church out of pure motives. Timothy was that man. In fact, Paul says Timothy will "genuinely be concerned for your welfare."

The words "genuinely be concerned" (**v. 20**) means to care for someone in a way that is sincere, true and genuine, in accordance to what is right in the sight of God. It is one thing to care about people; it is another to care for them in a way that is Biblically right.

I know of a minister who confronted a person with the truth of God and was exactly right in doing so. Other people in the church liked the person who was confronted and took a side against the minister who stood for truth. They were not really interested in the things of Jesus Christ. If they were, they would have stood with the minister.

I have known of many ministers who allowed someone to work with them in some paid capacity. Instead of them being loyal to the man of God who decided to use them, they stabbed him in the back and built themselves up. I have seen that with youth ministers, calling ministers and associate ministers. They should be representing the minister pertaining to the things of Jesus Christ and instead they are out politicking for themselves, trying to make themselves to look important.

Paul had seen these kinds of people and he knew the only man he could trust was Timothy. Timothy would not stab Paul in the back. He would look out for the Philippians just like Paul.

Now one thing that is interesting about what he says in **verse 20** is that he has no one else like Timothy. Well my question is what about Epaphroditus in **verse 25**? What about the Elders and Deacons he mentioned in the first verse of the book (**1:1**)?

Certainly those leaders were solid men and certainly Epaphroditus was a very godly man, whom he will describe in **verses 25-30**. So what did Paul mean by his statement there was no one else like Timothy?

Timothy was a gifted Pastor/Teacher (I Tim. 4:14). The other men were godly, but they were not gifted men like Timothy. Timothy had a special gift to be able to unravel God's Word which is clearly the context of I Timothy 4:13-14. When Paul says in **Philippians 2:21** that "they all seek after their own interests," there is an article "the" before the "all" meaning Paul has specific people in mind. The people he has in mind are those other preachers and ministers who were not in ministry because they had been called and gifted by God (Phil. 1:15). Timothy was the only true gifted man of God who would care for these Philippians and teach these Philippians just as Paul would.

There are many things that motivate people to go into ministry. Some are motivated by self-exaltation. Some are motivated by power-domination. Some are motivated by self-preoccupation. Some are motivated by self-promotion and family motivation. Some are motivated by ego. Some are motivated by money. Frankly, very few are in ministry because God has actually called and gifted them to be in ministry. **Timothy was Paul's only choice of man who he knew had been gifted by God to look out for the welfare of the church.**

J. Dwight Pentecost wrote the following back in 1973: "Recently I read one of the most disturbing articles I have read in a long time. This article predicted that in ten years vast numbers of Sunday Schools across our nation would have to be closed because of a lack of teachers to teach. It drew our attention to the affluence of our day that makes it possible for people to have weekend homes and engage in weekend recreation that takes them away from a commitment to the Lord's work. It anticipated a four-day work week when men will have even longer weekends, providing for greater opportunities for recreation away from the city. That means less commitment to the things of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such carelessness is not a sign of the mind of Christ. Beware lest you become one of those about whom Paul writes when he says that no one cares" (*The Joy of Living*, pp. 109-110).

It is even worse than that. You can hardly find a minister who will teach God's Word Sunday morning and Sunday night anymore. Most churches don't even have Sunday night services anymore because no one comes and no one cares.

Thank God there was Timothy. Timothy was a gifted teacher and Pauline representative and Paul was sending him to the Philippian church.

Reason #3 - Paul's provable reason. **2:22-23**

Notice how **verse 22** begins with a sharp, contrasting conjunction “but.” In sharp contrast to those self-seeking ministers, there is Timothy. For the past ten years he has demonstrated a faithful commitment to Paul and the Word of God and the Gospel of grace.

Timothy had proved himself to be a very valuable man of God. That word “proven” means to be proved by testing. This is one way Paul proved whether or not one was faithful. **He used the process of time.** Timothy was a very faithful man when it came to Paul and his ministry over time. He actually spent some time in jail, like Paul, for preaching the Gospel (Heb. 13:23).

Now Paul taught that it was “required in stewards that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2) and Timothy had proved himself to be just that.

Timothy stayed right at Paul's side in his grace Gospel message and work. He ministered to Paul as a son would minister to a father. Timothy was a very faithful son, and Paul trusted him and could count on him.

There are some people at church on whom you cannot depend. They say they will do things and don't. They promise to be there and then they aren't. Not Timothy. Timothy was so valuable to Paul that Paul not only wanted him at his own side, he also wanted him in this Philippian church.

So Paul says I hope I can immediately send Timothy there to be with you. In fact, **verse 23** begins by saying, “this one” I hope to send immediately.

MESSAGE #2 – Paul hoped he could himself go to the Philippian church. **2:24**

Now Paul was trusting in the Lord that he himself might get out of jail soon and would also be able to go to Philippi. Paul thought so highly of this church that he himself wanted to personally go there and minister there and teach there.

He did not feel that way about every church. He did not say I hope to get out of jail and go visit Corinth or even Ephesus. He did say it about Philippi.

Had Paul said I want to send someone on an all expense trip to Philippi to check up on the church, I am sure many would have said, “Here am I send me.” Paul would say, “I don't want you and I am not sending you.” Paul said there is one I want to send and that one is Timothy.

We used to go to mission conferences and appeals were made to the crowd would you say to God, “Here am I send me”? Well what if God is saying, “I don't want you.” You aren't faithful and you aren't gifted and you don't know the truth.

I have a hard time with some of the mission trips I hear about. People who have never even gone through one book of the Bible or through any major doctrine go on a mission trip because someone said are you willing to go. Well Paul would not just send someone because they are willing to go.

Paul was very selective and there was one man he would personally send and that one man was Timothy.

Now here is a fair question for each of us to ask. On the basis of my faithfulness would God recommend me for His work? Yes or no?

A man in church history about whom most of us have heard is Jonathan Edwards. He was one of the most powerful preachers who was dramatically used by God in New England in the 1700's. It is said that through the ministry of Jonathan Edwards the power of God "spread like a prairie fire." Jonathan Edwards died in 1758 at the age of 55 and his last words were "Jesus, my never failing friend."

He left behind a son named Jonathan Jr. He carried on his father's work. Ironically, he also died at age 55. His last words were: "Trust in God and you have nothing to fear."

Like father; like son. That is the way it was for Paul and Timothy.