

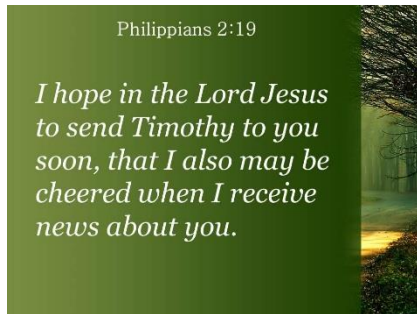
## A Living Example: Timothy

### Philippians 2:19-24

Online Sermon:

[http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page\\_id=3567](http://www.mckeefamily.com/?page_id=3567)

After having described in a hymn the ultimate example of what it meant to be a humble, obedient servant who looks out



for the interests of others; Paul now gave two examples of co-workers who he believed were living their lives worthy of the Gospel of Christ.<sup>1</sup> The first co-worker to be mentioned was Timothy. He was a native of Lystra, a third generation

Christian whom Apostle Paul viewed as a “follow worker” (Romans 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), a “brother” (2 Corinthians

1:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), a “bond-servant” (1:1), a “beloved faithful child in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 4:17), “coequal in the Lord’s work” (1 Corinthians 16:10; 1 Thessalonians 3:2); and above all his dear and “cherished son” (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2).<sup>2</sup> Paul told the Philippians, “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you” (2:19). Timothy had likely joined Paul in Rome and was “available to be sent out as his messenger.”<sup>3</sup> Paul’s hope was to send him soon, but that decision would not “rest on a human calculation of release and freedom”<sup>4</sup> but on the pleasure of the divine will of the Lord!<sup>5</sup>

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*Paul who loved (1:8), had confidence in (2:24) and rejoiced in the Lord (3:3; 4:10); would stand firm (4:1) and wait upon the Lord until He gave the command to proceed,<sup>6</sup> even though such a delay would greatly disappoint the Philippians!<sup>7</sup>*

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If it was the Lord’s will Paul would send Timothy for a “twofold purpose”<sup>8</sup> to Philippi and back. First, Paul wanted the

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 106.

<sup>2</sup> Cliff Kvidahl, “*Timothy*,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

<sup>3</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Philippians*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 92.

<sup>4</sup> Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 131.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Barnett, *Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord*, ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 77.

<sup>6</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., “*Philippians*,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 131.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Barnett, *Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord*, ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 317.

Philippians to know his “personal sense of well-being”<sup>9</sup> was one that was filled with joy because he was confident, he would remain steadfast in the faith and true to the Gospel of Christ (1:19-20) when in court in front of Caesar. And second, Timothy would not only further “instruct, correct, and edify the church during his stay”<sup>10</sup> but also Paul was confident he would return with a favorable report that the Philippians were working out their salvation by being “united in heart and purpose”<sup>11</sup> and were putting the interests of one another above that of their own!

**Reflection.** Paul was not willing to send Timothy to Philippi until it was the will of the Lord to do so. When you make decisions are they “yours” or the Lord’s will? If the Lord said “NO” to something, you really wanted to do would you not only refuse to do it but also wait for His path and clear direction in your life?

## Showing Genuine Concern

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<sup>9</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 193–194.

<sup>10</sup> Robert Rainy, [“The Epistle to the Philippians.”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 144.

<sup>11</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Philippians](#), Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Peabody, MA: Baker Books, 2011), 91.

<sup>12</sup> Gordon D. Fee, [Philippians](#), vol. 11, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 116.

Even though Timothy was well-known to the Philippians,<sup>12</sup> in the next few verses Paul gave them three reasons why Timothy was chosen to be Paul’s ambassador. First, Paul told the Philippians Timothy was chosen because “he



had no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare” (2:20). “It was not so much the spiritual gifts of Timothy that the apostle has in view, though

their presence is not denied,”<sup>13</sup> but both Timothy and Paul were of “equal soul” of the same mind, and kindred spirit.<sup>14</sup> Paul had complete confidence in his younger partner<sup>15</sup> and son in the Gospel that his love for Christ and for his spiritual father<sup>16</sup> would compel Timothy to give not only comfort but also provide a “living example” of what it meant to have genuine concern for

<sup>13</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, [The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 319.

<sup>14</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 194.

<sup>15</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., [“Philippians.”](#) in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelain, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 132.

<sup>16</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 63.

the interests of others! While Paul had other partners in ministry,<sup>17</sup> he also chose Timothy because no one else had quite the same genuine, deep love for the Philippians and desire to help them get rid of disunity problems and stand firm “in the one Spirit in the face of opposition (1:27-30)!”<sup>18</sup> Like Paul, Timothy was a “compassionate servant” who deeply loved Christ and His church at Philippi!

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*Paul had no doubt that his son Timothy had the pastoral heart<sup>19</sup> needed to deal with the self-centeredness and vain conceit that was inflicting great wounds upon church unity at Philippi.*

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And even though Timothy was known to be timid, Paul was confident that his son would not be anxious<sup>20</sup> in the face of both internal and external persecution but as a seasoned veteran would once again prove to be able to handle the most delicate of missions with the grace and power of the Lord whom He fearfully and wonderfully served!

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<sup>17</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 63.

<sup>18</sup> Gordon D. Fee, [Philippians](#), vol. 11, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 116.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Rainy, “[The Epistle to the Philippians.](#)” in *The Expositor’s Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor’s Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 144.

**Reflection.** Do you love the members of your church so much that you are willing to put their needs above those of your own? Upon close examination of your words, attitude, and deeds; would others testify that you genuinely love them with all your heart?

## Focusing on the Will of Christ

The second reason Paul chose Timothy was because he was not like everyone else who merely “looked out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (2:21)! As Paul wrote this letter in a dungy prison, chained to a Roman guard; he likely thought of many people he could have sent but to Philippi but were excluded from his list of possible candidates. When Paul stated “everyone,” i.e., the “whole lot of his associates,”<sup>21</sup> looks out for their own interests” he was unlikely referring Epaphroditus, Luke, or Aristarchus<sup>22</sup> but instead those who “preached Christ out of envy, rivalry, and selfish ambition (1:15-

<sup>20</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 195.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon D. Fee, [Philippians](#), vol. 11, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 1999), 117.

<sup>22</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., “[Philippians.](#)” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 132.

17).<sup>23</sup> It is possible that Paul asked other colleagues to go to Philippi and they refused his request because they were simply too “busy” with their own self-appointed ministry goals!<sup>24</sup> “What a strange irony—that the gospel could become the occasion for a profound self-absorption. We do live in an age of unprecedented self, of weightless souls consumed with their own gravity.”<sup>25</sup>

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*As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “We must be ready to allow ourselves to be interrupted by God. God will be constantly crossing our paths and cancelling our plans by sending us people with claims and petitions.”<sup>26</sup> How one handles these “interruptions,” i.e., God’s will for one’s life; clearly reflects our motivation, to serve our or God’s agenda.*

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Paul chose Timothy not only because he was his spiritual son and partner in the Gospel but also because he could “find no one like him” who was genuinely “anxious to promote the welfare

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<sup>23</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 195.

<sup>24</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 195.

<sup>25</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 109.

of the other people, and to give himself to a fatiguing journey and to the resolving of person quarrels in the Philippian church.”<sup>27</sup> Paul was confident that Timothy’s motive to serve was not to seek the admiration of the Philippians<sup>28</sup> but instead was to seek the interests of Jesus Christ who wanted His church to be steadfast in the faith and unified as one body under His headship! “Jesus in His preaching called upon His hearers to seek God and His kingdom first, that is, to put their whole life under God’s rule (Mt. 6:33; cf. 7:7–8; Lk. 11:9–10, etc.).”<sup>29</sup> Since this was Timothy’s primary motivation of service, not selfish ambition, in Paul’s mind he was the perfect ministry partner to send because he emulated Christ’s humble obedience to God’s will and would give the Lord all the credit!

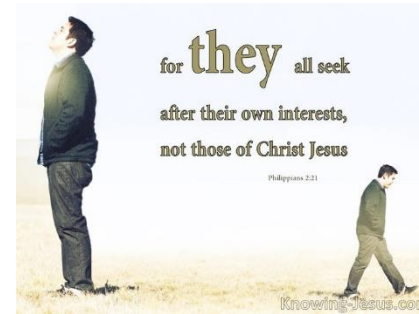
**Reflection.** What kind of ministry servant to the Lord do you want to be? Are you seeking first the kingdom of God or the

<sup>26</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 109.

<sup>27</sup> Ralph P. Martin, [Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 11, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1987), 134.

<sup>28</sup> Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 121.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Thomas O’Brien, [The Epistle to the Philippians: A Commentary on the Greek Text](#), New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 322.

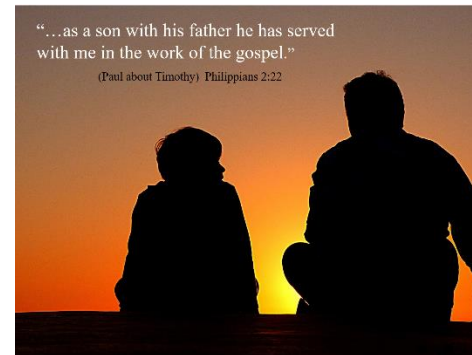


kingdom of self? Are you willing to drop your agenda the moment Christ calls you to a new one? Are you willing to serve the Lord even if no one notices or comments on your hard work?

## Working with Others

The final reason why Paul chose Timothy was because in Paul's words, "he proved himself, because as a son with his father he served me in the work of the Gospel" (2:22). It was not just because Paul was instrumental in Timothy's conversion at the tender age of fifteen<sup>30</sup> or the fact that Timothy co-authored so many of his letters;<sup>31</sup> but the fact that Timothy had "proven his character"<sup>32</sup> to be one that was trustworthy and fully devoted to being Paul's partner in the Gospel of Christ. "Timothy was there when Lydia, a seller of purple, became the first convert on the soil of Europe. He had witnessed the baptism of her and

her entire household."<sup>33</sup> Under the apprenticeship model Timothy learned much from Paul "by overserving, listening to instruction, and doing."<sup>34</sup> "Together they had served Christ for the furtherance of the gospel, beginning with Paul's second



missionary journey more than ten years earlier."<sup>35</sup> While Timothy "fulfilled his filial duty by honoring and obeying"<sup>36</sup> the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul did not see Timothy as a

subordinate to but a spiritual son whom he deeply loved and saw as his co-equal partner in the Lord. They worked together as "slaves in Christ" (1:1) through "the fire of testing and trial, advancing the Gospel in the midst of hardship (Acts 16:1, 3; 17:14).<sup>37</sup> Paul had the utmost confidence in his beloved son Timothy<sup>38</sup> because he had "put on the mind of Christ, towel of

<sup>30</sup> Alfred Plummer, "[The Pastoral Epistles](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor's Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 392.

<sup>31</sup> Mark Allen Powell, "Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey (Grand Rapids, MI, Baker Academic), 401.

<sup>32</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 358.

<sup>33</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 109.

<sup>34</sup> R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 110.

<sup>35</sup> Homer A. Kent Jr., "[Philippians](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians through Philemon*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 11 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 132–133.

<sup>36</sup> G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 196.

<sup>37</sup> Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 121.

<sup>38</sup> Alfred Plummer, "[The Pastoral Epistles](#)," in *The Expositor's Bible: Ephesians to Revelation*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, vol. 6, Expositor's Bible (Hartford, CT: S.S. Scranton Co., 1903), 392.

Christ and devoted his life to the church as the place to work out his and his fellow believer's salvation with fear and trembling."<sup>39</sup>

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*In a Greco-Roman world that only believed in quid-pro-quo, Timothy's faithful obedience to seek first the kingdom of God and devote his life to being a living example of humble service to the Lord made him truly like a shining star in the sky because he held onto and lived the words of life midst a warped and crooked generation (2:14-16).*

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No wonder Paul chose Timothy to be his "selfless flesh-and-blood example"<sup>40</sup> of living one's life worthy of the Gospel!

**Reflection.** Do you see others in ministry as co-partners and equals at the foot of the cross or do you see yourself as being better than others? Do you have someone in your life that you mentor that would say you are like family in the Lord? Do your words, thoughts, and deeds make you shine brightly in today's fallen world?

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<sup>39</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 110.

<sup>40</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 110.

## Confidence in the Lord

After having written why Timothy was a perfect candidate to be his ambassador and example of one living a life worthy of the Gospel, Paul once again reiterates his plans. First, he told the Philippians, "I hope, therefore, to send him (Timothy) as soon as I see how things go with me" (2:23). While we are not certain as to why Paul wanted to delay sending



Timothy it was likely because Paul wanted to know first if he was to be "sentenced or set free."<sup>41</sup> If he is sentenced to death then Timothy will act as Paul's representative as one sent "in the Lord Jesus"

to comfort and encourage the Philippians to remain steadfast in the faith, hold onto the word, and let their light shine. There is another likely reason why Paul delayed sending Timothy and that is he needed his spiritual son by his side to help comfort and encourage him in the face of an uncertain future!<sup>42</sup> Paul

<sup>41</sup> G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 198.

<sup>42</sup> G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 198.

could find “no one like Timothy” who immediately dropped his ministry plans and obeyed the will of God to help his partner and spiritual father in the faith! Though apostle Paul had no biological children of his own, he was like a father to Timothy who was his very own son.

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*Do you have spiritual friends that serve Christ by taking care of your interests?<sup>43</sup> You know the kind that are present, speak the truth, strengthen you in your weaknesses, pray for you, and support you with resources and hugs when needed?<sup>44</sup>*

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And second, Paul told the church of Philippi that he was “confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon” (2:24) and visit in person. Paul is not contradicting his prior statement that he was being “poured out like a drink offering” (2:17) and was likely to be executed but was experiencing “a change in his thoughts”<sup>45</sup> and was now thinking that his release from prison would happen. Whether he be executed or released would not change the truth that Paul would always put his faith and trust in the Lord because he was confident the Lord always works for the good (being executed meant presence with the Lord and

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<sup>43</sup> Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 122.

being released meant continuing being an apostle to the Gentiles) of those who love Him (Romans 8:28)!

## Conclusion

How rare it truly is to find someone in this “me generation” who truly places the interests of others above that of their own! To find a person who seeks first the kingdom of God and is genuinely concerned with obeying the will of the Lord by



...serving one another is truly a rare find! Though Paul was locked up in a Roman prison, chained to guards 24/7, and faced an unknown future; he remained steadfast in

the faith, deeply in love, confident in and rejoicing in the Lord! Though he faced likely execution, Paul’s concern was not for himself but the Philippian church who were struggling to be like-minded, have the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Knowing that disunity in the church is often a landmine

<sup>44</sup> Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), 122.

<sup>45</sup> H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 63.

to those trying to correct self-absorbed attitudes, Paul was left with the daunting question of who could he send to handle such delicate matters? Sadly, many of his colleagues were not willing and even some disqualified due to preaching Christ out of selfish ambition and vain conceit! We can relate to Paul's dilemma for we too live in an age of unprecedented self, of weightless souls consumed by their own gravity. Thankfully, Paul had Timothy his beloved son! He provided an excellent example of a God-fearing, faithful servant of the Lord. If we are to aspire to be like another of course Christ is our first choice but occasionally the Lord shows us a person who puts His kingdom first by genuinely serving the interests of others! Like Timothy we must not see God's will as interruptions in our lives but opportunities to willingly serve our Lord, Savior, and King. Such occasions are to be cherished for as we stand firmly with the word of God in our hearts and minds our actions will shine like stars in the sky to this warped and crooked generation!