

Philippians 2.19-30 / Church of the Open Bible / 11.20.16

Timothy

2.19 Timothy was the co-_____ of this letter with Paul. Timothy had been on Paul's ministry team for years, ever since Paul's second missionary tour. Paul had sent Timothy to the church in Corinth to remind them of the ways of Christ, and later to the church in Ephesus to straighten out problems there.

Paul wanted to send Timothy to Philippi, so he could learn that they were standing in _____ for the true gospel and living up to that gospel in their lives, as Paul has exhorted them to do in this letter.

2.20-21 Paul wanted to send someone to Philippi who was spiritually _____ and equipped, to handle the serious problems there. Paul knew many good Christians in Rome, but Timothy was the only lieutenant of his whom he could send.

Many others had become _____ – interested, rather than interested in the things of Christ; this was something Paul warned the Philippians against in themselves. Timothy, in contrast, remained like-minded with Paul, thus like-minded with Christ, concerned for the welfare of the Philippians and the interests of Christ.

2.22-24 Timothy was with Paul when he _____ the church in Philippi. He also went back to the church later, being sent there by Paul.

As a _____, Timothy had given up the blessings of secular life and faced many risks.

Timothy was a spiritual son to Paul, his _____, who had worked alongside Paul and learned from him. And he lived like a true son, who serves his father, represents him, works alongside him, has his values.

Just as _____ chose to submit to God the Father, to be sent by him to sacrificially suffer for the sake of the gospel mission, so Timothy chose to submit to Paul and be sent by him to sacrificially suffer for the sake of the gospel mission. So here in this passage, Paul exalts or praises Timothy, as God the Father exalted Christ to glory.

Paul was following Christ. Timothy was following _____, to learn how to follow Christ. Now the Philippians could follow Timothy as an example of someone following Christ.

Epaphroditus

2.25 Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippian _____ to minister to Paul and bring Paul gifts.

Paul called Epaphroditus his fellow worker and fellow _____. This last term would have spoken to the Philippians, as the town was mostly families of former soldiers. They would understand this symbolism, that Paul and Epaphroditus were in unity of purpose and methods for the gospel, contending side by side for the true faith of Christ's gospel, just as Paul had instructed them to do earlier in this letter.

Since he was a respected spiritual leader in their church, it would be important for them to know of the _____ Epaphroditus had with Paul and Timothy.

2.26-30 One reason Paul sent Epaphroditus back now was because they had heard he was _____. Epaphroditus had been sick, almost dying, but God had mercy on him and spared Paul the grief of losing his dear friend and fellow minister. Therefore Paul sent Epaphroditus even more eagerly so they could rejoice and Paul could be less concerned about what was happening there.

As their envoy, Epaphroditus was doing what they could not do from so _____.

Those who were wavering in the face of suffering would have looked at Epaphroditus' premature _____ as further evidence of the suspected curse against Paul and against them for supporting Paul. So Paul was all the more eager to send Epaphroditus home, to turn their anxiety into rejoicing and to strengthen their resolve and faith.

Paul told the Philippians to _____ people like Epaphroditus, because Epaphroditus was willing to suffer and risk his life for the work of Christ and to support Paul on their behalf. As with Timothy, Epaphroditus deserved honor for proving himself to be a passionate follower of Christ, by selflessly and sacrificially suffering for the sake of the gospel mission. As Christ obeyed to the point of death, Epaphroditus was prepared to do the same.

Conclusions

Paul wanted to establish the _____ of Timothy and Epaphroditus, so the Philippians would follow them as true spiritual leaders who were following Christ.

Timothy and Epaphroditus, as _____ of Paul, were trying to learn from him, were following his good example of what it meant to be a Christ-follower. They were not as sanctified as Paul yet, perhaps, but they were chasing him as he chased after Christ.

Christ is our example of a _____ person. Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus are examples of people trying to follow Christ, to live up to the gospel, to become as righteous in life as they were declared to be by God's grace, to live by faith and obedience to God's revelation.

We can be inspired and instructed by the example of these men, but also of _____ to foreign lands and other spiritual leaders in our lives who model what it means to live for God and be Christ-like.

Our goal is to _____ spiritually, to become more like the inspiring teachers and leaders who go before us, and ultimately to become more like Christ, our example of perfect humanity. We grow as we live by faith and obedience, on what we call the top-line, walking with God in his light. We grow to be more like Christ by learning to follow the example of Christ, by following the example of those who are following Christ.

What matters right now is not your _____ of maturity or growth, but your slope; in other words, what's important is whether you are growing to be more like Christ or stagnating back into the ways of the world and flesh.

It is never acceptable to _____ or stop growing. God's vision is that we grow to become ever more like Christ throughout all our days on Earth.

Really, you never plateau, rather – if you stop growing – you _____ and start to slide back into the ways of the flesh and the world.

Make sure you are growing now! You should be able to see real change in yourself over any _____ month period.

If you want help with this, we offer not only the worship service, but Sunday school classes, small groups, personal mentoring, biblical counseling, devotions and other spiritual exercises, opportunities to serve and reach out, and more, and it is all free.

So join us as we look to Christ, to Paul and the other apostles, to Timothy and Epaphroditus, and to people in our own lives, who exemplify the Christian life. Let us seek to be like them, to become all that we were saved to be!