Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Model Spiritual Servants, Part 2: Timothy
Scripture: Philippians 2:19-24
Code: 50-25

Model Spiritual Servants: Timothy

Let's open our Bibles to Philippians chapter 2. We're looking at verses 17 through 30 as the setting for our message. Philippians 2:17 to 30 presents to us three model spiritual servants. And we looked at the first one, Paul, last Lord's day. And today we'll look at the second one, Timothy. And next Lord's day we'll look at the third one by the name of the Epaphroditus.

Now this particular portion of Scripture is not profound theologically. It's not even a doctrinal passage, as such. It's not a difficult passage. There aren't any hidden treasures here. It's simple, straightforward. In fact, it's very practical. It is profound in the sense that I believe it presents to us a model for spiritual living, for spiritual virtue.

But as I viewed this passage and as I thought about it last night, just kind of meditating on what I would say to you as I refine my thoughts, I began to get the sort of...I don't know...sort of a warm and gracious, almost a lovely feeling about what I was learning from this young man, Timothy. It's not at all a threatening passage. It's not at all a sort of dunning kind of text. It presents to us the model of a young man like us who learned to live according to the pattern that God had established. And he becomes for us an example. He becomes for us a model, a pattern upon which we can trace our own life.

As we look at Timothy, let me just remind you of a great general principle that comes through in all three of these illustrations in this text. Thomas Brook said, "Example is the most powerful rhetoric." He's right. Many times as I speak to groups of pastors and church leaders, this week I had occasion to have a Master's Shepherds' Seminar in Albuquerque and another one in Phoenix. And as I speak to these groups of pastors and church leaders, I say to them this important basic statement. The single greatest tool of spiritual leadership is the power of an exemplary life. The single greatest tool of leadership is the power of an exemplary life.

And that's what we're seeing here. After many verses of duty, many verses that give us principle for living, we now have a model to follow. And I don't know about you but to me that is so helpful. You see, we tend to be creatures led more by pattern than precept. We are much better at following a pattern and a model than we are trying to live out a concept or a precept or a principle. And somebody might say, "Well what makes examples so powerful, why is it the single greatest tool of

spiritual leadership? Why is it the most powerful rhetoric?"

And the answer is this, because example shows us what precepts can't. Examples show us what principles can't. What do I mean by that? Principles, precepts tell us our duty. That's all they can do. Principles and precepts tell us our duty, that's all they can do. Example assures us that that duty is possible because somebody is fleshing it out. If there were no one that I could look to as the model of spiritual virtue, I think I would probably say it's impossible. Wouldn't you? When you read the Scripture and when you endeavor to be obedient to all the precepts of the Word of God and you look at your own life and your own weakness and your own sin and your own failure, you might conclude this is impossible, I can't do it. You see, principle can only tell us our duty, it can't help us do it. But modeling and example can show us that such a duty is possible, it can be done. And we need other than Jesus Christ because although Christ is the perfect model, He is not like we are, He is not battling sin and the flesh and failure and weakness. And so we need somebody who puts flesh on principles, who puts life into precepts that we can pattern our life after.

And that is precisely Paul's purpose in this text. He had given sixteen verses of precept in this chapter. Verses 1 through 16 really lay out precepts...how we are to live, humbly, without complaining, working out our salvation with fear and trembling. We are to even be like Christ, "Have this mind in you which was in Christ." Very high lofty goals. "Look not on our own things but the things of others." "Love everybody the same way." These are very lofty goals. Never grumbling, never disputing, always with a healthy fear of God, always working out that inward salvation...duties, duties, duties.

And now, as if to say I know duties are limited, I know principles are limited. Let me show you pattern. Let me show you model. Let me show you example. Paul gives us three models of spiritual service...three models of how to live the Christian life...three models of how to serve God. First is Paul, second is Timothy and third is Epaphroditus.

And though they are distinct, they are in some sense all one because they all illustrate the same thing. They all illustrate selfless, humble, spiritual service. And yet in each case there are some nuances in their particular lives that make them unique. By the way, they were three close friends. They're all together in Rome as Paul is writing this epistle to the Philippians. Paul, of course, is the imprisoned Apostle. He is a prisoner in a private house. He is chained to a soldier. He is unhindered in his presentation of the gospel. And they give him liberty to work with his friends and so Timothy, his son in the faith is there, and Epaphroditus has come from Philippi to be with him because the Philippians are concerned about his situation and Epaphroditus brought some money to help support him and stayed in order to be a servant to him as well.

So these three men, three models of spiritual service, are really working together and their lives sort of intertwine, overflow and overlap and we could say that all three of them illustrate the same

thing...humble, uncomplaining, working out of salvation in a virtuous way. And yet there are some distinctions that we have noted.

We looked at the first model last week, Paul, and we called him the sacrificial rejoicer. Look at verse 17 and 18. Paul, pointing to himself as an example, says, "Even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. And you, too, I urge you in the same way and share your joy with me."

Paul says to them, I see my life as an offering, a drink offering poured out on top of your sacrificial offering, and I do with great joy. His selfless, humble, uncomplaining, working out of salvation was a way of life, and he saw it as a sacrifice and a joyous one at that. So we call him the sacrificial rejoicer. And we kind of reduced it down to one very important principle, ultimate joy comes from the ultimate offering of one's life to the will of God. It isn't just service God desires, it is humble, uncomplaining service with sacrifice and joy. And Paul is the model of that. Humble, without complaint and joyful in his sacrifice.

Now from the sort of sacrificial rejoicer, or humble rejoicer, if we can call Paul that, let's go to the second model, Timothy. We'll call him the single-minded sympathizer, just to give him a title. And I want to take you through verses 19 to 24. Again it's not theological. It's not real deep and profound stuff. It's just practical, it's a lovely portrait of a wonderful servant of Christ who can act as a model for us to follow to take duty and put it into a context in which we say, "That's possible...that's possible, he did it, I can do it, for he is as like passions as we are, as was Paul, as is Epaphroditus," whom we'll meet next week.

Now, let's look at verse 19 and meet Timothy the single-minded sympathizer. "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition." We'll stop at that point.

Paul would loved to have gone to Philippi himself. There's no question about that because he had such a relationship with the people. They loved him, he loved them. They had a bond that was really wonderful and rich. In fact, every time he thinks about them it is with joy, chapter 1 verse 3. "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you." Verse 4, "Always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all." Down in verse 8 he says, "God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus." He had a great, great loving affectionate compassion for these people, did Paul.

In chapter 2 and verse 24 he says, "I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly." He calls them in chapter 4 verse 1, "My beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, my beloved." He's almost effusive about his affection for them.

Because of this affection he wants to come and see them. And as I noted in chapter 2 verse 24, he believes that shortly he'll be able to do that. That is certainly his heart's desire. Back in chapter 1 verse 25 he said, "I know I shall remain," that is in this world and not die, "and continue with you all for your progress." That's interesting...for your progress. That tells us there was another element in his wanting to be with the Philippians. It wasn't just fellowship. It wasn't just love. It wasn't just affection. It was also spiritual progress. While he was a prisoner at Rome and while he may have been a little bit melancholy as he thought about the affection he had for these Philippians, he was also pretty astute in his mind and he realized that he needed to be there, not just for the sake of fellowship but also for the sake of their spiritual progress. They had some real needs.

For example, look at chapter 1 verse 27. He says, "Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel." Now the first thing we would note is that there was a bit of discord among those people in Philippi. We don't know the extent of it but there was some disharmony there and there was need for greater unity.

Chapter 2 verse 1 affirms it. He says, "If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." Here he's calling for humility. He's calling for unity. He's calling for oneness. He's calling for loving each other the same, and so forth.

You go over to chapter 4 and we get a little more specific look at maybe one of the problems. In verse 2 he says, "I urge," and he names two women, "Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel," and so forth. He wants somebody to get two cantankerous, fighting women together to bring accord where there is discord.

So, Paul desired to be with the Philippians not only for the sake of affection but for the sake of spiritual progress in the matter of unity. And there was one other thing on his mind and that is that the Philippian church was being attacked by some theological opposition. In chapter 1 again verse 28 says, "In no way be alarmed by your opponents." Striving together for the faith of the gospel indicates that there was a war going on about the faith of the gospel. As some opponents were coming in teaching false doctrine, the fact that they opposed the gospel, he says in verse 28, is a sign of destruction for them. Then in verse 29 he reminds them, "It has been granted for Christ's sake not only to believe in Him but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me and now here to be in me." In other words, this is to be expected. You've been called to suffer. You're being attacked. There are those who are coming with false doctrine, opponents and enemies. Obviously under this attack he was concerned that they have an adequate and appropriate response to that. So that was another reason that he would have desired to be with them.

In chapter 3 verse 2 he gets very direct. He says, "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision." Down in verse 18 he says, "Many walk of whom I've told you and now tell you even weeping that they are enemies of the cross of Christ whose end is destruction, whose God is their appetite, whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things."

So there were some humanistic, materialistic, false teaching people who were attacking the church. And Paul was greatly concerned that the church was in upheaval about this. I think that's why in chapter 4 he says in verse 6, "Be anxious for nothing," and in verse 7 reminds them of the peace of God which surpasses comprehension.

So he wanted to be them for affection's sake. He wanted to be with them for spiritual progress sake...spiritual progress having to do with the issue of unity internally and the issue of doctrine externally and fighting against the opponents of the faith who were coming against them, not only in terms of what they taught but in a persecuting effort as well.

Now because he had such a strong desire to help the Philippians out of love, and because at the time he was a prisoner, he had no recourse other than to send someone else. And so verse 19 he says, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you." Obviously Timothy then is going to carry Paul's mission. He will carry Paul's affection. He will carry his message and effort toward unity and toward doctrinal clarity and strength against persecution. That's why he wants him to go.

Thus we are introduced to Timothy. Notice how Paul frames what he says. "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy." I like that. I hope would not be enough for Paul because everything he hoped for had to be submitted to the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus. That little phrase "in the Lord Jesus" simply means consistent with His will, His purpose, His person, His plan, just that, in accord with His will. Paul never did anything. That's the baseline, that's the bottom line in Christian experience. The goal of the believer is to fill out the will of God, to do what God wants him to do. And so, you live in constant submission to the will of God, and we should always say, "I hope in the Lord Jesus, I trust in the Lord Jesus to do this or that."

Paul never wanted to act independently of his Master's desires. He submitted all of his plans to the Lord. The Lord was sovereign. Everything was submitted to the Lord. That was the bottom line in his life. And by the way, this is not a stock phrase like "if the Lord is willing," sort of slapped on the end, tacked on in an unthinking way. Nor is it some especially self-abnegating phrase indicating that Paul hasn't got any clue about what his future is and doesn't have any idea of what's coming and so he just sort of pushes it off to the Lord. It's not that either.

It's simply to say I make plans and I make strategies and I set goals but they are all subject to the sovereign Lord under whose leadership I live. That's the only way to live, to live in a confident trust in

the sovereignty of God. So he says I hope in the Lord Jesus, that is if the Lord Jesus wills it and if the Lord Jesus wants it, and it's consistent with His person and plan, to send Timothy.

Do we need to remind you about Timothy? Have we not already known enough about him in 1 and 2 Timothy? I'm sure we have, but just a few things. He was a native either of Derbe or Lystra, two little towns in the are we know as Galatia. His mother was a Jew by the name of Eunice, his grandmother, Lois. His father was a Greek so he had a Jewish mother and a Greek father and thus he was able to meet those two sort of colliding cultures, Judaism and Hellenistic Greek culture. Obviously he had not been circumcised. He had to be circumcised, but he had not been circumcised and as a consequence to that its indication that probably he was educated in Greek culture and Greek circles formally. So informally he was educated by his mother and his grandmother from whom he learned the doctrines of salvation, as Paul tells us in his epistle to him. From his father and the culture of the Greeks, he learned that world and that perspective. So he was eminently qualified to go with Paul into the Greek world to bear the message of Jesus Christ.

We don't know when he was converted to Christianity. We don't know the details about it. We know by the time Paul met him in Acts 16 he had already become a Christian and was such a proven young man that Paul said, "I want to take him with me." He became Paul's protege. I don't know if you know how extensively he was a part of Paul's life. He speaks of him as his son in the Lord, his son in the faith, his true child. He speaks of him as his brother and his coworker and his fellow servant and his fellow slave. He was with Paul in Philippi, he was with him in Thessalonica, he was with him in Berea, he was with him in Corinth, he was with him in Ephesus, he is with him here in Rome as he writes this. He was associated with Paul in the writing of some of his epistles...such as 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philippians. And when Paul wrote to the Romans, Timothy was there as well.

He was of great use to Paul because he was so willing to do anything Paul ever wanted him to do. Paul could send him somewhere, he would go. Paul could take him with him, he would go. Paul could leave him somewhere, he would stay. And always faithful to fulfill that which God had given him to do. A message in the hands of Timothy would be as safe as it was in the hands of Paul because Timothy was truly his protege.

The Philippians knew him, too, because he had been Philippi from the very beginning. He was taken up by Paul in Acts 16. Later in the sixteenth chapter the church at Philippi was founded, Timothy was surely there at the very founding of the church. And so they knew Timothy as long as they had known Paul. And certainly next to Timothy he must have been their second favorite. So he was the right choice. And Paul was very anxious to send him because of his concern.

Notice the word in verse 19 is the word "shortly." Quickly. How quickly? Well he has to qualify that down in verse 23. "I hope to send him immediately as soon as I see how things go with me." The

only thing that was restraining Paul at the moment was the fact that he had some personal matters to which Timothy must give his attention. You say, "What were they?" Well, we don't know. It might have been some personal thing in the life of Paul. It might have been some ministry that he was engaged in on behalf of Paul. Now Paul was a prisoner but he could preach and teach concerning the things of Christ without being hindered. That's why so many people in Caesar's household were being saved, as the end of the epistle indicates. And so there must have been many duties to bring people to him, to assemble them, to follow up the people who came to name the name of Jesus Christ. And Timothy, along with Epaphroditus, would have been very busy.

So there were some specific reasons why he says I'll send him shortly and in verse 23, "I'll send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me." Some think he meant as soon as I hear the outcome of my trial so that I can send him with the news about whether I've been released or whether I'm to be beheaded. But nonetheless he delays for a short while because of some pressing need before he will send Timothy.

The purpose of sending Timothy is given also in verse 19. "So that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition." He was sending...this is a lovely, gracious, humble way to say it...he was sending Timothy so that Timothy could see them, find out all the good about them and report it back so Paul could rejoice. The assumption here is that all was well. He has a very positive outlook. So that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. That's a very, very positive approach, saying I'm sure you're doing well. Love always believes the best, doesn't it? It's an example of real trust. I want him to come so he can see how wonderful you're doing, how your progress is moving ahead, and then he'll come back and he'll tell me and that will be so wonderful for me to be encouraged...the word in the Greek means to be glad...to be happy when I learn about your condition.

So the main object then of Timothy's mission was to go to a assist them in this matter of unity, to assist them in the matter of facing persecution and false doctrine, helping them with those things. Then to return to Paul to bring him great gladness of heart when he reported back the condition of this dear, dear congregation.

Now, since Timothy is going to the Philippians, he wants them to accept them. And he doesn't want any equivocation on that. So starting in verse 20 he gives us a profile of Timothy and it is beautiful, it is magnificent and it is real, it is a pattern, it is an example, it is a model for us to follow, this choice servant. And I want you to see seven features that Timothy models in the matter of spiritual living. He is a unique young man. He lived a sacrificial life for the sake of Paul, for the sake of Christ and there are seven things Paul notes that mark him out as a model of spiritual virtue.

Number one, let's just say he is similar...let's use the word "similar," only for the sake of "S's", there might be better words, but you'll understand the point. Similar to what? Verse 20, "I have no one else of kindred spirit." Similar to Paul. Paul is saying, "As I survey the people that I might send to you, I

have only this man, I have no one else available to me of kindred spirit. He's the only one similar to me. He's the only one who is like me."

The word there is one...really two words in the Greek, "of kindred spirit," isopsuche, one souled, one souled...s-o-u-l-e-d, one minded. He is one with me in mind, one with me in thought, one with me in feeling, one with me in spirit.

In other words, he thinks like I think. He acts like I act. He reacts like I react. That's why I'm sending him.

He operated like Paul. He learned to think like Paul. He learned to perceive like Paul. He learned to evaluate like Paul, to assess like Paul. He came with a spiritual mind, not with emotion. Now please notice in verse 20, "I have no one else like him." No one. You say, "Well maybe there wasn't anybody with him." Yes, verse 21 of chapter 4 says, "The brethren who are with me greet you, all the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household." In Rome there had been a church established, there were a number of saints there, there were obviously even some preachers there. Back in chapter 1, some were preaching Christ in envy and strife against Paul, some were proclaiming Christ out of selfish ambition rather than pure motives, Philippians 1:15 and 17. So there were preachers there whose motives were bad, who were envious, selfish, strife-ridden, who wanted to hurt Paul and injure Paul...all was not well on the front in Rome.

And there were other brethren, and there were other saints from Caesar's household and from other places, but he says when it comes down to someone whose heart beats like mine, I have no one else. That's a great reminder of the fact that you may spend a life time in ministry and when you come down to the end find that you have been indeed rich if you have produced one who is like you. I have no one else.

Even Paul found that those who were unusually faithful and those who were unusually able and those who were unusually gifted were very, very few, very few. Only Timothy. Now I don't think he's necessarily slurring Luke and Aristarchus, they had been with him but had been already dispatched, according to Colossians and Philemon, they had already been sent away. So Luke and Aristarchus weren't there and they would have been the closest thing to Timothy, certainly to understand the heartbeat of Paul. But even Luke and Aristarchus weren't of kindred spirit in the same sense that Timothy was.

To show you how much like Paul he was, 1 Corinthians 4. First Corinthians is a corrective letter, probably the most detailed corrective letter in the whole New Testament. The Corinthian church was a mess, to put it mildly. They were engaging in every kind of deviation from proper godly living. Paul is so concerned about them, so burdened about them, that in chapter 4 verse 16 he says, "I exhort you therefore be imitators of me." Be imitators of me. Then notice what he says immediately. "For

this reason...what reason?...because I want you to imitate me, I have sent to you...who?...Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ." Stop at that point.

Paul said I'm so concerned about you, I am so burdened about you that I'm sending Timothy. And somebody might say, "Well if you're so uptight and so upset and so burdened, why didn't you come yourself?" I'm sending Timothy because Timothy is my beloved son in the faith who will remind you of all my ways. Timothy was a reproduction of the Apostle. That's why I used the word similar.

By the way, this is the goal of discipleship, reproduction. When a man is fully discipled, Jesus said he'll be like his teacher. But it's rare. It's rare to find someone who has all the elements that you would want to reproduce. He says to them, "You should receive Timothy, don't think it's anything less than if I were to come because Timothy is like me, he thinks like I think. He has similar qualities of soul, similar passions.

Now do you understand why Timothy was so precious to Paul? Do you understand why when Paul comes to the end of his life, the last book he writes is 2 Timothy, the last epistle he writes to Timothy is to keep Timothy on track because Paul knows he's going to leave the world and he says I'm ready to be offered, I finished my course, I've kept the faith. He knows he's going to die soon. And the one thing he wants so desperately is continuity in his ministry and so for the sake of continuity he pleads with Timothy to stay on track because Timothy is his clone, his carbon. Timothy is his protege.

And this, beloved, is a mark of spiritual virtue that you model after the model of Paul. All of us must come along under the Pauline model. Timothy is a classic illustration of what all of us are to be. People ask me all the time, "Who are the people who influence you most? Who is your model?" And you say, well apart from Christ who is the model of sinless perfection, which is an unattainable model, the man I have most patterned my life after and I say this honestly to you, is the Apostle Paul. He is the man who is modeling for me all the time, as I pour over his life and his writings hour after hour, week after week, month after month, year after year through my life. No man has influenced me like the Apostle Paul.

Yes, I need the model of Jesus but that's a model of sinless perfection. I need the model of Paul who is a model of a victorious believer with a sin principle in operation.

Timothy was set apart uniquely as an effective believer because he was so similar to the apostolic model. And in the process of you and I moving through our Christian life, it's fine for us to take other folks as a pattern as long as those other folks are taking the apostolic model, and Paul provides the greatest model for all of us. And bless his heart, Timothy then by bearing that same model becomes to us a model as well.

So, we start with the fact that Paul said be imitators of me, and that's where it all begins. We must imitate Paul. We must have his responses and his zeal and his passion and his attitude and his heart and Timothy did, so he was similar to the apostolic model.

Then we go on to a next quality. He was sympathetic. This, too, much more specific than that general one we just mentioned first, Timothy was sympathetic. Please notice verse 20 again. "I have no one else of kindred spirit...here it comes...who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare." That means he was sympathetic. Genuinely concerned for your welfare. The word "genuinely," just what it says, legitimately, not spuriously, not hypocritically. He has the disposition of a true shepherd. He cares about you.

Remember the shepherd in John 10, the good shepherd lays down his...what?...his life for the sheep. Timothy, I believe, had a compassion for the church. When Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 11 that the greatest burden in all the ministry was the care of the churches, that must have reflected the heart of Timothy also because in the first verse and the first chapter of that same epistle Paul writes, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God and Timothy, our brother, to the church of God." Timothy who was in a sense along with Paul as he penned that certainly reflected the same compassion and care for the church that Paul did. He was certainly deeply burdened for the church. That's why Paul left him in the Ephesian church to assess the situation and to solve the situation. Timothy had a passion for the church. He had a sympathy for the things that needed to be done. And so Paul sending Timothy to Philippi was not sending a cold, indifferent man to do duty for someone else, but a sympathetic caring person.

Would you notice also that the term concerned for your welfare is very interesting. It's a strong verb, very strong. It's used in chapter 4 verse 6 only there it's translated this way, "Be anxious for nothing." We translate it under the idea of worry, or being burdened in a very serious way. And that's what it is here. It could read, verse 20, "Who will genuinely be anxious for your welfare, who will be burdened for your welfare, who will genuinely feel deeply your needs." That's the idea.

You say, "But how can Timothy be commended for being anxious and we be instructed in chapter 4 verse 6, be anxious for nothing? Isn't that a contradiction?" No. In chapter 4 verse 6, be anxious for nothing means not to worry about your own life circumstances. Chapter 2 verse 20, Timothy was compassionately sympathetically concerned about someone else's spiritual needs. One is unselfish, the other is selfish, and that's the distinction. Timothy was a man of great sympathy. And that's why he is a model for us to follow, a man of sympathy, a man of tenderness, a man of compassion, a man who carried burdens deeply and felt those burdens.

There's a third characteristic of this young man. He was also single-minded. He was also single-minded. I love this. In verse 21, "For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ

Jesus." For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. Did you see that? That's really kind of tragic when you think about it. Here is the Apostle Paul, right? He's come to a point in his life where he's a prisoner. He has left a trail of evangelized individuals, there are many believers around him, there are believers in Rome in Caesar's household, there are believers in Rome beyond Caesar's household. There are the special brethren who are attending to him and serving him. And yet he says in verse 21, "They all seek after their own interests." Now that term "all" excludes every exception.

You say, "All the believers in Rome? All of them?" That's what it says. And again I remind you, it doesn't include Luke and Aristarchus, and maybe some other brethren who had been dispatched to some other duty. But he's saying I'm sending Timothy because no one else is as single-minded as he is. Notice it again. They seek after their own interests. The idea is Timothy is consumed with the interests of Christ Jesus. This is a man who is single-minded.

By the way, that phrase "they all seek after their own interests" is in the present tense. They all are continually seeking after their own interests. Isn't that sad? You'd think that with Paul as their spiritual father or grandfather or uncle in the sense that he was responsible for bringing the gospel to all of them, either directly or indirectly, you'd think that now that he's a prisoner they would all be consumed with the interests of Christ. You would think they wouldn't have become double-minded and distracted with the world and the flesh and all the stuff around them, but they did. And Paul, you know, there's a note of sadness as you move toward the end of Paul's ministry, you would have thought that with this great ministry that the culmination would have been a great and glorious accumulation of dedicated people, a mass of humanity all totally sold out to Jesus Christ. After all, that's the kind of pattern Paul gave them, isn't it? I mean, was there ever a man so consumed with his mission as Paul? And didn't they see it? Couldn't they feel it pulsing in his heart? Couldn't they hear it coming from his mouth? The level of dedication is mind-boggling. And yet here he comes and he says, "I have no one like me," verse 20, "and they all seek after their own interests." How sad...how sad.

I mean, in Rome there were those envious striving selfishly ambitious impure motivated preachers, they were no good to him. They were preaching Christ but they were double minded in that they were preaching Christ and wanting to exalt themselves. So that Paul says I just look at them all, and it's the same situation with all of them.

I think about the fact that when he came to the end of his life he said, "Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world." I can understand a man forsaking me, I've had that happen, I prayed with a man every morning for over a year and at the end of that time he left his wife and left his children and denied the faith and has to this day. He was a man who was as close to me as any man in those early years of our ministry here, in the first two or three years. I mean, I understand that for me but for Paul? You know, you sort of had the idea that Paul would have such a convincing life

that nobody would ever turn out anything but monumentally successful in reproducing the model. Some sense you see the humanness of Paul and the sadness of ministry. Demas has forsaken me, having loved the present world.

And then there his statement in 1 Timothy where he says, "At my first defense no one was at my side, but all deserted me." In another place he says, "All in Asia have forsaken me." I mean, the very people from whom he expected help in his trials and in the hard times of his life were bailing out when the pressure was on. And as he stops to think about who he might send, he says, "I have only one who is of kindred spirit, all the rest care about their own things." They're the lack of genuine interest.

So we're not really surprised to see verse 21. It was a part of his life, it's a part of my life, it's a part of the life of anyone who ministers and it's tragic and it's disappointing. But he says, "I do have one and that's more than many can say, I think." I've often said if God just gave me one Timothy I would have...I would have had a life worth living.

Timothy was single minded. Moving from the ones that he couldn't send to the one he could, they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. That last phrase applies to Timothy. He seeks the things of Christ. In other words, he lives with that single-minded devotion. Few and far between are such.

It's not that people won't serve Christ and the church at

all. They will. It's just that they're not single-minded. I was reading this week Leroy Iames(?) who is the president of the Navigators, that excellent organization begun by Dawson Trotman(?) and in his book he had a little paragraph that I thought was appropriate. He said, when Billy Graham preached Dawson Trotman's funeral, Dawson Trotman drowned up at Schroon Lake, New York. And when Billy Graham preached Dawson's funeral, He was particular interested on the focus on Dawson's single-mindedness. He said at the funeral, quote: "Here was a man who did not say these forty things I dabble at, but this one thing I do," end quote.

When I was young I remember my grandfather saying, "Johnny, do just one thing, one thing well in your life and you'll be way ahead of most people." I've never forgotten that. And if I appear to be a rather one dimensional person, blame it on my grandfather, or blame it on single-mindedness.

A man can destroy his life in three ways. The first is to give in to his lazy slothful nature and do nothing. You know, that's the guy that buys the guitar, puts on a pair of shorts, goes to the beach in sunny California and lies around frying in his own fat. Great way to waste your life. A lot of other forms of it, but it's the same basic thing...just waste your life.

The second way to destroy your life is to give yourself to a goal. Nail down that goal, find that goal, identify that goal and go for that goal all your life only to find out at the end, wrong goal. A lot of people have poured out tears and bitter regret over that kind of thing.

And the third way to ruin your life and destroy your life is to dabble in a whole bunch of things and never do anything. And that's where most people fall. I see young men in the ministry, I have a great burden for that because I see them dabbling and not focused on one thing.

What made Timothy so special in ministry was he was utterly single-minded. While everybody else had a lot of interests, he had only interest in the things of Christ Jesus.

As John Calvin wrote, "Involved in their own private affairs, people are the more negligent to promote the church, for it must necessarily be that one or other of two dispositions rules us. Either that overlooking ourselves we are devoted to Christ and the things that are Christ's, or that too intent on our own advantage we serve Christ perfunctorily," end quote. He's right.

The church is made up of the perfunctory servers for whom Christ is one of the items on the agenda, and the consumed people who make the difference. Timothy was one of those. Similar to the apostolic standard, sympathetic and compassionate toward the church, single-minded in being interested only in Christ. That's like Paul, isn't it? "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ."

The fourth thing about Timothy that makes him a good model for us is he was also seasoned. He was seasoned. Verse 22, Paul says, "You know of his proven worth." Just that phrase, "you know of his proven worth." This is not an unknown quantity here. Timothy's integrity was well established. You know, ginosko, by experience is the implication, you've experienced his validity, his proven worth, dokime, that word from dokimos, familiar New Testament word, means to be approved after testing. He has passed the test. He was proven. Please note, not by school but by service. Not by a test but by testings and trials.

Previous ministry on a number of occasions had provided evidence of Timothy's spiritual character and maturity. As I noted, he was there when the church began in Acts 16. You read Acts 19, Acts 20 you'll see again that he intersects with the Philippian congregation. They knew, you know by personal experience the proven worth of this man. He was known to you from the start.

By the way, 2 Corinthians appears to have been written from Philippi also. And as I mentioned earlier, Paul and Timothy were together in the writing of that epistle. And so he was there even at that writing and certainly was well-known to them.

This unique servant of the Lord was a seasoned man. You'll remember that in the qualifications for elder, 1 Timothy chapter 3, it could not be more clear as to what the standard must be. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy that this man who was an elder must not be a new convert lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And then in verse 10 regarding a deacon, he says, "Let these also first be tested." And the "also" means that the elders had to be tested, just as the elders are tested also, the deacons have to be tested. In other words, they have to be dokimos, proven after testing. And again I say, not proven in school but proven in service. Not proven by a test, but proven through testings. This is a man who is a model spiritual servant because he is seasoned. He has been proven.

Then there's number five. The fifth characteristic of this model servant, he was submissive...he was submissive. This is so good. It says, "He served with me," verse 22, you know of his proven worth, "That he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father." Now just take this much of that. He served with me like a child serving his father. We'll drop that middle section out and consider it as a separate point, in a moment.

The word "serve" is to slave. He slaved with me, sunemoi(?). Please note this, it doesn't say he served me. It doesn't say he served under me. It says he slaved with me. He's a fellow slave. Paul doesn't see himself as the master and Timothy is the slave. He slaved alongside of me. Just like he said to him in 2 Timothy 2, "Suffer hardship along with me as a good servant of Christ." He sees Timothy as an equal. That's again his humility. He sees Timothy in the spiritual dimension as an equal. He slaved along with me. But from Timothy's viewpoint, his attitude was like a child serving his father.

It isn't a master and a slave. It isn't a sergeant and a private relationship. He slaved with me with the mentality of a son serving alongside his father so that whatever submission was there was a not a forced submission but an earned respect. Both were servants of God, both slaved side by side. But Timothy with the willing, loving, submission of a son who honors and respects and wants to learn from the father of his love. The word for son here is not huionwhich is the generic word for son, but teknonwhich means child. He served alongside me as if he were a little boy and I was his spiritual father. That's marvelous...marvelous, beautiful submission, wonderful meekness. He never competed with Paul. No more than a little boy competes with the father of his heart's affection. But he came alongside his father. From his father's view they were serving together. From the boy's view he was lovingly and affectionately looking at his father whom he loved and honored and learning from him with joy. That's why he calls him, "My true child in the faith."

Timothy was submissive. But not because he was forced to be, but because he so greatly esteemed his spiritual superior. This is a model of spiritual virtue. May God help us to have such a heart toward those who are over us in the Lord, to esteem them highly in love for their work's sake, as Paul said to the Thessalonians. As Hebrews 13 says, "To follow their faith."

Model spiritual living demands that you come alongside those who are the fathers, the spiritual fathers and look at them with love and esteem and respect and honor as a little fellow does the father of his love. That alone could heal congregations of immense difficulties.

He was a model servant, similar to the apostolic model, sympathetic, single-minded, seasoned, submissive. Number six, sacrificial. And now let me take that little phrase in verse 22, "In the furtherance of the gospel." "He served with me in the furtherance of the gospel." That points up to me Timothy's sacrifice. I don't know what Timothy's plans were when he was picked up by Paul in Acts 16. He was there and a young man. No doubt he had some life direction. I don't know what his father did either but Timothy probably had some career goals in mind. The next thing he knew he was called by the Apostle Paul to come along with him. There was a voice out of heaven prophetically that affirmed his giftedness and calling for that. There was the laying on the hands of the presbytery to set him apart in the ministry. And off he went with the Apostle Paul on one unending non-stop adventure. And that unending, non-stop adventure ultimately landed, according to Hebrews chapter 13 verse 23, in prison for Timothy. He was released. We don't know what finally happened to him, but he lived a totally sacrificial life. Whatever his own agenda was, whatever his training was, whatever his plans were, he set them all aside and slaved alongside of me for the furtherance of the gospel. He was consumed to sacrifice his life for the cause of evangelism.

As far as I know he left his home. As far as I know he never fell in love. As far as I know he never married. As far as I know he never had a child, all the joys of life were forfeited. As far as I know he never owned a home. Don't ever see him in it. As far as we know he didn't own a possession. He seemed to be mobile from the beginning to the end, at least to the documentation of his life. And the sacrificial character of Paul had so impacted him that he literally gave his life up for the furtherance of the gospel. You see, that's why he's so unique...so unique. Nobody else had that kind of spirit. Nobody else sought only the interests of Christ. Nobody else was so consumed with the gospel extension as Timothy was.

Sure he learned it from Paul. He was a willing learner and a marvelous disciple of Paul. He lived for one great reality...gospel advance, salvation of souls. I don't care what you do in life, that's got to be the underlying thing..it has to be.

So we come with all of that to the last characteristic and it really sums it up. Here is a man who is similar to Paul, he's imitating him. He is sympathetic for others. He is single-mindedly consumed with the interests of Christ. He is seasoned by experience and trials. He is submissive by choice as a loving son is to the one who disciples him. He is sacrificial so that his life is focused on one thing, advance the gospel in the hearts of the lost. And finally because of all of this, can we say he was, number seven, serviceable...serviceable.

Such a man is eminently useful. Such a man is greatly useful. Anyone in the Lord's service would long for such a man. So he says in verse 23, "Therefore I hope to send him immediately as soon as I see how things go with me." He's so useful. He's always useful. Paul says go, he goes. Paul says stay, he stays. Paul says come with me, he comes. That was his life, always useful, always available.

If I send him now he'll go. If I wait a while, he'll wait. This is a very, very unusual man. Could we go so far as to say there is no time in all the pages of the New Testament that you ever see Timothy with his own agenda? A very serviceable, useful, available man. Paul says I need him right now, when I don't need him anymore and you need him he'll come to you and then when I need him he'll come back to me. What a man...what a man.

One of the hard things must have been for this man the constant severing and aborting of relationships. Can you imagine what it would be like to be at the instant beck and call of someone all the time? Going and coming, and going and coming, and staying, meeting new people and saying goodbye to dear ones, your whole life in motion, nothing like the comfort and the familiarity and the roots that we all celebrate as the best things of life. This is a peripatetic. This is a non-stop wanderer who doesn't even call his own life shots, somebody else does it for him. But he's so serviceable...so available. Where is the need? That's where I'll be. And he's not concerned about himself and his comfort and whether he's with the people he likes or whether he's in a new situation where he doesn't know anybody like he was in Ephesus. It doesn't matter to him. It only matters that he do what he was called to do.

Paul says then in verse 24, "I trust in the Lord that I myself shall be coming shortly." Notice the phrase "in the Lord," that's where we started in verse 19. He's still in the Lord in verse 24. He says, "All this is subject to God's sovereignty.

By the way, Paul did get released from this imprisonment, I'm confident of that. Acts chapter 28 verse 30 says he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness unhindered. I believe it was a two-year imprisonment. At the end of that time he was free for a while. Later on was imprisonment and there he lost his life. But when he was released he may well have gone to Philippi. He may well have visited them before his final imprisonment and verse 24 may well have come to pass and also chapter 1 verse 25 where he says, "I know I'll remain and continue with you all for your progress."

So Timothy was a model, wasn't he? A model for us to pattern our lives after. Now let me close with this, and I want you to listen very carefully cause this is so helpful. Here Paul writes Philippians and he just paints a picture of Timothy that sets him apart as this wonderful person, a real model for us.

And it was true. But Timothy was human and Timothy was a sinner. And for those of us who are sinful human beings, even though we're redeemed, there is an ebb and a flow in life, isn't there? There are highs and lows. There are victories and defeats. And it isn't long after this...it isn't long, we don't know exactly how long, until the Apostle Paul just a few years writes back to Timothy the final letter and he says to him some things that are most remarkable. Second Timothy chapter 2 verse 21, "If a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the master, prepared for every good work." Timothy, I want you to be useful. "Now flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness and call on the Lord from a pure heart and refuse foolish and ignorant speculations. And don't be quarrelsome."

Now wait a minute...wait a minute, that's the last letter Paul ever wrote at the end of this life and he writes it to Timothy and says, "Timothy," first letter he said, "Be an example to the believers." Now he says, "Follow righteousness, run away from unholiness." And I personally believe that at that point in Timothy's life there was the ebb, there was the waning of his spiritual strength. And Paul knowing his life is at an end as he writes 2 Timothy is so burdened because Timothy is the only one who is of kindred spirit. He's the only one whose only interests are Christ's. He's so totally focused and so totally serviceable and so uniquely gifted and yet he's reached an ebbing of his spiritual zeal. And Paul has to write the second epistle to strengthen him. Be strong in the Lord, he says in chapter 2 verse 1. And so Timothy is the perfect model for us. He's so human.

We see the standard of what he was in Philippians. Paul holds him to and calls him back to that standard in 2 Timothy. And he would do the same for us today. You see the model of Timothy, hear the word of Paul to Timothy later and be sure that you become what you can be in the power of God's Spirit. Let's bow together in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the pattern of Timothy we have seen this morning, for his life and testimony. We thank You for how Your Holy Spirit made him into such a unique man, such a model for us. And, Father, we see also the fact that there came a time in his life when he went through a serious trial he began to falter a little bit, maybe not...certainly not in a disqualifying way, maybe not in a total way, but he just began to stumble and You had to call him back to what he once was. Lord, help us to realize that being in the place of spiritual victory and being what we ought to be doesn't guarantee that we always will. And so we are bound to press hard toward You and to continue to fight the spiritual battle on all fronts in the power of the Holy Spirit that we might continue to be the kind of people You want us to be. Thank You, Father, for again giving us the pattern of a single-minded sympathizer whose compassion and clear focus made him so useful to You. May it be in our lives as well, in Jesus name. Amen.

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