

Striving Together: Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

Lesson 6: Philippians 2:19-30

This section continues what Paul had been writing about in 1:12-26...

Timothy's Mission to Philippi (vv. 19-23)

- Paul is guided by God's will in sending Timothy (v. 19)
 - "trust" = hope, expectation in God's goodness
 - Timothy will report back to Paul on their progress
 - Old saying: Get what you inspect, not what you expect
 - Paul expects obedience; now he'll ensure it
 - Key: Don't let problems fester (1 Cor. 5:1-7)

Church discipline is rare these days. Why is that?

- Timothy is Paul's most trusted colleague (vv. 20-22)
 - Paul considers them "like-minded" → of the same soul (v. 20)
 - NIV: "no one else like him"
 - Paul knows Timothy will care for their spiritual needs genuinely, in the same way he would himself
 - Verse 21 has troubled scholars because of Paul's tone
 - This probably points back to 1:15-18, where there are those preaching the gospel out of strife
 - Possibly the other "quality" workers have other assignments already, but it looks like Paul wants to send his top associate
 - Like father, like son (v. 22)
 - Timothy has stood the test ("proven") – Acts 16:12-40
 - All of this taken together leads one to believe that Timothy will be able to assess the situation in a manner similar to Paul and have the ability to speak on Paul's behalf in a way they will understand and appreciate
- Paul's release will trigger Timothy's departure (v. 23)
 - This will give them time to correct issues contained in the epistle
 - They can rejoice in Paul's release from incarceration

How do Paul and Timothy's father/son dynamic illustrate God the Father and Jesus Christ?

Paul's Plan to Return (v. 24)

- Different word for “trust” here – confident, persuaded (1:25)
- All of these journeys by these ministers should give us a real appreciation for their commitment to Christ

Welcome Epaphroditus (vv. 25-30)

- A substantial biography in not many words (v. 25) – “lovely”
 - Brother – his identity as a Christian
 - Fellow worker – an evangelist, church builder, discipler, servant
 - Fellow soldier – engaged in the war for men’s souls
 - Messenger – same word as apostle; this is functional, not positional
 - Ministering to Paul’s needs – others first (2:4)
- Epaphroditus’ illness explained (vv. 26-27)
 - Epaphroditus is concerned about his friends in Philippi, but how did they know? A possible scenario:
 - Almost certainly several men went with him to visit Paul, since they were carrying a monetary offering
 - Epaphroditus got ill along the way, but made it to Rome
 - He sent one or more men home once the offering was delivered
 - Others may have come from Philippi since, telling of their concern
 - The folks back in Philippi may have been alarmed by Epaphroditus not being able to care for Paul due to his own sickness, because of his extended stay, or even because they needed him back in Philippi and others had been given the job of caring for Paul
 - It’s also possible this was Epaphroditus’ concern more than it was in Philippi
 - Whatever the case, he missed his brothers and sisters in the church
- Paul’s commendation (vv. 28-30) – almost formal in its content
 - In order, Epaphroditus, then Timothy, then Paul
 - Paul and the Philippians will be joyful in Epaphroditus’ homecoming (v. 28)
 - They’re told to receive him “in the Lord” with gladness (v. 29a)

What does he mean by this?

- Paul exhorts them to honor Epaphroditus’ work on their behalf (vv. 29b-30)
 - This is the kind of person to value (v. 29b)
 - Paul then explains why (v. 30)
 - His willingness to sacrifice his own life
 - Unflinching dedication to his mission
 - He did what the Philippian church could not, due to proximity

Next week: Philippians 3:1-11