

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

“Timothy, Son in the Faith”

Philippians 2:17-24

Review

1. The initial eleven verses of this chapter two provide an exalted statement about Christian conduct. The crux of the matter is grounded in the “mind of Christ” (v. 5).
2. In view of our Lord’s unbelievable expression of selflessness, the believers at Philippi (and all believers by extension) are urged to do the same as He (vv. 12-16).
3. The high point of the exhortations leads to the Judgement Seat of Christ (v. 16). Paul, at that day, expects to learn he has not run nor labored in vain with the Philippians (v. 16).
4. Paul is in a Roman prison. At this point, it is not clear how his situation will turn out. Apparently, like all early (and present!) believers, the immanent return of Christ at the Rapture was real (v. 16). But, Paul writes now about two alternate possibilities:

1. For PAUL himself vv. 17, 18

He proposes the following:

- a. A Sacrifice

Rather than living at the time of the Rapture, Paul writes about a contrary hypothesis. It’s here suggested Paul may fall prey to death. His may be a martyr’s death by which he will glorify God. The figure here is that the faith and service (sacred) of the Philippians was the oblation (sacrifice) and the Apostle’s life-blood the libation (sacrificial drink offering). This may be the result of his labors or by execution.

- b. A Joy

Whatever happens with Paul, the events of v. 16 or v. 17, his joy is not diminished or changed. What an incredible expression by Paul of steadied spirituality!

- c. A Confidence

The verbs are exhortations (imperatives). Paul expects the Philippians to have mutual joy with him respecting his sacrifice as outlined. The adverbial phrase “for the same cause” (better: “and in the same manner”) is used of the thieves in reproaching the Lord (Mt. 27:44).

2. For PHILIPPIANS themselves vv. 19-24

Paul proposes the following : the sending of Timothy shortly. Meanwhile he will dispatch Epaphroditus with this letter. Both of these men are magnificent examples of consistent constant believers. Take note what he writes about Timothy.

- a. He is a Messenger v. 19

Paul’s absence from Philippi has been noted (v. 12). The phrase “in the Lord Jesus” is an expression of Paul’s to indicate he is under His authority and control. In all the vicissitudes of life, a believer is to act this way (James 4:15), hence, as the Lord directed, Paul expects to send Timothy to Philippi and to do it “quickly” (KJV “shortly”). See Actsd 16:6-13.

- b. He is an Informer v. 19

“That” is the introduction of a purpose clause. Besides Timothy being a comfort to the believers, Paul “also” will be benefitted. He will be “well of soul” (being of good comfort) and Timothy would be able to provide information about the Philippian church. One wonders how long it would take inasmuch as communication methods then did not include e-mail, let alone a postal service as we moderns have!

- c. He is a Superior vv. 20, 21

These two verses put Timothy in a class by himself. “Like-minded” literally means “of equal soul.” (cf. LXX Deut. 13.6 “a friend equal to thy soul” and Ps. 55:13 “Thou, O man like-minded”). Timothy would “genuinely” (naturally) have anxious care for their state (cf. v. 19 for same phrase). Added to these qualities is the statement that “all the rest” (totally unidentified) keep seeking (present tense) their own concerns and not “the things of Christ Jesus,” Timothy had no room for selfishness!

- d. He is a Worker v. 22

- 1) Proved The meaning of this word is the effect of proving, i.e. approved (cf. Ro. 5:4). The church had had experience with Timothy (cf. Acts 16:2). He was not wanting!

- 2) Related The term “son” really means “born one,” hence Paul enjoyed Timothy in a filial way (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10). This was a true father and son effort.

- 3) Employed The aorist tense states Timothy “did service.” It expresses the cumulative whole of Timothy’s service in Philippi. It was all “unto” or “in the furtherance of” the Gospel (cf. 1:5). Timothy did not waste Paul’s time nor his own.

Conclusion

Paul had no assurance that he would be released from prison (cf. 2 Pet. 1:13, 14). Therefore, “this one” (“him” v. 23) Paul would send, namely Timothy, just as soon as he got a view of his circumstances. Meanwhile, he trusted (perfect tense) “in the Lord” (cf. v. 19) that he himself would see the Philippians again. We do not know what a day will bring forth. Today is ours; tomorrow we may be in His presence. O Lord, Thy will be done!