

# **PHILIPPIANS: REPLACING SELFISH AMBITION WITH GODLY ACHIEVEMENT**

## **Part VII: Examples Of Humble, Selfless Service In Timothy And Epaphroditus**

**(Philippians 2:19-30)**

### **I. Introduction**

- A. As we have often noted in this lesson series, the Philippian believers lived in a culture marked by selfish ambition and strife, what tempted them to relate to one another in this sinful mindset, cf. Philippians 4:2.
- B. To influence his readers to have victory over this sin, Paul in Philippians 2:19-30 told of two good examples in Timothy and Epaphroditus, servants of God his readers knew. We thus view this passage for our insight:

### **II. Examples Of Humble, Selfless Service In Timothy And Epaphroditus, Philippians 2:19-30.**

- A. Paul held up fellow worker Timothy as a good example of humble, selfless service to God, Phil. 2:19-24:
  - 1. The Apostle Paul expressed his intention to send his Philippian readers his fellow worker Timothy to obtain news of their welfare that Timothy could report back to Paul in prison, Philippians 2:19.
  - 2. Paul explained that he had no such fellow worker with him of "like soul or mind" (*isopsuchos*, Arndt & Gingrich, *A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T.*, 1967, p. 382) who "sincerely, genuinely" (*gnesios*, Ibid., p. 162) cared about the things concerning the Philippian believers, Philippians 2:20.
  - 3. Specifically, Paul explained that unlike other men who sought their own good, not the things relating to the interests and glory of Jesus Christ, Timothy put the interests of the Lord above his own interests, v. 21.
  - 4. Paul added that his readers knew the "proof" (KJV) or Timothy's "character" (*dokime*, Ibid., p. 201), that he had served Paul in the ministry of the Gospel as a son would serve his father, Philippians 2:22.
  - 5. Accordingly, the Apostle Paul hoped to send Timothy once he had learned how his case would turn so that Timothy could relate to Paul's readers the news and welfare of the apostle, Philippians 2:23.
  - 6. Paul added that he trusted that the Lord would make it possible for Paul himself to visit his readers, v. 24.
- B. Paul also held up fellow worker Epaphroditus as a good example of humble, selfless service to God, v. 25-30:
  - 1. The Apostle Paul had also thought it necessary that he send his readers his brother in Christ, fellow worker and fellow soldier, Epaphroditus, one who was the Philippian believers' messenger to Paul of their welfare and who also ministered to Paul's needs, Philippians 2:25.
  - 2. Epaphroditus had been longing to be with the Philippians and had been distressed because he learned that they had heard that he had been ill and obviously anxious about his welfare, Philippians 2:26.
  - 3. Paul explained that Epaphroditus had indeed been not only ill, but close to death in his sickness, but the Lord had been merciful to him, but also merciful to Paul in not letting Epaphroditus expire lest Paul have sorrow upon sorrow in his difficulties as a prisoner, Philippians 2:27.
  - 4. Paul was thus all the more eager to send him to his Philippian readers that they might rejoice upon seeing him again and that Paul might be less anxious over the state of concern in his readers, Philippians 2:28.
  - 5. The Apostle Paul thus urged the Philippian believers to receive Epaphroditus in the Lord with all joy, and to hold such men in "high honor" (*entimos*, Ibid., p. 268), for on account of the work of Christ, he "had no concern, was careless about" (*parabouleuomai*, Ibid., p. 618) his "earthly life" (*pseuche*, Ibid., p. 901-902) in his effort to complete what was lacking in the service of his readers' service to Paul, Phil. 2:29-30.

***Lesson:*** Paul held up two fellow workers, Timothy and Epaphroditus, as outstanding examples of humble, selfless service for the Lord: (1) Timothy (a) had a long track record of submitting to Paul's apostolic leadership as a son would submit to his own father. Also, (b) unlike so many other professing believers or fellow workers, Timothy did not seek his own personal interests as a priority in serving the Lord, but (c) sincerely cared for the needs of other believers and (d) sought to heed the will of God and (e) the glory of Christ. (2) Epaphroditus (a) was selflessly concerned about the spiritual nurture of other believers, be it his fellow believers at Philippi or the Apostle Paul's welfare in prison, (b) to the extent that he willingly risked his physical life in suffering a life-threatening illness to remain helpful to Paul in prison for the sake of the Lord's work.

***Application:*** May we like Timothy and Epaphroditus humbly, selflessly serve the Lord in addressing the needs of God's people in our ministries by (1) submitting to rightful spiritual overseers, by (2) not seeking to fulfill our own interests as a priority in life, (3) but instead sincerely focusing on addressing the spiritual needs of others (4) to fulfill God's calling of us (5) for His glory. May we (6) be selflessly concerned about the spiritual welfare of those whom the Lord calls us to minister (7) to the point that we be willing to risk our earthly lives for the furtherance of the ministry of the Lord to His people.