



Ministry of the Word

Sunday 28th February 2016

by Vincent Gannon

Scripture: Philippians 2:19-24

Subject: Chapter 2, Part 22 – Timothy; The Man, His Message, His Mission.

The evangelist and apologist Michael Ramsden, of RZIM ministries, tells the account of an interview he had with an individual who desired to learn theology so that he might become a member of a team that would preach the Gospel not necessarily in the western hemisphere, but in the far flung corner's of the earth. This individual came from a most unlikely background, a military man of 15 years service in the SAS. So he had, I'm sure, all the adventure one could soak up in a lifetime and it was a miracle he had survived for so long it seemed. This military man had applied himself as a new believer as he studied hard and had, "hands on training" in sharing the Gospel, even to heavily armed militant Islamists. After all that's what we should be doing if we believe that souls are at stake and you have the answer, isn't it? He believed it was better to die serving the Lord than trying to shelter from the devil. He had placed his life on the line for lesser causes than the kingdom of God. He believed that God is worth serving with all your heart even if your life is required. Do you share that conviction? I wonder.

This dear brother knew the difference between ‘armchair’ Christianity to the armour car approach. We are too comfortable and more than willing to embrace, believe and practice Matthew 16:20 AV which reads as follows,

“Then charged He, His disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ”.

Listen carefully to the questions that I want to pose to you,

- I. Why are you a Christian, in the Bible sense of the meaning?
- II. Is it of any real importance for people to become one, just like you?
- III. Do you pray and seek opportunities to witness for the Lord?
- IV. What should be the link between what I believe and what I practice?
(Answer: Integrity.)
- V. What does Integrity mean?

The English dictionary gives us the meaning of Integrity. It’s from a Latin word *integritas* meaning:

- Negatively moral uprightness, honesty
- Positively speaking it’s about, wholeness, completeness, unity, fullness
- Soundness, in the sense of been reliable and dependable

You see, its one thing to look and want to find it in others but how about us? Do we have the same high standards for our own lives? There is a lot of hypocrisy on this issue.

What Paul was saying previously in the part of the chapter was on the negative side of integrity but what about the positive side of things? Paul, in the verses we are concentrating on this morning, illustrates this by telling us Timothy and Epaphroditus and also himself. He is telling us about real men who have been redeemed by the once for all sacrifice of Christ on the Cross; who have been saved from sin by God’s grace and filled with, or indwelt by, the Holy Spirit of God. They are not perfect men but men, been made perfect by the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit of God. These were men who took God at His word and were captivated in spite of their weakness by the Word of God. For them John 1:1 was real. [*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God Himself.”*]

The Man, His Message, His Mission

“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. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.” (Philippians 2:19-24)

The second model of a spiritual servant is Timothy, Paul's beloved son in the faith. Like Paul, who was his mentor and model, Timothy is a trustworthy example for other believers to emulate. As we look briefly at his life try to note the various characteristics of such high quality. Then ask if you dare can these be found in your personal Christian life?

Because his imprisonment prevented Paul from going to Philippi, it was his hope in the Lord Jesus (that is to say, in the Lord's will) to send Timothy there shortly, so that he might also be encouraged when he learned of the Philippians' condition. The apostle's hope was not an idle wish but the deep longing of his heart. He never wanted to act independently of his Master's will, his hope and expectation was in line with the purpose of the Lord Jesus. Paul no doubt prayed earnestly for the Lord's direction and was determined to adjust or discard his own plans if necessary.

Timothy was a native of Lystra in the province of Galatia, which is part of modern Turkey. His mother, Eunice, was Jewish and his father was a Greek (and probably a pagan). Paul led him to Christ (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 1:2), probably during the apostle's visit to Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23). Both his mother and his grandmother, Lois, were believers (2 Timothy 1:5) and had instructed Timothy in the Old Testament (2 Timothy 3:15). He was not circumcised as a child, which suggests that his father had educated him in Greek learning and culture. Along with his spiritual maturity, his combined Jewish and Greek heritage made him uniquely qualified to minister the gospel with Paul to the Gentile world. To make Timothy more acceptable to the Jews, especially to those in Galatia who knew of him, Paul circumcised him (Acts 16:3). By the time Paul wrote Philippians, Timothy had been his almost constant companion for about ten years.

With great affection, Paul spoke of him as

- "my true child in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2),
- "my beloved son" (2 Timothy 1:2),
- "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 4:17),
- "my fellow worker" (Romans 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; cross reference with 1 Corinthians 16: 10),
- "our brother" (2 Corinthians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; cross reference with Hebrews 13:23), and, in this letter to the Philippian Church,
- "as a fellow bond-servant of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:1).

Timothy was with Paul in Corinth (Acts 18:5), was sent into Macedonia (Acts 19:22), and accompanied the apostle on his return trip to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was associated with Paul in the writing of Romans (Romans 16:21), 2 Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1: 1), Philippians (Philippians 1: 1), Colossians (Colossians 1:1), both Thessalonian epistles (1 Thessalonians 1: 1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1), and Philemon (Philemon 1). He served as Paul's troubleshooter in Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17), Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:2), Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3-4), and Philippi (Philippians 2:19).

Timothy was faithful and dependable in every way and clearly was qualified to be a model for the Philippians to emulate. They were well acquainted with him, since he doubtless was with Paul when the church there was founded (see for reference Acts 16:3 and 12-40). It is therefore hardly surprising that the apostle was eager **to send Timothy to them shortly**. Later in this chapter, Paul explained what he means by **shortly**, saying,

"I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me"
(Philippians 2:23).

Some interpreters believe Paul wanted to learn whether he would remain in prison, be released, or be executed. However, his comments a few verses later indicate that he expected to be released and to visit the church at Philippi in person (Philippians 2:24). It may have been that Timothy was assisting with some crucial matter in the church at Rome. Although the apostle was free to have visitors and to preach and teach without hindrance, he could not leave his rented quarters, where he was under constant guard (Acts 28:16, 23, 30-31). It may have been that Timothy was assisting Paul with the situation referred to in Philippians 1:15-17.

The only specific reason Paul mentioned for sending Timothy was **so that he might be encouraged when** he learned **of** the Philippians' **condition**. Despite his hope to visit Philippi soon, Paul expected Timothy to have time to reach them and report back his assessment of their **condition** before the apostle was freed. His confidence that he would **be encouraged** by that report which reveals that he expected it to be a positive report. It was typical of Paul to be so concerned. In the case of the Corinthian church, his concerns were so deep that he had no heart for ministry until he heard of their condition (2 Corinthians 7:5-9).

Paul wanted the Philippians to accept Timothy without hesitation; therefore, he gave them a brief profile of that dedicated servant of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2: 20-24). The apostle highlighted seven personal characteristics for the Philippians to emulate: Timothy was **sympathetic, single-minded, seasoned, submissive, sacrificial, and serviceable**.

Timothy's spiritual character was similar to that of the apostle's. In many ways Timothy was a true **kindred spirit** with Paul. Epaphroditus (Philippians 2: 25-30) as well as a few other preachers and teachers in Rome were faithful servants of the Lord, and Paul loved and appreciated them (cross reference with Philippians 1:14-17). The apostle was in no way belittling those men, but there was **no one else of** Timothy's stature. He had been instructed in the Scriptures from childhood by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15) and was highly regarded by those who knew him (Acts 16:2). Yet, Timothy's greatest spiritual growth began when he started traveling and ministering with Paul. Except for the Lord Jesus Christ, there has never been a spiritual mentor on a par with Paul. Timothy had the unique and enviable privilege of being the apostle's protégé.

Used only here in the New Testament, *isopsuchos* is a compound adjective, composed of *isos* (equal) and *psuche* (soul). It literally means equal-souled or one-souled: referring to persons who are like-minded, **of kindred spirit**. The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) used the word in Psalm 55:13, where David speaks of "*a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend*", who had grievously betrayed him.

The goal of true discipleship is imitation; when a person is fully discipled, Jesus said, he will be like his teacher (Matthew 10:25). Over the course of time, Timothy came to think like Paul, relate to believers and unbelievers like Paul, evaluate ideas and

situations like Paul, trust in the Lord like Paul, and pray like Paul. Those two men of God had similar qualities of soul, similar passions, similar objectives, and similar zeal. In effect, Paul was saying to the believers in Philippi what he had said to those in Corinth a few years earlier:

"I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Corinthians 4:16-17).

So here, as at Corinth, until Paul was able to visit Philippi again, Timothy was by far his best substitute. He was the ultimate fulfilment of the apostle's desire that other believers be faithful imitators of him, as he was of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 11: 1). No wonder Timothy was so beloved and dear to Paul and no doubt to the Lord.

Timothy also had the virtue of being sympathetic. With the utmost confidence, Paul could assure the Philippians that Timothy **will genuinely be concerned for their welfare**. The verb *merimnao* (**concerned for**) expresses a strong feeling for something or someone, often to the point of being burdened. Jesus used the verb to speak of needless anxiety and worry (cross reference with Matthew 6:25-28; Matthew 10:19; Luke 10:41), and later in the present letter it is rendered "anxious" (4:6). Paul used it in a positive sense to describe Timothy's great concern for the **welfare** of the Philippian church. Like his Lord, Paul had constant "*concern for all the churches*" (2 Corinthians 11:28) and was confident that Timothy shared that concern. They were true shepherds, whose foremost concern was for the **welfare** of their sheep.

Another virtue that characterized Timothy was his single-mindedness, stated here indirectly by contrast with the leaders of the church in Rome. Paul laments the self-centred, loveless attitude of those leaders. '**Seek after**' translates the present tense of the verb Ζητήστε μετά (*Zitíste metá*) and could be rendered "continually seek after". It must have deeply grieved Paul to have to say of them that **they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus**.

Although the gospel was being proclaimed by a number of men in Rome, it was sometimes preached out of

"envy and strife ... [and] selfish ambition rather than from pure motives" (1:15,17).

Paul nevertheless rejoiced

"that in every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is proclaimed" (v. 18).

It seems that those who preached out of good will and love (vv. 15-16) either were gone or silent. Despite Paul's presence, many preachers had become worldly and self-centred. They were not apostate or heretical but obviously had left their first love for Christ and become self-centred (cross reference with Revelation 2:4). Their primary **interests** now were no longer **those of Christ Jesus** but **their own**. Unlike Timothy, they were no longer single-minded but had become double minded and therefore spiritually unstable (James 1:8). An example of this was Demas, who was a dependable co-worker of Paul's in Rome (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24) but he eventually deserted Paul (2 Timothy 4:10, 16). The few faithful men with Paul in Rome, such as Luke and Aristarchus (Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24), were evidently not available to travel to Philippi. The apostle was down to his last reliable co-worker; faithful Timothy was the lone single-minded exception in Rome. This was again Paul's plight in his final imprisonment in Rome. In his last letter to Timothy, he said,

"All who are in Asia turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1:15)

and called for Timothy to remain loyal (2 Timothy 1:13). Like Paul, his dominant **interests** when Paul wrote this letter were still **those of Christ Jesus**.

An Additional distinctive trait of Timothy was that he was seasoned. Paul did not have to convince the church at Philippi of that because they knew **of his proven worth**. **Proven worth** translates *dokimen*, which has the basic meaning of proof after testing. Used of a person, it describes proven character or tested value. Paul used the verb form numerous times in his admonitions for believers to

"prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect"

(Romans 12:2), and to

"examine [themselves]" (1 Corinthians 11:28; cross reference with 2 Corinthians 13:5 and Galatians 6:4).

Believers are to

"examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

and

"test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 John 4:1).

Paul also used the term in regard to the Lord's testing of believers, noting that

"just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts"
(1 Thessalonians 2:4; also see references 1 Corinthians 3:13; 1 Peter 1:7).

Paul spoke highly of an unnamed brother

"whom we have often tested and found diligent in many things"
(2 Corinthians 8:22),

and instructed that deacons

"must also first be tested [to see] if they are beyond reproach" (1 Timothy 3:10).

Timothy had been tested many times in his service to the Lord. When agitators from Thessalonica forced Paul to leave Berea, Timothy and Silas were entrusted to remain there and carry on the work (Acts 17:14). Similarly,

"after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia,... [he] sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus" (Acts 19:21-22).

A short while later, Timothy accompanied the apostle and others when they returned to Macedonia (20:3-4), of which Philippi was a key city. Paul may have written 2 Corinthians from Philippi (cross reference with 2 Corinthians 11:9; Philippians 4:15) and in the introduction to that letter sent greetings from *"Timothy our brother"* (2 Corinthians 1:1). The church at Philippi was well acquainted with Timothy and had benefited from his faithful service for many years.

Timothy's fifth virtue mentioned here was his submissiveness. Like Paul, whom Timothy **served with**, the young man was submissive to the Lord. *Douleus (served)* was used of many types of service, including service of money (Matthew 6:24), a human master (1 Timothy 6:2), a human father (Luke 15:29), a conquering nation (Acts 7:7; cross reference with John 8:33), and service of believers to each other (Galatians 5:13). But it was also one of the most common verbs used in the New Testament for service to the Lord (cross reference with Acts 20:19; Romans 12:11; 14:18; Colossians 3:24), often in contrast to serving other people and things, such as the letter of the Mosaic Law (Romans 7:6), the law of sin (Romans 7:25), and sinful desires (Romans 16:18; Titus 3:3). As the next

phrase ("in the furtherance of the gospel") makes clear, **served** here refers to serving the Lord.

It is important to note that Paul is not speaking of Timothy's personal service to him, although that was considerable. Timothy was completely submissive to Paul, as an apostle, a spiritual father, and an incomparable model of godliness. Still, Paul makes it clear that this particular service was not to him, but **with** him. They served the Lord together in a loving and non-competitive partnership. Paul was clearly the senior and Timothy the respectful junior yet the two men were both "*bond-servants of Christ Jesus*" (Philippians 1: 1), "*doing the Lord's work*" together (1 Corinthians 16:10). Timothy not only was Paul's co-worker, but also "*God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 3:2).

Timothy's sixth virtue mentioned in this letter was his willingness to be sacrificial, as implied by his ministering with Paul **in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father**. From the time the apostle chose him to serve alongside him, Timothy surrendered any personal plans he may have had for his life. He began a non-stop adventure that would bring him great fruitfulness and spiritual satisfaction, but that also involved suffering and sacrifice.

Like Paul, Timothy considered himself under obligation to preach Christ to everyone, knowing that the gospel

"is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:14-16).

He, too, was

"determined to know nothing except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified"
(1 Corinthians 2:2),

He was also willing to

"become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men," being considered a fool "for Christ's sake;" and was willing to be hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless, reviled, persecuted, and slandered "as the scum of the world, the dregs of all things, even until now" (1 Corinthians 4:9-13, [summary]).

He could say sincerely with Paul that

"we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake,"

and that he was

"afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (2 Corinthians 4:5, 8-10).

The Lord had also given him *"the ministry of reconciliation"* as an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18, 20). Also like Paul, he was eventually imprisoned for his faith (Hebrews 13:23). For the sake of his Lord, he left his home and his godly mother and grandmother. There is no evidence in Scripture that he ever married, had children, and experienced the joys of family life. He could truthfully declare as Paul did to the Ephesian elders:

"I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24).

Timothy's seventh virtue was that he was available, a characteristic implied in the others. Since he was so eminently qualified for service, Paul could affirm without hesitation, **Therefore I hope to send him immediately.** Qualifying **immediately**, the apostle explained that he first wanted to **see how things go with me.** As noted in the discussion of verse 21, he still needed Timothy's help a while longer.

The context makes it clear that Timothy was willing to do what Paul asked of him. He had no agenda of his own. For him, being available to the Lord essentially meant being serviceable to the Lord's apostle. His staying or leaving was entirely Paul's decision, not his own. It must have been challenging for this intelligent, energetic, talented, and gifted young man to be constantly severing relationships with family, friends, and fellow workers. For most people, especially those with his capabilities, it would be all but unthinkable to be at someone else's beck and call. Nevertheless, Timothy was just that sort of willing, dependable, and joyful servant of Paul in their mutual service of Jesus Christ. He was ready to spend and be spent as seemed best to his beloved friend and apostle.

Paul then added, **and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.** He did not minimize the value he could be to the church at Philippi by ministering to them in person. Whether or not he did, however, it is clear that he had the utmost confidence in Timothy.

Timothy had human frailties. Despite his divine calling and spiritual gifts (1 Timothy 4:14), he apparently lacked self-confidence because of his youthfulness (1 Timothy 4:12). He was tempted by youthful passions. In his second letter to him, the apostle warns:

"If anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:21-22).

Apparently, Timothy was then at a low point in his personal life and ministry. He had victories and defeats, satisfaction and disappointment, happiness and sadness. He heeded Paul's counsel:

"Continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them.... Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.... Be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil your ministry" (2 Timothy 3:14; 4:2,5).

Amen.