

A Kindred Spirit

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Philippians 2:19-24
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Our text today comes from Philippians 2 again, and I invite you to turn there to verse 19. Philippians 2:19-24.

One of the benefits of expository preaching is that you encounter texts that you wouldn't necessarily choose to preach if you were just cherry-picking what you wanted to preach and emphasizing certain themes that occurred to you. As you walk through the word of God, the word of God walks through you in all of its fullness and all of its major notes and all of its minor notes and today we have a wonderful text to set before us a sense of what the faithful Christian life looks like.

I'm going to read verses 19 through 24.

19 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. 20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. 22 But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. 23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

Now for us to get the maximum benefit of this text, it's important for us to remember the context that led up to it. You'll remember that Paul, as we've emphasized so many times, Paul is emphasizing the importance of humility and unity in the church as he writes to the Philippians. They were a faithful church, they were a godly supporting church of Paul, he loved them, he found joy in them, and yet they were not without blemish, they were not without fault. They were marked by some realms of division and Paul is trying to help them come out of that spiritual problem as he writes to them and as he prepares for future ministry with them.

You'll remember chapter 2, verse 3, he says, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others." Keep those two verses sound in your mind as we go through what we have here

in front of us this morning because what happens with Timothy is a carrying out and an extension of that command and that call that Paul places upon them. That's going to be very important for you to see and understand because the question, the question becomes, you know, it's easy for us to talk in generalities when we talk about spiritual things. You need to be humble. You need to look out for others. Don't simply look for your own personal interests. And you can talk in those things and treat them as though they were mere platitudes, things that are said that are not intended to be taken seriously or that have any real practical effect on your life. Well, this is the word of God. We know that that's not what God would have for us, he would have us take these principles and incorporate them and internalize them and apply them in life in a way that affects the way that we live, and that affects the way life in the body of Christ as we gather together corporately, to realize that these things have effect both individually and corporately in our lives. And so that's going to be important for us to remember and have operating in the background of our minds as we consider this text here this morning.

Now Paul immediately illustrated what he had to say with the person of Christ, Christ humbled himself by coming to earth, going to death for our salvation, God exalted him in response to that and now Christ has ascended at the right hand of God in heaven. In response to that illustration, Paul tells the church and by extension he tells us in verse 12, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. It is important for us to understand that salvation is meant to be lived out and there is a power supplied for us to do that in verse 13, "it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." So Paul has given this command, he has illustrated it with the person of Christ, and now he's getting more direct and more intentional in the command that he gives. He's saying, "You need to work this out in your life. You need to work out your salvation." And it's still at a general level there, as we saw last time, but now he gets specific as exactly what it is that he is calling them to do. He says in verse 14, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation."

So let's just take a little breath here and kind of refresh ourselves on where we're at. He had told them, he said, "with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Look at Christ and see this illustrated. Now go and work out your salvation with fear and trembling. God is at work in you, and specifically what I mean by that," Paul says, "is I want you to be conscious of your responsibility to live life without grumbling or disputing with one another." And so he's gone from broad exhortations into very specific things. He's given examples with the Lord Jesus Christ and he's called them to respond and it's really a call to a renovation, a renewal of their very character. They had slipped into becoming grumbling, complaining Christians which is far short of what the glory of God would seem to evoke in his people, and so he's called them and been specific with what that is to be like and what they are to do.

Now it's with that broad context that you come to verse 19 and he starts talking about Timothy. Here's what I want you to see because it sets up everything else that we have to

say here today. Timothy by his life example and Timothy by the ministry that he will have among the Philippians, Timothy is going to be an extension of the ministry that Paul was talking about. Timothy is going to go to help them cultivate this joyful attitude. Timothy is going to help correct the grumbling and the complaining. That's what he's being tasked to do, but in addition to that, my friends, Timothy in his character and in his life himself is an illustration of what Paul is calling them to be. And so think with me here, Paul has all of this spiritual good in mind, he has these calls of what he wants them to do and to be, and he's illustrated it with Christ and he's talked about his own heart of rejoicing with them, and now Timothy comes in. Here's what you've got to see, Timothy and this section about Timothy is extending and expanding on what the commands have been. It's not a sudden change where Paul starts talking about something different, this is a continuation of the whole theme of chapter 2 about living with one another in unity, in humility, and instead of grumbling or disputing. If you keep that in mind, this text jumps out and becomes alive.

So with that thought in mind, the children of God must be those who are putting away grumbling. Now I am very very grateful for the fact that many people felt the need to tell me that last week's text had an impact on them, that that message got into their kitchen. One person told me that it got even into her pantry, it was so convicting of things for her. And I'm grateful for that because this tells us the reason that there was so much response to the message last week on that text of doing all things without grumbling or disputing, the reason there was so much response to that is because the text convicted us. God's word exposed something in our lives and showed us attitudes that we have let fester, let's say. We've let attitudes fester and all of a sudden God's word confronts us and convicts us that this is not the way that Christians are to be, this is not the way that Christians are to live. And you know, one of the effects of that is, for some people were, you know, I heard that people were, you know, had questions and things like that, when God's word convicts us so strongly on something that is so woven into our characters, there's almost a disorienting effect that it has on us, say, "Man, there's just so much here that I need to process. The way that I look at the world. The way that I look at my spouse. The way that I look at my family. The way that I look at my circumstances." All of those things are prone to prompt us to this grumbling attitude and Paul has called us out of all of it and, yeah, that's a little bit disorienting and uncomfortable to hear. Those of you that have ever tried to pull up weeds, you know that if a weed has taken root for a long time, it takes a lot of effort to pull it out by its roots, and so in a similar way God's word comes and reaches deeply into us to pull out these ungodly roots and to replace them with the fruit of the Holy Spirit. And you know, every aspect of our life is on the table here. God's word has surgically taken a scalpel and sliced us, so to speak, and opened up our hearts to be exposed before his word and before the Holy Spirit.

So we need to embrace that and we need to humble ourselves before the word because this is how we will put away grumbling, this is how we will be blameless in a crooked generation. In the context of Philippians – oh, this is so sweet. I love when God's word just makes itself know with power. In this context, why does Paul start talking about Timothy here? Paul is sending Timothy to the church at Philippi because Timothy exemplifies the very character that he is calling them to grow in. And so as we look at the

life of Timothy, we see another example, another illustration of what the Christian character is supposed to be like. We see it given to us in perfect human form in the person of Christ. We see it reflected in the Apostle Paul. And now in Timothy we're seeing it emphasized again as Timothy illustrated exactly the character that Paul is calling them to manifest.

And I was going to make this my closing verse but I'm going to bring it forward in the message. Turn over to Hebrews 13 with me for a moment. You see, part of what we need, you and I, part of what we need is we need more than simply the didactic instruction, we need examples that we can follow to help us grow like this in our Christian life. We're not able to do this in isolation by ourselves, we need to see living flesh and blood examples of what Christian godliness, Christian living looks like so that we have an idea of what we are to model ourselves after, and that's why it is so very important for you to be doing today what you're doing, and as you've gathered together, as we gather together corporately, we have the ability and we have the opportunity, we have the platform to have this kind of exemplifying effect on one another. I look at your godly example and it helps and encourages me. You look at some of the elders, I won't include myself in the picture there, you look at the other elders and you see in them the godliness, the patience that is needed for you to live a godly life and you say, "Oh, I see how this man responds to adversity. I want to pattern after that."

I remember the first time that that was clearly manifested in my life. It had nothing to do with the text of Philippians or Hebrews. I was a very young Christian. I had been a Christian for only a year or so and there was a man, an elder at the church at the time, that was leading a Bible study that I was a part of, a small group Bible study, and he had been involved in a horrific accident in which he had some kind of an explosion had brought second and third degree burns over a large part of his body and he was hospitalized for that, and it was painful, and if you know anything about the recovery in burn units, it is a brutal treatment that helps people, you know, get back to where they need to be. Well, the first time that we got back to our Bible study after he had recovered sufficiently from that accident, as I recall, my memory may not be too good here, as I recall he still had some bandages on and things like that but he wanted to show up and he wanted to be faithful to his responsibility in leading that Bible study. Example 1, you show up even when you're hurting, even in adversity you still be faithful.

Secondly, he didn't... I'm going to lose it here as I remember this because I love that man to this day even though I haven't seen him for a very long time. He sat down, we're sitting in a little circle and he opens up his Bible and he's doing his best not to call attention to himself and he has us turn to the Scripture and he starts talking and he just broke down. He just broke down and started weeping. It was such a hard moment for him to be faithful in that and yet to be in the midst of the physical pain and all of the mental suffering that had accompanied everything that brought him back to this point and he wept in front of us. You saw the faithfulness of a godly man. I saw the transparency of a godly man. I saw a man willing to expose his emotions to people and to be vulnerable and transparent like that in the midst of his adversity and here we are talking about it 35 years later. You can see that that made an impact on me in terms of what it looks like and how a godly man

responds to adversity and how a leader responds to adversity. You keep going and yet you don't pretend like nothing happened and that example has carried with me to today.

My point being this, is that you and I, we need examples to help us grow in Christ and as you have godly people in your life, hopefully some within this church, you observe their lives and you are intended to learn from them and to model and to imitate their example. We are not intended to be spiritual Lone Rangers who just do it all on our own. "You know, I don't need anybody and nobody needs me." That is not the spirit of Christianity whatsoever.

So in Hebrews 13, you see this reinforced. Hebrews 13:7. One of the purposes of spiritual leadership in the church is to prove and to model an example to others. Chapter 13, verse 7, "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith." You have a good example, you do what they do. That's part of the way that we appropriate and grow in Christian character is that godly examples help us to do that. We say, "Oh, I see how a man does that. How does a man deal with, how does a Christian man deal with prosperity? Oh, there's an example to show me that. How does a Christian woman deal with adversity and sorrow and difficulty in her marriage? Oh, I have an example here to show me that." We are not only to observe, we are to be examples like that and that's the whole point that Paul is calling us to in Philippians 2. Timothy exemplifies the character. Timothy is going to arrive in Philippi eventually and Paul is telling them by extension and application, he says, "You observe Timothy's example and you grow from it because Timothy can help you see how it is that you avoid grumbling and disputing in your life."

Well, Timothy was with Paul at the start of his ministry in Acts 16, the ministry with Philippi, I mean, is what I mean by that. You can read Acts 16 and you see the founding of the church of Philippi and Timothy was right there. That means that they had observed Timothy, they had known Timothy over a period of a number of years. Timothy was even with Paul as he was writing this letter. Look at chapter 1, verse 1, "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi." And so Timothy had been with Paul at the founding of the church of Philippi, he was with Paul now in prison in Rome, he is going back to Philippi soon. Timothy is a prominent man in the life and ministry of Paul. And you can even think about it in this way, two of the New Testament letters of the 13th that Paul wrote, two of them are written to this man Timothy.

So Timothy was a man of high profile in Paul's ministry. He's worthy of a study, a character study all his own. We're not going to do that here today, we're just going to stick with the text today and I want to show you three aspects of this humble character that you find in Timothy that gives us an example of what it is that Christian living is to be like. When God tells us to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, what does that look like? Timothy helps us see it. When God tells us do all things without grumbling or disputing, what does that look like? This text about Timothy is going to help us see it and this goes into the roots of our heart. This goes deep into our character to

tell us exactly what it is that we are to model our lives after and Timothy is a mirror, is a reflection of our Lord himself.

So let's look at the first aspect of this humble character which I would call the attitude of sacrifice. The attitude of sacrifice, and Timothy is wrapped up in Paul's sacrifice that he is making on behalf of the Philippians. You see that in verse 19. Remember, Paul is in prison and so he cannot go to Philippi to help the situation himself. He must send an envoy because he cannot go personally and that helps us have the context as we look at verse 19 when Paul says,

19 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.

Paul is going to send Timothy to Philippi.

Now think for a moment. Timothy was dear to Paul, Timothy was very useful to Paul. Paul was isolated and Timothy was a comfort and a help to him as he was imprisoned there, and yet Paul is sending him away. What I want you to see about this is that this was, by sending Timothy Paul was making a selfless act of sacrifice on behalf of the church. Timothy was useful to Paul and yet Paul still sends Timothy away to minister to them. He sacrifices – watch this – he sacrifices Timothy's ministry to him personally, he voluntarily gives that up so that Timothy could go to Philippi and be there in their midst for their own welfare. This is what godly Christians and this is what godly leaders do, they are willing to sacrifice and to give up that which is of their own benefit in order to extend ministry to other people, to extend ministry to the body of Christ.

It is not, my mind is about to explode here, I hope that doesn't happen but we just need to really fundamentally grasp the sense that God did not save you simply to make you comfortable in your life. I know that that's what the moralistic therapeutic deism of our day teaches Christians to think, that God simply saved you in order to make your life go well. If you have a problem, go to God and he'll fix it and then, you know, and then you can go on and get back to your life and not have worry too much about it, and it's all very profoundly self-centered. What we see in this text and this example of Paul is that the reality of true Christianity is the flip side opposite of that, that there is sacrifice involved and that there is a willingness to go without for the sake of others. If Paul was ingrained in the thinking of moralistic therapeutic deism, he would have looked at Timothy and said, "This is God's answer for my need and how I thank God that He sent Timothy and I've got Timothy here to help me." But what you see in Paul is the flip opposite of that. Paul says Timothy is a valuable man, Timothy is a godly man and I see a church that needs his ministry. I'm going to give him up so that they can have him and that Timothy can go and be with them. This from a man in prison. This from a man without freedom. This a man of basically on his own and his response was to take a human asset that he had and to share it and to give it to someone else. This is the attitude of sacrifice that you see in true Christianity. This is the real thing here, the true element of true Christianity is seen in that.

And do you see as we consider the context of Philippians 2, do you see that that same spirit, that that is an extension of the sacrifice of Christ that we looked at many times in verses 5 through 8, Christ humbled himself, Christ gave of himself, Christ sacrificed his own well-being for the sake of his people? Well, here you see Paul in a smaller microcosm sense doing that and sacrificing that which was of his own benefit. Christ did not grasp and clutch onto the prerogatives of deity and heaven, he let them go so that he would come to earth and be a servant to his people. Paul had Timothy, didn't clutch him, didn't grasp him, didn't keep him to himself, he let Timothy go for the sake of others. And my friends, that is the spirit of true Christianity and somehow the Spirit of God is going to help us understand how that applies in each of our lives and the places where it applies in our lives, but whether it's your time, whether it's your resources, whether it's your abilities, Christ has given you things that are designed for you to be able to sacrifice, to be able to share, to be selfless with so that others benefit from it. Christ did not sacrificially give himself for your salvation in order to turn you into a selfish Christian. That's obviously ridiculous.

And so this attitude of sacrifice comes out right from the start. Paul is going to send Timothy and so look at the text and just in the historical context, you see what he's saying here. He says, "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly." He's not sending him right away. He's going to send a man named Epaphroditus even ahead of Timothy, but he says, "so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition." And so the idea that Paul has here is that, "I want to send Timothy. I can't do it just quite yet. I want to send Timothy and I'm going to send Timothy to help you," and then when Timothy is there and has ministered, Paul is expecting to hear a good report about their spiritual welfare that will in the future encourage him when he sees Timothy again. Look at it there again in verse 19. He knows they need help so he says, "I hope to send Timothy to you shortly so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. Timothy will come and encourage you, and when I hear about the effect of his ministry, that's going to encourage me." And so there is this goal of mutual encouragement that is being furthered by Paul's willingness to sacrifice Timothy's presence in his own life.

Now why is Timothy the right man for the job? Why is Timothy the one to send? Well, that brings us to our second point here, a point plainly titled this morning the attitude of concern. The attitude of concern. Timothy had a life that showed that he was concerned for the people of God. He cared about them, in other words. Now the Philippians may have hoped that they were going to see Paul himself but Paul couldn't come and so he sends an envoy, he sends a representative instead.

Look at verse 20, Paul says,

20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. 21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

Now in those verses you see something special about Timothy being stated here. Paul is saying, "Timothy is the only man that I have to send that can fulfill this job. He's the only

one who can do it." And what was it that qualified him? Verse 20, look at it there again with me, he says, "For, I'm sending Timothy for this reason," he says, "because I have no one else of kindred spirit who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare." Timothy was unique because his soul, his attitude, his heart toward the Philippians was like Paul's heart to the Philippians. Paul could send Timothy knowing that Timothy would care for these people when he arrived and when he ministered to them. Timothy would tend to their needs with sincere interest just like Paul would if he was able to go personally.

Now I realize that it might seem like why are we talking about this and what is the point of all of this? Here's what you need to see is that that attitude of concern is apparently something that is comparatively rare in the Christian church. The genuine concern for others is apparently something that is relatively rare because Paul says, "I don't have anyone else that can do this job for me. I don't have anyone else that can represent me and to serve you in the way that I would want it to be done." Timothy, in other words, beloved, was the one man in Paul's circle there in Rome who reflected the attitude that he was talking about earlier in chapter 2 when he said, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves." By sending Timothy at this time, Paul is saying Timothy is a man who is humble enough to regard you as more important than himself. Timothy will lay his life down for you. Just like Christ did, Paul is saying, just like I would if I could. Timothy will carry out and manifest the spirit of Christ toward you. And so Paul trusted Timothy to care for them in the same way that he would.

Now Timothy's attitude is in contrast with the others that were with Paul at the time. Look at verse 21, he says, "they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus." There is one man, Timothy, and then there's everybody else, he's saying. Paul had no one else to send that could serve in quite this same way.

Now as you read the commentators, it's not entirely clear who Paul has in mind when he says "they all seek after their own interests." Is he condemning everyone who ever served him in ministry, served alongside him and condemning even his comrades in ministry? I don't think so. I think Paul was just saying, look at it there he says, "I have," verse 20, "I have," present tense, "I currently have no one else of kindred spirit." He's talking about the circle that was around him in Rome at the time. He had a specific errand that requires a specific man and Timothy was the only one that he could send.

Now we have some preparation for that statement found back in chapter 1, verse 15, if you turn back there with me. Chapter 1, verse 15. It's been so long since we've looked at this text. Paul was in prison and there was still Gospel ministry going on around outside the walls of where he was and he says in verse 15, "Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former," meaning those who are preaching Christ from envy and strife, they "proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives." So there were these Gospel ministers, let's call them, there were people who were preaching the Gospel in Rome at the time but Paul looks at them and says, "What marks them? What's coming out of their life? What is

motivating them? I can tell," Paul says, "they are marked by envy, they are marked by strife, they are marked by selfish ambition, people preaching Christ from those kinds of motives."

Well, put yourself in Paul's sandals, put yourself in Paul's cloak here and think about what that means to Paul. What it means to Paul is if he sends someone with personal ambition marked by envy and strife, if he sends them into this volatile situation at Philippi, they're going to make it worse because there's already enough people in Philippi that are acting out of selfish ambition and grumbling and disputing with one another. Paul says, "I need someone who's not like that in order to be able to come in and bring out the purposes of God and to bring out the ministry that needs to take place here." Timothy stood out among others as the only man to send, only Timothy was qualified. Paul needed a man to bring unity and, you know, after a few years in ministry, I can understand this. I can understand this. It's not every man in the church, it's not every woman in the church who genuinely wants to put others ahead of self. It's not every man, it's not every woman in the church that is so free of self-centeredness that they can actually be useful in difficult situations. It takes a person, it takes a man, it takes a woman who has genuine concern for others and is content to put self in the background in order to selflessly sacrifice and to bring about harmony in the relationships that come.

So you know, in the church broadly speaking, not just talking about Truth Community Church, you know, there are people that stir up strife and division, and there are others who have a unifying sanctifying impact on the body. There are those who cause trouble and then leave. There are others who stay and are faithful and you can count on them week after week after week to be doing what they're supposed to do, to be where they're supposed to be, and to be doing it with an attitude of joy that is a genuine ministry and encouragement to everybody that they talk to. There is an aroma of life about them. There is the fruit of the Spirit savors the atmosphere in which they walk. And not everybody, let's just be honest with one another here, I'm just telling you the same things that you observe in your own interactions and we're not mentioning names and I don't have names in my mind as I say these things. There are some that carry about the aroma of Christ and there are others who do not. The ones who are caring about the aroma of Christ are showing forth this attitude of sacrifice and this attitude of concern that is reflective of the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ saved us in the first place.

Now I ask you a genuine, honest, humble question, is to ask yourself, let's not even talk about what kind of Christian you think you are, what kind of Christian you want to be, what kind of member of Truth Community Church do you want to be? Well, this attitude of Timothy shown in this sacrificial attitude and this attitude of love and genuine concern for others is set before us as the model for us to pursue and it means that we let some of our disputes go, it means that we sacrifice in order to bring that to pass, but it's a pursuit of this and it shows in the fruit of the lives and the relationships that people cultivate.

Now look alongside of that I would just say this and as we're talking about these things is to realize that not everyone in ministry, not everyone in a church is trustworthy for sensitive tasks like this that take some maturity, that take some love, some sacrifice, some

patience and some tact. You know, some people like to boast about how outspoken they are, "And when you get me, you know where I speak, because I speak my mind." Well, great, you speak your mind. What's in your mind to speak is another question maybe. But we just have to understand that that kind of proud boastful outspokenness isn't necessarily what's going to produce peace and unity and humility in the body of Christ. So we have to step back from ourselves and ask ourselves what kind of person do I want to be? Paul is sending Timothy to Philippi because Timothy manifests what it is that godliness is to look like. And it's not always the outspoken one, sometimes it's those that just withdraw and put their hands over their chests and say, "I'm not speaking to anybody," that have an equally divisive effect. Christ through his word calls us.

Look at verse 14 with me again, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent." Christ through his word says in chapter 2, verse 1, "If there is any encouragement in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose." You see, God's word is calling us to be a people like this. We're all at different stages of growth and that's cool. There's no problem with that. We all have times where we struggle and stumble along the way. That's cool, we can deal with that. But what we're talking about is what is your fundamental disposition toward the kind of person you're going to be, especially in the body of Christ, what kind of person are you going to be as you walk and move among the people of God.

Let me remind you, beloved, that this is not our church and I'm not mad at anybody in what I'm saying here. I'm afraid it might be taken that way. We're just laying down positive principles that establish what life in the church is going to be like. This is not our church. This church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the one who bought the church with his own blood. He paid for it therefore it belongs to him. Those of us that want to be in the body of Christ and I'm including myself in this, those of us that want to be in the body of Christ, we need to understand that if we are going to be members of the body of Christ, then it is incumbent upon us to bring the attitude and the life of love, sacrifice and concern that Christ calls his church to be. Christ says, speaking by his authority, "This is what My church is to be like." And we say, "Ah, I'm part of the church, then I need to aim my life after that. I see things that aren't consistent with that, Lord, I repent. Please forgive me. Wash me. Cleanse me. Change me and make me more like that." And the Lord in his grace does that in our heart and then he places in our lives examples that help us see how we can get to the next step, how we can take the next steps. "Oh, I see how this man, I see how this woman lives. That's what Scripture is talking about. Let me be like that one." Proud, self-made man or woman may sell well on Fifth Avenue, may make for interesting movies, it's not what's elevated in the body of Christ. It's this humble, sacrificial, concerned attitude. "He who humbles himself will be exalted."

Well, with that sacrificial and concerned attitude, let's look at a third and final attitude that we see in Timothy and it's this attitude of faithfulness. This attitude of faithfulness. Timothy had proven to be consistent. Timothy was a man who could be depended upon.

What he was like on Sunday was what he was like on Tuesday and Thursday and Saturday. When you got what you got from Timothy was what he was to be. Timothy had proven himself faithful. He had stood the test.

Look at verse 22. This is a powerful appeal by the Apostle Paul to the church. He says in verse 22,

22 But you know of his proven worth,

He's drawing a contrast. He said, "There are these men all seek after their own interests, but by contrast," verse 22, "you know of Timothy's proven worth. You have observed his life over a period of years and you know what Timothy is like. What Timothy has done in the past is.

that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.

The Philippians knew that Timothy was true. They had seen him with their own eyes. They knew him personally. They had observed him working with Paul over the course of years. And so, beloved, let me step back. They had a wealth of personal observation by which they should know that when Timothy arrives, that he carried a weight of moral authority based on his proven life as he ministered amongst them. So as Timothy gave counsel, as Timothy gave instruction and teaching, as Timothy corrected them when he arrived, Paul is telling them, "Because you know who he is, you should have a receptive attitude toward his ministry, you should be responsive to him in a way that will produce the change that I'm looking at and calling you to engage in."

Timothy's time and this is maybe 10 years or more, Timothy's time had proven who he was and, beloved, as John MacArthur taught me to embrace and say, time and truth go hand in hand. You may not know what a man's really like after two or three months, he comes in, you don't know what he's really like in that short amount of time, but as the months and years go by, a faithful Christian manifests and proves who they really are, and as the longer the time goes and the more consistency that is manifested, you get an idea that this is the real deal here. This is the genuine man. This is the genuine Christian woman here. And that presence among the same people over time is vital to proving forth a man's worth in ministry.

Let me just say this as a passing aside. That's one of the benefits, I'll state this in a positive way, I'll state it as a positive principle, that's one of the great benefits of a man, a woman, a family, coming to a church and staying over time rather than bouncing around from church to church every two or three years. Now sometimes you change churches and that's okay because churches go in a different direction than what you want to do. That's cool. That's cool. Those things are going to happen over the course of time but what we want to see from Scripture is that there is a value in living out a faithful life before the same people over the course of time, over the course of years. That builds

credibility. That builds a life example quietly without you even thinking about it, it builds a life example over a long period of time where someone can know your proven worth.

Paul, go back to verse 22, Paul points to this. Paul says, "you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father." They had watched Timothy alongside Paul in ministry. Timothy was faithful. Whatever his dad, so to speak, whatever his dad needed, he did it. It's an intimate picture of respect, trust and imitation, so much so that in other parts of Scripture Paul calls Timothy "my son." Timothy was faithful, and here's what you want to see, in those prior times there was less at stake, Timothy was faithful in those times to Paul and to the Philippians when there was less at stake. Now here's the point, now after years have gone by and Timothy has proven himself time and again, Timothy has proven the established character that gives Paul confidence to send him into a volatile situation and know that he'll handle it well. With the unity of the Philippian church at stake, Timothy's prior life had shown that he was up to the task and it gives us a perspective on the day to day little things that we do in private life, in the body of Christ. There's a really important principle. Jesus said it in Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much, and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much." Little acts of faithfulness accumulate over time in a way that show that a man can be trusted, and when a man has established that kind of trust, then he's become an example for the rest of the church to follow, to look at, that faithfulness is very important in the sight of God. So Timothy having shown by the way that he would serve one man, humbly, quietly, faithfully as he did with the Apostle Paul, now years later will bring that same character to bear as he serves in the midst of the body. He will come as that same selfless servant with their interests at heart. Timothy shows that by God's grace quiet faithfulness produces a life that is worthy of the Gospel.

So what's Paul doing here? Paul is paving the way for Timothy's ministry in Philippi. He was conditioning the church to receive him favorably, appealing to what the church knew to be true about Timothy themselves to give him the respect and the deference to be able to receive his ministry so that Timothy could go and be effective in their midst. It was time for the Philippians to lay aside their disputing with one another and gather together in unity around being willing to receive the ministry of the man who was coming to minister to them. This is what Paul is calling them to do. You get a sense that Timothy was somebody pretty special, right? To send any man into conflict, you need to know that he can handle the bullets that are going to come at him. Timothy had proven to be that kind of man.

Now Paul tells them that there's going to be a little bit of a delay before Timothy arrives. Look at verse 23. He says, "Therefore," because Timothy is a man like this,

23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.

He wants to send Timothy quickly but it seems like there's something that's causing a little bit of delay. Maybe Paul is waiting for the decision on his legal case before Caesar and he needs Timothy to be with him and just until that decision comes down. But he wants to be able to send Timothy and he'll send him soon, and after Timothy goes, Paul hopes to follow soon after that. The point of the letter is that when Timothy arrived, the Philippians should follow his pattern because he exemplified the humble character that produces unity in the church.

So we look back and we see a historical example of a man who lived out what Paul was calling for earlier in chapter 2. I'm grateful to have so many men and women in Truth Community Church who manifest that same kind of selfless humility, who are faithful, who can be depended upon, whose lives carry about the aroma of Christ. Beloved, what we need to see is twofold: one is that is the way that it's supposed to be, and secondly as we look at our own lives and we look at our own hearts, we see the reality that as grateful as we are for all that God has done in us, that it's our desire to excel still more.

Let's pray together.

Father, we just bow before You and we pray that You would seal these attitudes into the very warp and woof of our own character, the attitude of sacrifice, the attitude of concern, love for others, the attitude of faithfulness. Father, these are at the very core of a sanctified life, the very core of a life that would be the opposite of grumbling and disputing. So Father, we ask You to build these traits in us deeply. Father, make each one of us a Timothy, make us a Paul to someone else, make us those kinds of men and women who manifest this character that You call us to. Let us be those who are genuinely concerned for the welfare of others in the body of Christ and lead us away from being those who seek after their own interests. Father, we commit these things to You, grateful for all that You've done and praying and trusting You for all that You have yet to do. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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