

Philippians 2:19-30

Verse 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.

19. Paul has already expressed his confidence that the Philippians were doing well in their faith.
 - a. Paul genuinely cared about the welfare of the Philippians, as he cared for all the churches he wrote.
 - b. Timothy was with Paul. He likely was writing the letter for Paul as he dictated it.
 - c. The praetorian guard heard him dictating.

But here it is first of all for his own sake, that "I for my part might be cheered," in the sense of being encouraged or refreshed by good news about them. Fee

We can learn a good example from Paul here. Not only did Paul lead the Philippians to saving faith in Christ, but also his genuine interest in their spiritual welfare led him to send his most trusted companion--Timothy--to them. If ever Paul needed Timothy at his side, it was then during his imprisonment. Even in the worst trial of Paul's life, he was putting the needs of others ahead of his own. AWMI

Verse 20-21

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.

20. What an amazing thing to say! Timothy was Paul's most trusted companion in ministry, and he wasn't afraid to say so.
 - a. Why was Timothy so trusted? Paul knew that Timothy genuinely cared for the Philippians in the same way he did.

"I have no one else of like soul." Fee

21. We don't know to whom Paul was referring to here when he says "they all", but he likely had several people in mind who were more concerned about themselves than others.
 - a. It's the easiest thing on earth to get occupied with our own lives and not open our hearts to reach out to others.

We begin with the "all," which can only refer to people in Rome, not Philippi, and which should mean something like, "the whole lot of them." Fee

The contrast, therefore, is not between Timothy and other co-workers who could make this trip, but between Timothy's character qualifications and some other people who came to mind as Paul was dictating. This seems verified by the content of the contrast; where we might have expected a contrast at the human level, "they seek their own interests not those of others," what we get is a contrast concerning the gospel: their "concerns" are not "those of Jesus Christ." Fee

That means, therefore, that the contrast is not with anyone else whom Paul might be able to send but will not because they are too self-serving, but between Timothy's positive qualities in v. 20 and some in Rome – not to mention Philippi – who are otherwise. Fee

There may have been many things that made Timothy "likeminded" with Paul, but the thing that Paul mentioned was that Timothy was not self-seeking. That was one of Paul's dominant traits and the main trait that made Timothy a faithful messenger whom Paul could totally trust. AWM

Verse 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.

- 22. What tender terms Paul is using here to describe Timothy's service with Paul. Paul is old. Timothy was taking care of Paul personally.**

Timothy, reminding the Philippians of their own knowledge of him: "His proven character you know." The word "proven character" has been coined from the verb, "to put to the test." Fee

Timothy had proven himself. Many people desire to have others trust them as Paul trusted Timothy, but few are willing to earn that trust. Some even get upset if that trust is not extended toward them, and they try to demand it. Faithful people, however, are so busy being faithful, they never demand anything. If trust isn't given, they just work harder. Trust cannot be demanded. It has to be earned. AWM

Verse 23-24

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.

- 23. Paul hoped to send Timothy to the Philippians as soon as he found out the outcome of his trial.**
- 24. Paul trusted that He would also soon visit the Philippians. He believed he would be let go.**

He reminds the Philippians that Timothy's coming to them would reflect his genuine concern about them; Timothy simply is not one to seek his own interests ahead of those of Christ Jesus. Fee

It is hard to imagine a more certain antidote to any number of struggles that consistently plague the local church, not to mention larger bodies and denominations, than this one – that God's people all be as Timothy in terms of their putting the interests of others as the matter of first importance. Fee

Verse 25

But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

25. Paul intended to send Timothy, but in the meantime, he was sending Epaphroditus.

EPAPHRODITUS is the next example which Paul brings forward who also illustrates in his life the exhortations of 2:1-4. His name means "charming." Wuest

Paul uses four words to describe him, "brother, companion, fellow-soldier, and messenger." Wuest

But that is not all. The word "ministered" is the translation of a Greek word used of the ritualistic service of the Levitical priests. The service of Epaphroditus in ministering to the needs of Paul while the former was in Rome, was looked upon by the apostle as a ministry having as much sacredness about it as one would meet with in the ministry of the priests in the Jewish temple services Wuest

Verse 26-27

Because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow.

26. Here we see the heart of Epaphroditus

27. Even while he was sick unto death, he was concerned, even distressed that the Philippians might sorrow over him.

The most promising scenario, therefore, is the one that sees him as having taken ill on the way to Rome, with one of his traveling companions returning to Philippi with that news (which is how Epaphroditus knew they knew), while another (or others) stayed with him as he continued on his way to Rome, even though doing so put his life at great risk (v. 30). Fee

28. Some have used this verse to say, "See! Divine healing isn't guaranteed! Epaphroditus was sick!" This is silly logic. No one is saying that divine healing is "guaranteed". The Bible declares that healing is already provided (1 Pet. 2:24). People get sick, yes, even Christians get sick. That doesn't prove that healing isn't for us today. The bigger picture here is that Epaphroditus was healed.

"Sorrow upon sorrow" This little phrase should also be regularly kept in mind when in this letter we repeatedly hear Paul speak of rejoicing. Joy does not mean the absence of sorrow, but the capacity to rejoice in the midst of it. Fee

The God he serves is full of mercy, both in healing the sick and in sparing the heavy-laden from further sorrow. Fee

Verse 28

Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.

29. Paul was eager to send Epaphroditus because he knew that it would be a point of rejoicing for the Philippians, and then he, Paul, would not be worried about them. What a lovely circle of love. Here was see the body of Christ caring for each other.

Verse 29-30

Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; 30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

- 30. Paul is holding up Epaphroditus as an example to the Philippians. He is telling them that they should highly esteem him for the kind of person he is.**

Thus, "he almost died for the sake of Christ, by having risked his life in order to complete . . . your service to me." The clear implication is that there is "a causal connexion between the bringing of the gift and the risking of his life." Fee

But it is doubtful whether Paul intended to sound quite so pejorative. This combination of the verb "make up for" and the noun "lacking" is used in a similar context in 1 Cor 16:17 to refer to "making up for the absence of the rest." That is almost surely the intent here. Thus, the clause begins, "he has made up for your lack" in the sense of "your absence." Fee

He indicates that by the "lack " of their not being present, neither could they minister to his needs as they would have liked; but now Epaphroditus has done so in their behalf. Fee

The result is a clause very awkwardly stated, but whose sense goes something like this: "so that he might make up for your absence, and thus 'minister' to my needs as you have not had opportunity to do recently" Fee

Chapter 3

Verse 1

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

- 1. Paul did not mind repeating what he previously taught. Repetition is an important component of learning.**

His first exhortation was designed as a positive preventive of becoming entangled in this false teaching. "Go on constantly rejoicing in the Lord." The Judaizers were rejoicing and boasting in man and his attainments (Gal. 6:12), but Paul said that he would glory only in the Lord Jesus. Wuest

Paul returns to their circumstances: their need to "progress in the faith" (1: 25), to have "joy" renewed 5 and to find that joy "in the Lord," and thus not fall prey to the kind of teaching he has repeatedly warned them about in the past 6 –which is perhaps related to the present tensions among them, as well as to the abatement of eschatological focus on the part of some. Fee

"Rejoice." Not only is this a major concern in the letter, but this reminder is also the framework in which they are to hear the final warning and appeal. Fee

The word "joy" is a noun, denoting a person, place, thing, idea, or quality. The word "rejoice" is a verb, describing the action of a person, place, or thing. When Paul told

the Philippians to rejoice, he was telling them something that they were to do. AWWMI

"Rejoice in the Lord." This serves as Paul's first antidote to their being taken in by the possible attractiveness of the Judaizing option. FEE

It means to verbalize with praise and singing. The reason for such "rejoicing in the Lord" has to do with knowing him by being found in him (3: 8-9). Knowing Christ far surpasses even blameless Torah observance; it is unthinkable that under the pressure of present sufferings they should lose their joy in belonging to Christ by yielding to such observance. FEE

The phrase "to write the same things to you" refers to previous instruction given earlier to the Philippian believers. Paul was saying that repetition is part of the learning process. Peter spoke three times in his second epistle about the importance of remembering. Paul was bringing back to the Philippians' minds previous instruction for their own benefit. AWWMI

Repetition of the truth of the Gospel is a safeguard for us.

Safeguard: (secure (literally or figuratively): - certain (-ty), safe, sure). The same word is used in Hebrews 6:19 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure(a safeguard) and steadfast and one which enters within the veil,

Verse 2

Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision;

- 2. Paul is not engaging in generic name calling. He expressing his intense anger toward those who would pervert the gospel.**

The Greek word translated "beware" has the idea of "constantly observing with a view to avoiding, constantly be looking at in the sense of beware." Wuest

The reason for the invective lies with Paul. Such people have been "dogging" him for over a decade, and as the strong language of Gal 5: 12 and 2 Cor 11: 13-15 makes clear, he has long ago had it to the bellyful with these "servants of Satan" who think of themselves as "servants of Christ" (2 Cor 11: 15, 23). Fee

At issue for Paul is Christian existence itself. Fee

First, "look out for the dogs." This metaphor is full of "bite," since dogs were zoological "low life," scavengers that were generally detested by Greco-Roman society and considered unclean by Jews, who sometimes used "dog" to designate Gentiles. Paul thus reverses the epithet; by trying to make Gentiles "clean" through circumcision, the Judaizers are unclean "dogs." Fee

Paul calls them evil workers. The term implies, not merely evil doers, but those who actually wrought against the gospel of grace. Wuest

Third, and changing from the masculine plural to a pejorative description of their activity, Paul warns , "beware the mutilation," an ironic reference to Gentile

circumcision. The Greek word for circumcision is peri tome (= to cut around); katafomē, used here, denotes "cutting to pieces," hence "mutilate." Fee

Heathen priests mutilated their own bodies. The Judaizers mutilated the message of the gospel by adding law to grace, and thus to their own spiritual lives and those of their converts. Wuest

Such people, Paul proffers, in trying to make Gentiles submit to Torah do not work "righteousness" at all, but evil, just as those in the Psalter work iniquity because they have rejected God's righteousness, Fee

This final epithet also serves as evidence that the issue has to do with "righteousness based on Law" (v. 9), which in Paul invariably refers to Torah observance both as a "means to" and "gauge of" righteousness – i.e., being observant is seen as an attempt to secure one's relationship with God, while at the same time Torah serves as the yardstick to measure performance, and thus that relationship. Fee

Paul clearly sees through to the ultimate theological consequences for those who would capitulate – that it has the effect of adding a plus factor to grace, and thus of eliminating grace altogether by exchanging it for boasting in "one's flesh." Fee

Verse 3

For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

3. The Jews prided themselves as the circumcision. Paul is declaring that those who worship in the Spirit of God and who glory in Christ and put no confidence in the flesh are the true circumcision.

In context, Paul was saying that those who put faith in their circumcision to save themselves are putting confidence in the flesh and not in God. Today the act of circumcision is not the issue, but acts of holiness are still deemed by many as essential for receiving salvation (see note 6 at Ga 5:2 and note 12 at Ga 5:6). That is just as wrong as those in Paul's day who believed that being circumcised granted them salvation. AWMI

Romans 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

God's new covenant people, therefore, do not need to become Torah observant, precisely because they "boast in Christ Jesus"; they have put their trust in him who has effected God's true righteousness for them. Fee