

The Gospel According to Philippians
Gospel Partnerships
Philippians 2:5-30
Sermon Outline

Introduction: Paul’s discussion of Timothy and Epaphroditus seems at first to be a bit of a yawn—until we see it is a fleshing out in “regular” people of the self-emptying of Jesus. What do we see and how do we become more like what we see?

I) What do we see?

A) The kingdom unfolding in real life

Big story and little stories

The church isn’t big ideas—it is real people making decisions in real time.

Character rises on the foundation of a thousand mundane decisions.

B) A symphony of other-directedness

Everybody thinking about everybody else

Thinking past one’s own horizons: Timothy in contrast with others in the church of Rome

v. 20-21: he is like no-one else... They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus

Choices at EPC

C) Joy and warmth

Nothing morose or begrudging, despite great suffering and loss

v. 19: Eager for news

v. 22; my son

v.25; my brother...

c. 26: he longs for you and is distressed because you hears he was ill

D) Proven service

v. 22: You know Timothy’s proven worth

1:10: That you may approve what is excellent

The end of a matter is better than the beginning

Jesus finished well

How are we to follow through?

Showing up day after day, week after week.

II) How do we become more like this?

A) Knowing Jesus

vv. 22, 24, 29, 30: in the gospel...in the lord...of the Lord

B) Practice

Questions for Reflection this Week

- 1) “Character rises on the foundation of a thousand little decisions: Love unfolds in a thousand choices to serve.” Do you agree? Illustrate from your experience.
- 2) Make a list of every instance of “other directedness” in Philippians 2:19-30. Take note, as well, of the circumstances that would have tempted each of the four characters (Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and the Philippian church) to be “self-directed” instead. How have you done under similar circumstances? How are you doing now? Why?
- 3) Look at vv. 20-21. Immersed though he was in the struggles of the church in Rome, Timothy pushed past that church’s horizons and thought about the interests of Christ more broadly. How broad are the horizons of Jesus Christ’s interests according to Philippians 2:10-11. How well does Emmanuel Church push past the horizons of its own life and ministry? How well do you?
- 4) How would you characterize the tone of Philippians 2:19-30? How would you characterize the spirit of Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus? How do you explain the tone, given the fact that Paul was contemplating parting with E. and T., and despite the fact that E. had nearly died in his service to the church? How does it compare to the tone of your life at the moment? If there is a difference, why?
- 5) Timothy was known to the Philippians for his “proven worth” (v 22). This means that he had over time shown himself to be rock-solid reliable. Someone has said, “The end of a matter is better than its beginning,” by which is meant that anyone can start a project, but only the person of character finishes it. Are you a consistent finisher, someone who can be relied upon to do what you have promised over time? If so, what has helped you to be so? If no, what has made it hard for you to be?
- 6) Reflect upon the utter reliability of God, as seen most fully in Jesus, who followed through until the bitter end (“It is finished” John 19) on his promise to rescue us and our world from sin and death. Imagine what it was like for him to keep choosing the cross (his will, not the spikes, held him there) as his pain and humiliation mounted past expression and as his Father withdrew his love for no other reason than that he had promised to put the world right. Thank him.
- 7) The portraits we see of Timothy, Paul, Epaphroditus, and the Philippian church are portraits of Jesus living out of them (Phil 2:13, “for it is God who is in you to will and to work according to his good pleasure). This reminds us that the only way to become more like them is to live “in Christ”—to trust our lives to him, to seek and know him through his Word and sacraments. What can you do to know, love, and trust him more fully?
- 8) To trust Jesus does not mean to be passive. The only way to grow as an affectionate, other-directed, proven servant is to practice (which is why Paul tells us in Phil 2:12 to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling”). What could you do to give more steady expression to the divine Person who is in you?