**TIMOTHY AND PAUL TO COME LATER**

***19I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon,******that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20******I have no one else like him******, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21******For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22******But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. 24******And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.***

**Philippians 2:19-24 (NIV)**

Having informed the Philippians about ‘his affairs’ (reflections on his imprisonment 1:12-26) and appealed to them regarding ‘their affairs’ (that they live worthy of the gospel 1:27 – 2:18), Paul now proceeds to ‘visits to Philippi’ – Timothy’s (2:19-23), his own (2:24) and Epaphroditus’ (2:25-30).

This larger passage (2:19-30) falls into two clear parts. First, here in 2:19-24, he hopes to send Timothy as soon as the outcome of his imprisonment has been decided. Expecting it to go in his favour, he is *‘confident in the Lord’* that he himself will come to them ‘*soon*.’ He expects to hear back from Timothy, however, before he comes (2:19). In the second part (2:25-30), Paul says that out of kindness to them, he has sent the now-recovered Epaphroditus on ahead with this letter.

*‘I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you’* (2:19). Having brought himself back into the picture at the end of the long exhortation, by reflecting on his and their respective suffering (2:17,18), Paul now returns to where the narrative left off in 1:26.

This opening sentence gives Paul’s thought, *‘I hope … to send Timothy to you soon’* and the reason, *‘that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.’* Because the outcome of his trial is still future, he ‘*hopes’* to do this. This hope is qualified as ‘*in the Lord Jesus.’* As in 1:14 the emphasis is on the grounds for this hope. From the time he was ‘*found’* in Christ (3:9) and so Christ became his whole life (1:21), everything Paul thinks, says or does is based on his relationship with ‘*the Lord Jesus*.’ Our term ‘I hope so’ carries very little confidence but Paul’s ‘*hope’* is expressing a strong confidence. Paul hopes to send Timothy ‘*soon*.’ The term usually means ‘without delay’ but here carries the thought ‘as soon as possible’ (once the present delay regarding the outcome of his imprisonment is resolved).

The reason for sending Timothy is quite different from Paul’s usual reason for sending a co-worker to a church. In most cases it’s for the church’s sake – to straighten something out or bring something started to completion. Here it’s not so much for the church’s sake but for Paul’s sake: ‘*that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you’* (2:19). Paul looking for encouragement by hearing good news about them.

‘*I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare’* (2:20). ‘*I have no one else like him’* is more literally ‘I have no one else of like soul.’ Paul means that Timothy is ‘like-minded to me.’ Paul knows he can count on Timothy to carry Paul’s own deep concerns at heart (‘*your welfare’*): that the church is standing firm in one Spirit in the face of opposition in Philippi (1:27-30).

‘*For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ’* (2:21). Timothy’s concern for the Philippians’ welfare stands in stark contrast to the mind-set of others. Who are these ‘*others’*? ‘I have no one like-minded’ sounds as if Paul is contrasting Timothy with the other workers who might be available. But given what we know of Paul’s high regard for those travelling with him, and that in 4:2 he sends greetings from *‘the brothers who are with me,*’ the greater likelihood is that the contrast is between Timothy’s character qualifications and others in Paul’s mind. These ‘others’ lacked the two essential qualities highlighted in Timothy (1) like mindedness with Paul, expressing itself in (2) genuine concern for others. This was the character of the gospel presented in 2:3,4.

Timothy’s character stood in contrast to those mentioned in 1:15 and 17 who preach Christ but not ‘sincerely’ (purely) and so who don’t do it for Christ’s sake. Timothy was being set forth by Paul as another model of one who ‘thinks like Christ.’The contrast is not with anyone else Paul might be able to send but will not because they are too self-serving, but between Timothy’s positive qualities in 2:20 (like mindedness with Paul, expressing itself in genuine concern for others) and some in Rome (highlighted in 1:15,17) who seek their ‘*own interests’* (2:4).

‘*But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father* *he has served with me in the work of the gospel’* (2:22). ‘*But you know that Timothy has proved himself’* is more literally: ‘But you know his character.’ The word Paul uses for ‘character’ is coined from the verb ‘to put to the test.’ In 2 Corinthians 8:2 it refers to the test that the Philippians themselves had gone through, but in Romans 5:5 it describes the ‘character’ that the testing had produced. This is probably Paul’s meaning here. Because of long association with Timothy, the Philippians know his worth, that his character has been put to the test and that he ‘*has proved himself.*’

Paul’s interest in Timothy’s ‘proven character’ is not with his character generally but more specifically how his character has been demonstrated in the way ‘*he has served with me in the work of the gospel’* (2:22). As they well knew, that relationship was one of ‘*a son’* with ‘*his father*.’ The emphasis here is not on their relationship but on Timothy’s being ‘like-minded’ with ‘*his father’* in the gospel. Paul was saying: you can count on his being among you like a son who looks and acts just like his father. ‘*He has served with me in the work of the gospel’* (2:22; c.f.1:5 where a similar statement was made of the Philippians).

‘*I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me’* (2:23). Paul now qualifies *‘I hope … to* send Timothy to you soon’ (1:19). As soon as he has any inkling as to the outcome of his trial, he will send *Timothy*. Timothy’s reason for coming then is (1) for Paul’s sake – to see how the letter has affected them, and (2) for their sakes – to be encouraged and filled in about the outcome of his imprisonment.

‘*And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon’* (2:24). Paul concludes this brief look into his expected future, repeating what he told them in 1:24-26. In 1:24 this confidence of freedom was expressed in terms of ‘necessity,’ implying divine necessity that had their progress in the faith as its ultimate concern. Now he says in even stronger language ‘*And I am confident in the Lord.’* Paul fully expects to be released. His talk about ‘death’ in 1:21-23 was therefore a yearning and not an anticipation, and his ‘being poured out as a drink offering’ (2:17) a reference more to his present suffering than a reflection on his martyrdom.

Paul’s description of Timothy, especially as it stands in contrast to those in Rome who out of rivalry are trying to increase his affliction, lies at the heart of what Paul understands the Christian life to be about. He reminds the Philippians that Timothy’s coming to them would reflect his genuine concern about them. Timothy was not one to seek his own interests ahead of those of Christ Jesus. This is what the gospel is all about.

Without direct referencing these studies have drawn, sometimes heavily, on:

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