

*I press on
toward the goal to
win the prize for
which God has
called me
heavenward
in Christ
Jesus.*

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

Sending Timothy

The apostle Paul's concern for the congregations and the individual saints rings loudly and clearly throughout his writings. He knew the value of each believer's soul, and he knew the necessity of strong local churches to help keep those saints headed in heaven's direction. Over the years, as his sphere of influence grew, he acquired a team of dedicated men who worked with him to spread the gospel and strengthen the congregations. These saints were willing to be directed to come and go, to some degree, at Paul's bidding, and thus were extremely valuable in the overall warfare against the forces of darkness and confusion. One such man was Timothy.

- ▼ **Purpose** — In those days travel was difficult and communication, by our present day standards, was poor. Paul's concern for each congregation was intense, but reliable information about the churches was pretty sketchy. Not only would information have to be communicated by someone trustworthy, but someone spiritual enough and experienced enough to be really able to assess the true condition of the congregation. "But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy shortly," explains the apostle, "so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition" (Philippians 2:19). Timothy was definitely qualified, and Paul was hopeful that the young evangelist would be able to come to Philippi shortly and be able to give a positive assessment of the church's progress.
- ▼ **Kindred spirit** — There always seems to be a shortage of capable and qualified man-power, as Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37). Such was the case even with Paul and his team. "For I have no one else of kindred spirit," he explains, "who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare" (Philippians 2:20). What a blessing for Paul to have someone whom he could describe as of a "kindred spirit," someone who operated with the same understanding, perspective, and goals as the apostle! That type of teamwork always has been extremely rare. By contrast, though, Paul comments about some others, "For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:21). There is actually an encouraging point here for those modern brethren who diligently labor in the Lord's fields, that it was even difficult for the apostle Paul to have every member of his team set aside personal interests and work for the big picture.
- ▼ **Accepting Timothy** — The congregation in Philippi was doing comparatively well, but it is clear that Paul wanted to do some things to help the brethren step up to another level. One of their number, Epaphroditus, was being sent right away, then Timothy as soon as possible. The apostle wants Timothy to have full acceptance, and writes accordingly. "For you know of his proven worth," he reminds the brethren, "that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father" (Philippians 2:22). Timothy had already been tested on a number of spiritual battlegrounds, and had established to the satisfaction of all knowledgeable brethren that he was capable and qualified. The point here is that if the Philippians trusted Paul, they could trust Timothy's guidance and direction also. "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 shall be coming shortly" (Philippians 2:23,24). Paul apparently needed Timothy to wrap up a few things for him while he was still in jail, but once those things were cleared away, and the apostle's release was imminent, then he could send Timothy immediately. And Paul's clear desire, if the Lord willed, was to follow Timothy into Philippi as soon as possible.

**"FOR YOU KNOW OF
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ANCE OF THE GOSPEL."**

The number of lost people, who are headed for a Christless eternity in the fires of hell, is staggering. The fight to maintain those who have been delivered from the domain of darkness is almost mind-numbing. The picture therefore being painted by the apostle in this epistle is for brethren to move past self-serving interests, and work as a great team to accomplish God's awesome purposes in helping people out of Satan's snare, and helping them onward to heaven.

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