

Timothy - Fellow Laborer

1 Thessalonians 3:1-3

Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, 2 and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, 3 that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.

Before Paul's conversion he was an up and coming young man. He was going to be an important person. He was driven to do things and get things done. The problem was that he started out doing the wrong things by persecuting the church.

After Paul's conversion in Acts 9 Paul's life's goals completely changed. Everything that he had invested his whole life to be was now to him a sham, a false golden idol. He went off alone and then he came back to Damascus to help the church there.

God was not done with Paul but had given him a mid course correction and changed the direction of his life.

A few years later when Paul began his missionary journeys he was always looking for those who could help him.

He ordained pastors and deacons in the churches but he was also looking for those who could do what he was doing. He was always seeking to duplicate himself.

As we saw last year when we were studying Philippians we discovered that he did not find many who had the same heart as he did. Men who would pick up the load and carry on.

Philippians 2:19-21 (NKJV) 19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. 20 For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. 21 For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

Notice that some times the young men that he found later proved that they were more concerned with their own and not the things of Christ Jesus.

But he found such a one in Timothy and also Titus and a few others.

Philippians 2:22 (NKJV) 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

He served Paul by serving the Lord. Paul had someone he could send to churches having difficulties. Paul could not be everywhere. His job was primarily that of a missionary-evangelist.

But Timothy was better suited to the work of a pastor. And tradition tells us that Timothy later became the pastor at Ephesus.

So let us look at this fellow laborer of the apostle Paul.

Paul's convert and companion, whose name means "one who honors God." His name is often spelled Timotheus in the KJV. Baker encyclopedia of the Bible

- I. Timothy was a good fellow laborer because he did not have to have top billing.
 - A. Timothy was no doubt young when Paul picked him to go with them on Paul's second missionary journey.
 - 1. Timothy had been converted on the first missionary journey.
 - 2. But he also had a good foundation through his mother and grand mother.
 - 3. And the church had no doubt been training Timothy between Paul's 1st and 2nd visit.
 - 4. It seems it was the church there in Lystra that recommended Timothy for the missionary work and ordained him to the gospel ministry.
 - B. So we could expect Timothy to not expect to have a too important a place.
 - 1. But Timothy would stay with Paul for the next 15 years and would be a part of his life clear up to his death.
 - 2. One of the dearest passages in all the Bible is found in Paul's second letter to Timothy.
 - 3. 2 Timothy 4:17-21 (NKJV) 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. And I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! 19 Greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus. 20 Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick. 21 **Do your utmost to come before winter.** Eubulus greets you, as well as Pudens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.
 - C. In all that time, Timothy never thought that he should be first.
 - 1. There were many that did.
 - 2. They left Paul and his ministry for more productive fields.
 - 3. Not doubt to their detriment.
 - 4. But Timothy was always there in the shadow of Paul, satisfied to serve.
 - 5. That was part of Timothy's nature.
 - 6. Paul encouraged him to be more bold in his ministry and not let people despise his youth.
- II. Timothy was a good fellow labor because he cared about people in the same way Paul did.
 - A. Ministry and ministering and being a minister is just that.
 - 1. Jesus said He did not come to be served but to serve.

2. I am bothered when I hear people talk about the strain of the ministry.
3. Nothing that we face today can compare with what Paul and Timothy went through in the first century.
4. Look at all that Paul suffered.
 - a. 2 Corinthians 11:23-29 (NKJV) 23 Are they ministers of Christ?--I speak as a fool--I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. 24 From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; 26 in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; 27 in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness-- 28 besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches. 29 Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I do not burn with indignation?
 - b. Someone wanting to join Paul's team might want to see what the captain of the team had signed up for before committing one's self.
5. I remember some thirty years ago or so when I was going through some of the most difficult times in my life that I mentioned to an older pastor that I would like to talk to him. His response was, "I suppose we could cry upon one another's shoulders." which indicated to me that he had not interest in ministering to my needs. It was like he was saying just toughen up.
6. But I have to say I am not like that.
 - a. I will set in my office and listen for sometimes almost and hour or more to the difficulties of people.
 - b. And the Lord gives me words of encouragement and advise for them.
 - c. And they almost always go away thanking me for being there.
7. Ministry is about serving others.
 - a. After what Jesus did, can we do any less?
 - b. Timothy had a great teacher in Paul and Timothy followed him.
 - (1) Acts 20:18-21 (NKJV) 18 . . . "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with

many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

- c. That is why Paul considered him a fellow laborer.
- d. “ one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state” Phil 2:20

III. Timothy was a good fellow laborer because he was first a servant of Christ Jesus.

- A. Timothy was not serving himself.
- B. Timothy was not even primarily serving Paul.
- C. When two people are working for the same person they must have similar goals.
- D. Not all those in ministry are working for Jesus.

- 1. Acts 20:29-31 (NKJV) 29 For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. 31 Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

We as God’s people are to serve one another. Galatians 5:13 “through love serve one another”

Mark 8:34-38 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.35 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it.36 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?37 Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?38 For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." NKJV