

(from Ephesus, 1Cor 4:17; 16:10–11) as the trusted emissary of Paul. Here we see the fruit of true discipleship. For having been drawn to faith in Yeshua through the work of the Ruach and taught and trained by Paul, Timothy fulfilled a vital role, not only in being the emissary of Paul, but also in strengthening and encouraging the communities to which Paul sent him.

We read this about Timothy in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians:

For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Messiah, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1Cor 4:17)

Now if Timothy comes, see that he is with you without cause to be afraid, for he is doing the Lord's work, as I also am. (1Cor 16:10)

20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

The opening "For" (*γάρ, gar*) connects to the previous verse giving Paul's own reasons why he has chosen Timothy as his emissary to minister to the Philippian community of believers. The overarching reason is that Timothy has proven himself to have both the spiritual maturity as well as the heart of a servant, to minister to the needs of others and thereby to faithfully accomplish the mission which Paul had entrusted to him. Here we see the two primary characteristics of the believer who genuinely desires to serve others by encouraging them in their life of faith in Yeshua.

...for I have no one else of kindred spirit – Here Paul's words are those of a mentor describing one whom he had discipled. From a biblical viewpoint, when we speak of a person "making disciples," we do not mean that the mentor primarily trains them to be and think like himself. Rather, the goal of spiritual discipleship is constantly to point the person being discipled to Yeshua so that he or she may become a true, maturing disciple of Him, walking in His footsteps, having His perspective (mind) in all matters of life, thus serving others with the goal that they would grow and mature in the faith and be enabled to disciple others as well.

When Paul writes that he had "no one else of kindred spirit," he is not saying that he had only one disciple that he could trust, but rather,

that Timothy was the only one currently who was ministering to Paul in his present imprisonment who would be able to carry his message and concern to the community in Philippi.

The phrase translated “kindred spirit” is one word in the Greek (ισόψυχω, *isopuxod*), which is made up of the word ἴσος (*isos*), “equal” and ψυχή (*spuxē*), “soul,” and is found only here in the Apostolic Scriptures. This word is likewise only found once in the Lxx, in Ps 54:14 (55:13 in the English), where David bemoans his son Absalom and the treachery he engaged in against his father.

But it is you, a man my equal (σὺ δέ, ἄνθρωπε ἰσόψυχε), my companion and my close friend; (Ps 55:13)

The Greek word literally means “equal souled,” that is, sharing the same “soul,” or “inner self.” David in the Psalm is emphasizing that Absalom was his very family, i.e., they had kindred lives, making his rebellion even more egregious, for he betrayed his father.

The question that confronts us in our text is whether Paul is referring to Timothy as being like him, that is, having the same “spirit” as Paul, or whether Paul means “having the same life purpose,” i.e., “to be like Yeshua.” Since the word was used in the Lxx to emphasize that David and Absalom were both of one family, it seems most likely that Paul uses the word to emphasize that both he and Timothy were one in the family of God. Paul speaks of Timothy in this way in a number of passages.

For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Messiah, just as I teach everywhere in every church. (1Cor 4:17)

To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (1Tim 1:2)

To Timothy, my beloved son [child]: Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (2Tim 1:2, cf. 2Tim 2:1)

But Paul’s words here also express that Timothy had clearly proven himself to have gained spiritual maturity and faithfulness, desiring to serve the Lord in the same manner in which Paul served Him. The “kindred spirit,” then, is both the desire as well as the needed maturity

to serve others in the body of Messiah, and to do so for their spiritual growth and to cause Yeshua to be lifted up and praised.

Thus, when Paul pictures Timothy as having a “kindred spirit,” he is emphasizing that he had proven himself to be a true disciple of Yeshua even as Paul was. It was the spiritual maturity which Timothy had evidenced that gives Paul complete confidence that he could send him to the Philippian community to minister to them, and that he would return to Paul to give him updates on how the community in Philippi was faring.

...who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. – It is not uncommon in our fallen world that when a leader (in whatever capacity) is, for one reason or another, unable to carry out their leadership responsibilities, there will be those who see it as an opportunity to advance themselves. Rather than seeking to help the incapacitated leader, they selfishly seek the higher position for themselves.

On the contrary, Timothy had proven himself to be a true servant, not only to aid Paul but also to be willing and able to serve others. Paul therefore expresses his confidence that Timothy would show genuine concern for the Philippian believers, taking on the role of a servant, first and foremost, for Yeshua, and thus for the Philippian community as well.

We see, then, that Timothy had proven himself to put as a priority in his life what Paul emphasized earlier in this chapter, in vs. 3–4. He had shown himself to be a willing servant to others, that they might be encouraged and strengthened in the faith.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. (Phil 2:3–4)

The emphasis that Paul puts upon spiritual growth and maturity, and seeing Timothy as an example of this, ought to prompt each of us to regularly take inventory of our own lives and assess how we are doing in terms of living out the very inspired words of the Scriptures which teach us to be servants to one another and to help each other to mature in the faith and to be witnesses for Yeshua. This must be the goal both in our individual lives as well as in our being part of a local community of believers, committed to obeying our Lord by serving each other.

The Greek word translated “genuinely” in the phrase “who will

genuinely be concerned,” is *μεριμνάω* (*merimnaō*), a word that can carry several meanings in its semantic range. It can mean “to be apprehensive, have anxiety, be anxious,”¹ i.e., “to worry needlessly.” We find Paul using the word with this sense in 4:6.

Be anxious [*μεριμνᾶτε*] for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Phil 4:6)

But the word *merimnaō* can also carry the sense of “to attend to, care for, be concerned about someone or something,”² and this is the sense Paul is emphasizing in our current text. Clearly Timothy has proven himself over time to be genuinely concerned about the needs of others, even as he had given himself to care for the needs of Paul.

The fact that Paul uses this same term in a positive sense, to be concerned about the needs of others, as well as in a negative sense, to allow anxiety and worry to control us, sends a clear message for us all. What will we allow to dominate our lives: faith in God’s all controlling and all encompassing care for us in accordance with His promises, or fear and anxiety that together demonstrate and flow from a lack of faith?

21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Messiah Yeshua.

Having indicated in the previous verse that he “had no one else” who had come to his aid and proven themselves to be faithful servants to assist him while in prison, Paul now gives the overarching characteristic of those who had failed to help him.

“They all seek after their own interests.” We should understand that by stating “they all seek...,” Paul is not saying that every one who was engaged in carrying the gospel of Yeshua to others had forsaken him. For instance, he is not thinking of men like Luke and Aristarchus who were laboring with him in Rome (Col 4:10, 14; Philem 24) nor of Tychicus whom Paul sent to Ephesus (2Tim 4:12). Rather, Paul is describing those “gospel workers” who were near him and who might have been available to come to his aid but did not.

He notes that they “seek after their own interest and not those of Messiah.” This hearkens back once again to vs. 3-4 where Paul admon-

1 BDAG, “*μεριμνάω*,” p. 632.

2 Ibid.

ishes us to not only look after our needs, but also the needs of others. This requires a humble spirit and the willingness to consider the needs of others as a biblical priority. When considered in light of the larger context, then, it is clear that “looking out for the interests of Messiah” is fulfilled in “looking out for the interests of others.” For what are the “interests of Messiah?” As the great Shepherd, He cares for His own and aids them in all aspects of their lives. Most often He does so through those who are His and who therefore put a high priority on serving and helping each other.

It may also be that those whom Paul characterizes as “seek their own interests” were fearful of persecution and therefore were distancing themselves from any association with Paul since they were afraid that they, like Paul, might be persecuted for their faith.

The obvious question that confronts us as we read and study these inspired words is clear: How would we respond to the biblical injunction to care for one another in a time of intense persecution? If we allow even trivial things to overshadow a genuine commitment to serving each other as the Scriptures teach us to do, why do we think we would be willing to do so under the duress of persecution?

Thus in this passage, the Lord is reminding us through these words of Paul to make an assessment of our own commitment to obey the Lord and thus to serve one another and to aid each other as we seek to be witnesses for Him in this fallen world. As He taught His disciples and us:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.
(Jn 13:34, cf. 15:12, 17)

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.

Timothy had been part of the group that originally went to Philippi with the gospel (cf. Acts 16), and was therefore known by some of those in the Philippian assembly. Thus Paul reminds them of how faithfully Timothy served both him and them as they ministered among those who came to faith in Yeshua, having heard the gospel message.

When Paul writes that Timothy was known for “his proven worth” (τὴν δὲ δοκιμὴν αὐτοῦ), he uses the word *δοκιμή* (*dokimē*) which carries a primary sense of “that which passes the test” (cognate to *δοκιμασία*,

dokimasia, “to test”)¹ and is used only by Paul in the Apostolic Scriptures.² The word-group itself is also found to be used of purifying metals through the process of smelting.³ Thus, Paul’s words indicate that Timothy had shown himself to be faithful even in the midst of difficult times. Here we see once again that the characteristic of genuine faith is that ultimately the believer perseveres, striving to accomplish that which honors Yeshua and is profitable for others within the community of faith.

...*that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel* – Here we see Paul affirming the character of Timothy, that he evidenced both fidelity and humbleness of character. He had received the truth of the gospel and of the Scriptures as taught to him by Paul and remained faithful to the true message of the gospel, not seeking to find his own way or finding a novel and new approach to a life of faith. His life and willingness to serve others was a clear and outward demonstration of the “new man” that had been birthed within him by faith in Yeshua.

In Paul’s testimony regarding Timothy, we are reminded of a significant characteristic that should be seen in all who claim to have been “born again” in Yeshua, and it is this: the heart that has been renewed by God’s saving grace will more and more be known as loving others, seeking to encourage and help those who are within the believing community while also seeking every way to proclaim the gospel in Yeshua to those who are lost in sin. If in fact a person has been brought to new life in Yeshua through faith in Him and acceptance of the gospel message, then surely they will desire to give the gospel to others, for God has ordained that it is by the message of the gospel that He draws to Himself those He intends to save.

...*like a child serving his father.* – Here Paul emphasizes Timothy’s humble character, for rather than lauding to himself the position granted him by Paul, to be his companion and co-laborer, he sought to serve Paul and to aid him however he could to encourage and help him continue in the work Yeshua had given him to accomplish.

Thus Timothy’s humble character was in contrast to that of Demas about whom Paul later wrote to Timothy:

Make every effort to come to me soon; for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia.

1 Cf. Heb 3:9. See BDAG, “δοκιμή,” p. 256.

2 Rom 5:4; 2Cor. 2:9; 8:2; 9:13; 13:3.

3 BDAG, “δοκιμιον,” p. 256.

(2Tim 4:9–10)

In Timothy we see an important truth, namely, that God often prepares a person for the work they are to do as adults by their upbringing as children. Surely there are many times when children who were raised in an ungodly home, having later come to faith in Yeshua, serve the Lord and His people in genuine ways. But how wonderful it is when believing parents diligently love and train their children in the things of the Lord so that they grow up both with the strength, desire, and ability to serve Him in their lives.

Note well Paul's words as he wrote to Timothy:

For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well. (2Tim 1:5)

Surely mother and grandmother planted the seeds of the gospel in many ways, seeds which the Ruach HaKodesh brought to fruition by the gift of faith, forming a spiritual foundation upon which Timothy would one day serve the Lord in significant and fruitful ways.

23–24 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 will be coming shortly.

It seems quite clear that Paul needed Timothy to stay near him in order to get food and water for his own sustenance. Yet he assures the Philippian community that, depending upon how things turn out (obviously regarding the outcome of the trial), he plans to also come to them in due time.

Here, in Paul's words, we once again recognize the dire straights in which he existed. While he hoped for soon release from prison, execution still remains a possibility. Here, once again, we are reminded that Paul has already established the fact that he was fully relying upon the Lord to bring about His divine purpose and that he was fully willing to receive whatever the Lord's determined plan for him would bring. "For to me to live is Messiah, and to die is gain" (Phil 1:23).

When he writes "as soon as I see how things go with me," we may understand that

The result of the trial would probably become sufficiently ev-

ident some time before judgment was finally pronounced.¹

... and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly. – We cannot be absolutely certain how to understand Paul’s words here in terms of whether he expects the hand of the Lord to spare him from execution, or if he simply is expressing in very positive terms what he hopes will be the outcome of the trial. The fact that he states “I trust in the Lord” surely emphasizes that he is ready to receive whatever the Lord designs, even as he expressed earlier (1:23–26).

So Calvin explains the final phrase of v. 24:

He adds this, too, lest they should imagine that anything had happened to change his intention as to the journey of which he had previously made mention. At the same time, he always speaks conditionally — If it shall please the Lord. For although he expected deliverance from the Lord, yet there having been, as we have observed, no express promise, this expectation was by no means settled, but was, as it were, suspended upon the secret purpose of God.²

Here, once again, we are challenged by the inspired words of Paul, that we too should be confident in the Lord, that whatever He brings to pass in our lives, we will trust in Him, for He does all things well.

 My times are in thy hand; my God, I wish them there;
 my life, my friends, my soul, I leave entirely to thy care.

My times are in thy hand, whatever they may be;
 pleasing or painful, dark or bright, as best may seem to thee.

My times are in thy hand; why should I doubt or fear?
 My Father’s hand will never cause his child a needless tear.

My times are in thy hand, Jesus the Crucified;
 those hands my cruel sins had pierced are now my guard and guide.³

1 F. F. Bruce, *Philippians in Understanding the Bible Commentary* (Baker, 2000), p. 93.

2 Calvin, *Philippians*, p. 79.

3 Hymn by W. F. Lloyd, *Trinity Hymnal* (1961), p. 577