

#6 Philippians

Tom Tillman

Verse 20: (of Timothy) 'For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.'

Paul is describing Timothy as a true pastor, a shepherd who truly cares for his flock. An evangelist's first concern is those in the World who are not born again children of God. He sees every non believer as his mission field; every person with whom he comes in contact, his goal will be to, very soon, determine whether or not that person knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his Savior. If not, he will soon find the way to present the Gospel to him in an effective, engaging manner. The evangelist is not intimidated by talk of Heaven, Hell, sin, death, eternal life or eternal punishment; he is not afraid to tell someone they are headed for eternity in Hell. The pastor, on the other hand, his first priority is his flock of true sheep, children of God, born again believers. A pastor should not be concerned with the unsaved world; he should not be concerned with 'loving and serving his city.' The city is not his mission field. His only mission field is his flock. Of course, he should be adept at presenting the Gospel, of offering salvation, of giving an 'altar call' but his first priority is lovingly caring for the sheep over whom God has placed him and he will answer directly to God as to his faithfulness. Now, if he happens to be planting a church, of starting 'from the ground up,' he will also need some gifting in evangelism but, otherwise, his only priority is his flock.

Paul was an evangelist but he was also a pastor, lovingly caring for all of his different flocks. Timothy was a young pastor, so young that some may have resented his position and authority; probably his gifting as pastor was what Paul referred to when he wrote, 'Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity. ¹³Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. ¹⁴Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership. ¹⁵Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. ¹⁶Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.' 1 Tim 4:12

There are many, so called, pastors but true pastors are more rare. Unfortunately, many men, and women, are lifted up as pastors who have no business being pastors at all. Maybe they are an effective teacher or evangelist but not a pastor who cares for the care and nurturing of the state of the soul of his flock. The evangelist is concerned for their eternal destiny. The true teacher is concerned with their Biblical knowledge and understanding while the pastor cares for their souls, for their spiritual growth and maturity.

The evangelist leads him to Christ. The teacher opens God's Word to him, after he is saved, and the pastor oversees his growth and maturity in the Faith. The pastor and the teacher work together to train him up to do the work of the ministry, of loving and caring for all other believers. Hopefully, the pastor is also a teacher; in fact, the Word seems to put the two together into one man.

These are gifts given by the Holy Spirit for the edification of the Body: 'And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and ***some pastors and teachers***, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, ¹⁵ but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for ***the edifying of itself*** in love.' Eph 4:11

A man doesn't just decide, 'I want to be a pastor... that seems like an easy job... just working one day a week, and even then, just giving a little talk... I'm sure I could do that!' A man is not a true pastor because he decides to be one; a genuine pastor has been gifted, by God, to do the work of equipping his flock to, themselves, do the work of the ministry.

Of course Paul is exaggerating when he says that no one else cares for the Philippians like he and Timothy do but maybe not; other men were being trained for the pastorate but he was acknowledging that true pastors are rare and sadly, many churches settle for a man who is not a pastor at all but had impressed the search

committee with his ability to teach or to lead unbelievers to Christ. Sadder, still, are the churches who settled for a 'church growth' specialist without understanding, that though he was able to fill the pews, he was totally unsuited to care for, nurture and mature those with whom he did fill the pews and sadder, even still, was the fact that he wasn't even an evangelist so what he filled the pews with were goats, not even born again believers, but those who were attracted by the fancy show he was able to produce every Sunday.

And another thing... a pastor who truly cares for his flock will recognize the times we are in and warn his sheep to see and understand that we are, in fact, into the Last Days, End Times; the Lord Jesus Christ will come for His Flock one day soon. The pastor who fails to recognize this and to prepare his people for persecution, which is beginning to happen to us, is doing a great disservice to the children of God under his care.

Many Pastors and teachers will not even touch the fact of the End Times; perhaps they are afraid, not wanting the push back which invariably comes to the one who is faithful to preach and teach the whole council of God.

Paul was sending Timothy to Philippi to, hopefully, heal the division and dissention which had risen over the conflict between two members, Euodias and Syntyche. Paul was worried for their standing before God.

Our state before God never changes: we are the absolute Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; 'He became sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.' 2 Cor 5:21 That will never change; our standing before God, on the other hand, can and does change. That is why Paul constantly admonishes his readers to '*walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,*' to '*set your mind on the things above, not on the things of the Earth,*' to '*forget what lies behind and press on toward the upward call of God in Jesus Christ.*' to '*love one another*' and to '*lay aside every weight and the sin that so easily entangles us and run the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*

Paul makes clear that the Gospel of Jesus Christ, His person and His Cross are all offensive to the World and they are offensive to goats within church buildings. That is why so many, so called, pastors who are not really pastors at all but, rather, hirelings... just hired to do a job... the job of filling up the building with spiritual riffraff; they work to turn the true Gospel into some shabby imitation of the world which is attractive to the world and to goats. They don't talk about sin or hell or the Blood of Jesus Christ or that He came to die in our place or about the End Times.

If a pastor's message is always attractive... like many TV types, he is not a real pastor. If his message is also offensive because of the truth of the Gospel... he is more likely a true pastor.

A true pastor's work is never easy and yet, it is still joyful because it is what God has called and equipped him to do. I keep saying 'him' and 'he;' pastors, according to God's Word, are always and only men; a woman is never qualified to be a pastor, no matter how much better she might be able to do the work. God's plan and command is that a pastor is only a man. Men are not better or smarter or cleverer but men are what God has commanded that pastors are always to be.

Paul knew that Timothy had the heart of a true pastor because he had trained him; he knew that he was ready for the work of the ministry.

Verse 21: 'For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.'

I think Paul is giving this statement a double meaning. All other pastors seek their own profit but also, false pastors and false sheep all seek their own... they seek out each other. False pastors want a congregation who will open themselves to his false gospel and false sheep seek out a false pastor who will tickle their itching ears, a man who will only speak that which is sweet and attractive to them as they, also, desire a building full of others like themselves.

If a church is without a pastor and they are seeking a '*church growth specialist,*' they are seeking their new pastor in all the wrong places with all the wrong giftings.

There are two things which will fill a church building; a false, feel-good gospel of worldly entertainment will fill a building with goats while the true Gospel of the life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with the sheep being trained to go out into the mission fields in which they live, will fill a building with true sheep. That's it! That is how a building is filled; one way fills it with death and darkness while the other way fills it

with light and life eternal. The lost who are blind and deaf will come to the false light of the first while those whose eyes are being opened by the Holy Spirit will be drawn to the true light of the latter.

Verse 22: 'But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel.'

Timothy had trained and learned under the Apostle Paul's tutelage. His character had been proven as he faithfully served under Paul.

No man should ever be lifted up to the position of pastor until his character, his giftings and his abilities have been proved over time by his faithful ministry under the guidance of an older, proven pastor. Bible School and Seminary do not make a pastor; only faithful, submissive service over time coupled with the easily discerned gifts from the Holy Spirit and having a family in obvious good order, these are the things that a 'search committee' should be examining before anything else. If all of these are in good working order then maybe you've found a true pastor.

Verse 23: 'Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. ²⁴ But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.'

'How it goes with me'... in other words... if I am to be kept in prison, if I am to be freed or if I am to be killed. Those would have been the only options. He said that he trusted in the Lord to be able to go to Philippi himself but we don't have anything from Scripture to indicate that he had but, hopefully, he was able to go back to Philippi to encourage his spiritual children and to be encouraged by them.

Verse 25: ' Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; ²⁶ since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷ For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.'

Epaphroditus had brought financial help from the Philippian saints to Paul as he was in prison in Rome. Their love for Paul was exemplified by their gift of money, something tangible for which Paul, just like anyone else, had need. A Roman guard certainly wasn't going to help Paul, it was only through the contributions of Christians, most of whom Paul had led to the Lord or whose churches he had planted. Epaphroditus had taken the long and arduous journey from Macedonia to Rome; whether by land or by sea, it was a long, hard trip. Perhaps from the long journey, Epaphroditus became very ill and we know it was a long illness because word of his illness had taken the long trip back to Philippi and then back to Rome again to tell him that the saints in Philippi were very worried for him and wanted him to be back with them again.

He did recover and, as Paul's secretary, wrote out this Letter to the Philippians which he then carried back to Philippi. Although Paul wrote this letter to the Philippians, it is thanks to Epaphroditus that it arrived there for them and then to be preserved for us down through all these Centuries.

Although we don't know anything about this Epaphroditus other than what we read here, he is thought to be the same person as the Epaphras mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians.

By the way, Epaphroditus is another example, like Paul and Timothy, that sickness is not the evidence of sin in a person's life. Faithful Christians are just as liable to sickness as anyone else while sinners can be just as liable to good health; it is always and only according to God's will, plans and purposes. Timothy had a stomach ailment for which Paul advised that he regularly drink a 'little wine.' Paul had an ongoing eye problem, possibly as a result of his blindness when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to him on his way to Damascus, an ailment which God refused to heal, even after Paul asked for healing three times. And, here we see Epaphroditus was sick and almost died, even though he was faithfully doing his work for the Lord Jesus Christ, His Church and His Word. It is a doctrine of demons, a lie from the enemy that says our salvation is a guarantee of health and wealth... a lie from Satan.

Verse 3:1: 'Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.'

Have you ever noticed... God **commands** us to rejoice in Him! Paul knew that his joy in his salvation was key to his walk in the Lord and his walk through this world. Our choice to rejoice, to have joy, is coupled with our choice to be thankful, to thank God in everything... not just the things we happen to believe are good things. In fact, everything that God brings into our lives are good things or, at least, what He uses for our good.

'Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures* forever... Let those who fear the LORD now say, "His mercy *endures* forever." ... The LORD *is* my strength and song, And He has become my salvation. The voice of rejoicing and salvation *is* in the tents of the righteous;... I will praise You, for You have answered me, and have become my salvation... You *are* my God, and I will praise You; *You are* my God, I will exalt You. ²⁹ Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for *He is good!* For His mercy *endures* forever. Psa 118

'Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls— ¹⁸ **Yet I will rejoice in the LORD**, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's *feet*, And He will make me walk on my high hills.' Hab 3:17

'Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.' Neh 8:10

Joy, rejoicing is not something that can be whooped up and made to happen with tricky choruses or encouraging people to raise their hands and dance around. Joy, real joy only comes from the heart of one who understands, and is thankful, for the full scope of his salvation, that he is forgiven of all sins: past, present and future, and that he stands before God clothed in the absolute, never ending, never lessening Righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew that and he rejoiced in it while he worked to instill it in all his readers, all the way down through time to us.

'Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.' 1 Thes 5:16

Everything that touches us comes from God... everything! And He is at work causing all of those things to work together for our good and His Glory: 'And we know that ***all things work together for good*** to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.' Rom 8:28

Paul rejoices in his salvation which was planned by God from before Creation... he was predestined to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ... and so was every believer... that, alone, is cause for eternal rejoicing in all things.

'Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷ and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.' Phpp 4:4

'...count it all joy when you fall into various trials, ³ knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.' James 1:2

Paul said, '*is not tedious*' for him to tell his readers to rejoice... he does it over and over again because it is so important for every child of God to be thankful and to rejoice in all that God has done and is doing... everything! Especially the things that we think are bad and could never have come from the Hand of God. Those are the things to especially recognize that it is a precious gift from God, meant to form us more and more into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ by building within us patience, forbearance and self-control.

For it is God Who is at work within you, it is God Who is at work all around you and it is God Who causes all things to work together for good, for you. He loves you and will never stop His work of forming you into His image and likeness which should be our own highest goal.

Rejoice in the Lord, again I say, rejoice always... give thanks in all things... He loves us and He will never leave or forsake us... ever and forever!