**THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS**

**“Kindred Spirits in Ministry”**

**Philippians 2:19-30 SCC 1/2/11**

**INTRODUCTION**

 In our relationships we may describe one or two of them as soul mates—a person ideally suited to another as a close friend with compatible interests, desires, hopes, and aspirations. This person stands out unique from all others. That is, when you literally become one of the same soul—friends but also partners in life and friendship. It is crucial to have a friend and fellow worker you can trust implicitly. Apparently partners in ministry together whom you can trust and implicitly connected is an asset and crucial for ministry. Paul had such friends and partners in ministry and from these relationships we learn of the dynamics of kindred spirits in ministry.

**HAVING KINDRED SPIRITS IN MINISTRY IS CRUCIAL FOR SHARING SUSTAINING MINISTRY**

*1. Paul hopes to send Timothy to the Philippians vs 19.*

 He hopes to do that shortly. But he also hopes to do that immediately after seeing how things turn out for him vs 23. Apparently, Paul is in a fluid situation. He is under house arrest and Timothy is with him though free to move about. In this situation ha says *I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy.* This tells us he is not yet certain of his future. Possibly his release or his death could come at any time.

*2. The purpose for sending Timothy is to encourage Paul with news of the Philippians condition vs 19.*

 That condition he is hoping to discover is what he stated in vss 12-18. Namely, that they are working out their salvation in accordance with the example of Jesus Christ to one another vss 1-11. If Timothy returns with the good news Paul is hoping to hear it would be a huge boost of encouragement, especially in light if his current situation.

*3. The reason he wants to send Timothy is because of the special kindred spirit concern of Paul for the Philippians vs 20.*

 Timothy was near and dear to Paul’s heart and if he ever needed Timothy it was while he was there in Rome under house arrest with a very uncertain and even ominous future. Yet he is willing to sacrifice that companionship so others could be helped. It is extremely valuable but rare to have a kindred spirit in ministry. For Paul says he has no one else like him in his life!

PT: Notice the network of relationships and partnerships in ministry. Ministry is about serving the body of Christ with our gifts, our time, our prayers, and our service so that individuals mature in Christ. It is not about building independent, self-sufficient groups of believers. Like Paul, who intends to maintain contact with the Philippian believers by sending Timothy and even wanting to go himself, we too must understand ministry in terms of serving the welfare of the individuals who are in our network of relationships.

*4. The reason for this peculiar kindred spirit with Timothy is because most seek their own interests not Christ’s like Timothy vs 21.*

 Timothy stands out as a rare gem in a world of self-seekers (1:15 and 17). Paul wants to send Timothy because like Christ Timothy had a true concern for the Philippians and not concerned merely for himself. This contrast clearly with what was said in 2:4. So most people involved in ministry are focused on their own interests, some on the interests of other people, but few on the interests of Christ. So pursue ministry, which is defined not by what you want or what people want but what Christ wants.

*5. Paul knows the Philippians understand Timothy’s proven worth to Paul vs 22.*

 The Philippians knew Timothy so they knew that what Paul said about him was true. From the beginning he served with Paul in their city. He had been closely associated with Paul for a long time and his character had been tested and proven in hard times. He had become a kindred spirit with Paul like none other.

*6. Timothy’s proven character was evident in his service with the apostle in the fellow partnership of the gospel vs 22.*

 Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father and Timothy worked with him as a son together as they both served the Lord in the work of the gospel. So this is a kindred friendship established in the common interests of the gospel. Most significant relationships involve submission. Here it is like a father to a son not a peer to a peer. Co-equality is not usually helpful in most areas of ministry. Here Timothy is of the same soul as Paul but he is also submissive to Paul and then useful for the furtherance of the ministry.

*7. Therefore Paul wants to send Timothy as soon as his situation is clear hoping to also come himself vs 23-24.*

 The whole point of this message is Paul’s desire to send Timothy who better than anyone else understands Paul’s concern and can deliver news to both parties so that Paul and the Philippians are served well. Waiting until things are clearer may mean Paul is waiting for some decision relating to his legal case in Rome. His confidence is *in the Lord* meaning that he would come if the Lord wills it by means of this decision in his legal case. We do not have a record of Paul revisiting the Philippians so we do not know if this ever happened.

PT: We do see an effective team of individuals functioning together for the common cause of the gospel and discipleship. The ‘team’ as a collective entity is not relevant. Paul and Timothy were a team because of each of their individual contributions. So our ministry includes making a personal and individual impact in other individual lives and that impact is multiplied through these individuals into the lives of other individuals. This multiplied impact serves to build up the body—not community—of Christ unto a mature man.

**HAVING FELLOW WORKERS IN MINISTRY IS ESSENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT MINISTRY**

*1. Paul Thought it necessary to send Epaphroditus to the Philippians in the meantime vs 25*

 The Philippians had sent Epa to Timothy with a financial gift 4:18. He is going to send him back but not without letting them know how highly he regarded Epa. Though not called a ‘kindred spirit’ he is described intimately as my brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier and messenger. He shared Paul’s spiritual life, labors, and dangers. He was also a minister to Paul’s need possibly relating to the entire house arrest scenario. There is a significant friendship that is a step below a kindred spirit but is still a brother, a worker, and a fellow soldier—comrades in the work of the ministry in which we all participate.

*2. The reason for sending Epa is his longing for the Philippians who were distressed by news of his sickness vs 26.*

 What they had heard was accurate. Ministry includes alleviating distress associated with a lack of information. Again we see ministry through the genuine heartfelt concern for one another’s personal and spiritual welfare. It is one person serving the interests of other persons personally.

*3. But Epa was sick, very sick, even to the point of death vs 27.*

 Whatever illness he suffered it was serious enough that he almost died. What seems interesting here is that Paul the apostle did not or could not heal him. Epa almost died. Healing was either a temporary or limited gift even for the apostles. Paul says Epa was healed by God’s mercy after he almost died. Paul not only did not heal him but he was afraid he would die.

*4. But God spared Epa and was merciful to both Epa and Paul by sparing further sorrow vs 27.*

 This was an opportunity to praise God for His mercy in restoring Epa and in the process sparing Paul greater sorrow in losing him. The fact that Paul’s personal circumstances are difficult and the future uncertain, Epa’s death would have increased the burden and for God’s mercy at this time, Paul is so thankful. God understands our personal circumstances and the weight they bear on us sometimes. He is a merciful Father with us just as he was with Paul.

*5. So the purpose for sending Epa now was the Philippians Joy and Paul’s peace vs 28.*

 Here is another example of selfless sacrificial service pulsating throughout this book. Paul has the best interests of the Philippians in mind as well as Epa. So this trip was hastily arranged so the Philippians would be glad when he arrived and knowing this would bring relief to Paul.

*6. Therefore they should receive Epa with joy and dignity vs 29.*

 Epa did not fail in his mission and Paul wants the Philippians to know that. He is coming back in the Lord—that is in the will of God. In fact Epa should be honored when he returns. In other words, there is no reason to think ill of him or his ministry or service to and with Paul. The whole motivation for sending Epa back is for the good of everyone—both the Philippians and Paul as well as Epa. So do not misread this. So ministry includes managing misunderstanding so that the truth is clear as we relate to one another.

*7. The reason the Philippians should esteem Epa is for risking his life in the work of Christ vs 30.*

 We are to hold in high regard those who suffer for the work of the gospel even when that suffering is not from persecution. High regard is for those who suffer for the gospel not for the high positions in our organizations or those who are ‘successful’. It was while he was serving Christ that Epa became sick and almost died near Paul. Epa was risking his life to do what they could not do. As we serve Christ we are serving others.

SO:

1. Ministry, which outlasts us, is ministry invested in other people’s lives and then multiplied through them into the individual lives of others.
2. Ministry, which is sustained, is ministry shared with other laborers who share the same perspective and heartbeat of ministry.
3. Ministry, which is effective, is ministry attempted by fellow workers willing to sacrifice whatever is necessary to get it done.