

Philippians Chapter 2
Part 3
The Submissive Mind
'Joy in spite of people

We live in a society where there is an increasing decline in concern for the welfare of others.

It is reported that some years ago in a 'Candid Camera' type exercise, a newspaper reporter in America, arranged for a man to lie in the gutter on a busy street. Hundreds of people passed him by but none stopped to help him.

Kindness and goodness are increasingly rare in the 21st century where people appear to walk fearful of one another in a way that has marked perhaps no other time in history.

We could cite numerous examples of such a lack of human kindness today, but it is worth noting that in Paul's day moral concern was not popular either. Good Samaritans were the minority even then, and those who would lay down their lives in service to others were few.

Philippians 2:19-21 New International Version –

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ²¹For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.'

Paul is continuing to discuss the submissive mind. In verses 1 – 11 he gave a description of the submissive mind, and the example of Jesus. Paul also explained the dynamics of the submissive mind in his own experience in verses 12 – 18.

He now introduces us to two of his helpers in the ministry, Timothy and Epaphroditus, whom he holds up as examples. Paul's reason for doing this is because he knows the readers of his letter are quite likely to say, *'It is impossible for us to follow the examples of Jesus and Paul. After all Jesus is the Son of God and Paul is an apostle, they are not ordinary people like us.'*

For this very reason, he introduces two ordinary men: Timothy and Epaphroditus, men who were not apostles or spectacular miracle workers.

Paul does this because he wants us to know that the submissive mind is not a luxury enjoyed by a chosen few, but a necessity for every born again believer.

He knows that God has a destiny for every single believer that few come into because they lack the **submission** to the Lordship of Jesus that would lead them into everything that has been set aside for them from the foundation of the earth.

Because of this he urges ordinary people to see that they have an extraordinary God to Whom they owe not only allegiance, but submission.

Let's just look briefly at these two men, firstly –

Timothy –

Philippians 2:19-21 The Amplified Bible

¹⁹*But I hope and trust in the Lord Jesus soon to send Timothy to you, so that I may also be encouraged and cheered by learning news of you.* ²⁰*For I have no one like him [no one of so kindred a spirit] who will be so genuinely interested in your welfare and devoted to your interests.* ²¹*For the others all seek [to advance] their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ (the Messiah).'*

What an indictment – all seek to advance their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Timothy's character, on the other hand, is marked by **genuine** interest in the welfare of, and devotion to, the needs of others. Timothy not only has the heart of a pastor of the flock of God, he displays it in his every day life.

We know quite a lot about Timothy, his grandmother Lois was saved first –

2 Timothy 1:3-5

He was the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. However, Paul always considered Timothy his own son *'in the faith'*.

2 Timothy 1:2 New Living Translation –

'I am writing to Timothy, my dear son. May God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord give you grace, mercy, and peace.'

It was when Paul went to Derbe and Lystra on his second missionary journey, that he enlisted Timothy as a fellow labourer.

Acts 16:1 – 4

In Timothy's experience, we learn that the submissive mind is not something that automatically appears in the life of a believer. Timothy, like us, had to **develop and cultivate** the mind of Christ. It was not natural to him to be a servant, but as he walked on with the Lord and worked alongside Paul he became the kind of servant that Paul could trust and God could bless. It is to Timothy that Paul writes the injunction in –

2 Timothy 5:22 NIV

'Lay hands on no man suddenly'

Paul is saying, **do not promote** a man or a woman until they have proved themselves beyond doubt to be honest servants of the flock which has been entrusted to you. So what we are discovering is that young Timothy has a servant's mind and a servant's heart.

Philippians 2:19-21

Timothy naturally cared for people and was concerned about their needs. He was not interested in winning friends and influencing people. He was interested in their physical and spiritual wellbeing.

Paul was concerned about the church in Philippi and he wanted someone to go there and tell them about his concern for them and to get the facts about the work. There were hundreds of Christians in Rome, Paul greets 26 of them by name in Romans 16 – but not one of them was available to make the trip.

Philippians 2:21 NIV

'For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.'

In a very real sense we all live in either –

Philippians 1:21 NIV

'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.'

Or –

Philippians 2:21 NIV

'For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.'

Before we go any further, you may wish to ask yourself a question. *'Am I more concerned for the welfare of others than myself? Do I live in Philippians 1:21 or Philippians 2:21?'* Talk to the Lord about your answer.

Timothy was concerned for the welfare of others. It was natural to him because he had a servant's mind; not so the believers in Rome.

Philippians 1:15-17

Timothy is not interested in promoting or supporting any divisive cause. He was only interested in the spiritual condition of God's people and this concern was natural to him. The question is how did this concern develop?

The answer to that is he had a servant's training –

Philippians 2:22

Paul did not add Timothy to his team the day he was saved. Paul was too wise to make an error like that. Paul left Timothy behind to become part of the fellowship at Derbe and Lystra and it was there that Timothy grew in spiritual matters and learned how to serve the Lord. How often these days'

serving the Lord is equated with serving men. We must learn to serve under the Holy Spirit's direction, not man's election or we find ourselves pleasing man, not God in our work and service.

When Paul returns to the area a few years later, he finds that young Timothy is well thought of -

Acts 16:2 NIV

'The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him.'

Some years later Paul writes to Timothy about the importance of permitting new converts to grow before thrusting them into positions of service.

1 Timothy 3:6,7 NIV

'⁶He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. ⁷He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.'

What's the devil's trap? Pride and presumption.

There is a story of a man in America a well known, a popular, night club musician. He was 'born again' and became very anxious to find out what he should do. A pastor suggested that he join a good local church and grow there, this suggestion did not appeal to the man. The minister then asked if this man's wife was saved, he answered that she was not, but he hoped to win her. But he did not want to wait to serve the Lord; he wanted to start right then. The pastor said *'You do not have to wait - get busy in your local assembly and use your talents there for Jesus'* – 'No' replied the man. *'You don't know who I am, I am a big star and everybody knows me, I want to start my own organisation, make records and draw crowds and get people saved.'* The pastor warned the *'place to start winning hearts is in your own home, God will open up places of service for you as He sees that you are ready, meanwhile give yourself time to grow'*.

But the man could not wait and did not take the pastor's advice; instead he set up his own organisation. It lasted less than a year - not only did he lose his testimony, but because he was away from his wife and family so much, they became estranged from him. Eventually he drifted away and disappeared from public ministry a broken and bankrupt man. His branches went out further than his roots went down, as a result he fell and the problem was – pride and presumption.

Paul didn't make that mistake with Timothy. He gave him time to put his roots down, grow and get established, and then he enlisted Timothy's help - when he had proved himself as a servant.

Proverbs 27:2

2 Timothy 3:10 – 17 NIV

Paul's Charge to Timothy

‘¹⁰You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, ¹¹persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. ¹²In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, ¹³while evil men and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.’

Jesus trained His disciples in the same way. He gave them personal instructions with on the job training.

Experience without teaching can lead to discouragement and teaching without experience can lead to spiritual deadness. Everything that you learn from these studies will be applied by God in your every day circumstances in order that He may make your knowledge perfect by experience because we need both. A whole heap of book learning never did anybody any good.

God has a series of elegant tests which bring us lower and lower until He promotes us to the place of a servant. Stephen in the book of Acts is a prime example. A man full of the Holy Spirit is promoted to wait on tables.

Acts 6:1 - 6

Timothy knew the meaning of sacrifice and service and God rewarded Timothy for his faithfulness. Timothy had the joy of serving with Paul in some of the most difficult assignments. In fact, Paul mentions Timothy at least 24 times in his letters, but God Himself gave Timothy a great reward –

2 Timothy 4:1-5 New International Version

*‘¹In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, ***I give you this charge:** ²Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. ³For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. ⁵But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.’*

**Emphasis added.*

Timothy is given the commission to carry on from Paul. Paul wanted to go to Philippi, but he had to send Timothy. What an honour. Not only was Timothy Paul’s spiritual son, but he was also his servant and he became his substitute.

The submissive mind is not the product of an hour's sermon or a week's seminar or even a year's service, the submissive mind grows in us as we choose daily His will not our own in every circumstance, as we bow the knee to the Lordship of Jesus in our lives and serve those whom He directs us to serve with willingness of heart.

Epaphroditus:

Philippians 2:25 – 30

Paul says he is 'a Hebrew of Hebrews' Philippians 3:5 – meaning 'I am fully a Jewish man'. Timothy on the other hand was part Jew and part Gentile. Epaphroditus was a full Gentile as far as we know. He was a member of the church at Philippi who risked his life to carry a missionary offering to Paul at Rome.

Philippians 4:8

He was a mature Christian.

Philippians 2:25

Described as a fellow worker and fellow soldier, this man had undergone the servant's training. Like Timothy, Epaphroditus was concerned about others.

Philippians 2:26 – 30 NASB

'²⁶because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. ²⁹Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; ³⁰ because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.'

Epaphroditus not only contributed to the work regarding Paul, but he also took the offering to Paul, risking his life. After arriving at Rome Epaphroditus became very ill and nearly died. This delayed his return to his own church at Philippi and the people became concerned about him. Epaphroditus was then, concerned not for himself, but for those who were concerned for him. This man lived in -

Philippians 1:21

not

Philippians 2:21

Philippians 2:28-30

²⁸Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. ²⁹Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; ³⁰because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.'

Epaphroditus blessed Paul and his own church and Paul admonishes the church to honour Epaphroditus because of his sacrifice and service. Jesus gets the glory, and His servant receives the honour due to him – let another man praise you.

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 New American Standard Version (NASB)

Christian Conduct

¹²But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labour among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another.'

There is no contradiction between –

Philippians 2:7 and 29

⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.'

²⁹Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him'

Jesus emptied Himself in his gracious act of humiliation and God exalted Him. Epaphroditus sacrificed himself with no thought of reward and Paul encouraged the church to hold him in honour to the glory of God. Here is the proof that the life of sacrifice and service to others is the joy filled life, that submission to God resulting in the submissive, humble mind toward God and man is the key to effective service in the Kingdom of God.

We end this chapter with the great hymn and pattern of our Lord Jesus Christ –

Philippians 2:1 - 18 NIV

Imitating Christ's Humility

¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:

⁶Who, being in very nature God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,

⁷but made himself nothing,

taking the very nature of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

⁸*And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death—
even death on a cross!*

⁹*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Shining as Stars

¹²*Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.*

¹⁴*Do everything without complaining or arguing, ¹⁵so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe ¹⁶as you hold out the word of life—in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour for nothing. ¹⁷But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.'*

Amen.

