

SESSION 21: CHOOSING (pt 15)

Called ♦ Chosen

God calls all of us, but according to scripture, few are actually chosen for the work of His kingdom. He can only choose those who are *faithful* and *fruitful*.

14 "For many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt 22:14)

Using Timothy as an example we can see that he was:

- a disciple (Acts 16:1)
- a man of good reputation (Acts 16:2)
- teachable (Phil 2:20)
- faithful (Phil 2:22)
- an example for other believers (Phil 2:20-22)
- an overcomer of personal issues (Acts 16:3)

You have to learn how to overcome your personal issues. This will require you to have a heart that is willing to submit to God's authority in your life, yield to Him, learn what He is asking of you and make the **change**. Timothy was willing to submit to Paul's authority, even when it was very painful for him (ex: Paul required Timothy to be circumcised to remove any cultural obstacle to ministry among the Jews in that area, because many of them knew that Timothy's father was a Greek). Change can feel painful, but it is necessary to yield to God and the culture of His kingdom if we want to be chosen for His work.

Watch your heart throughout this process. This is very important. Remember, everything always comes back to the heart.

You can obey God, and not be submissive, but you cannot be submissive without obedience.

 **Obedience is an act, but submission is the motive of the heart.**

Every circumstance, especially the really difficult ones, are opportunities to be trained. God is equipping you through circumstances in your life, so see the challenges and difficulties as stepping stones to a deeper walk with God. Use them as an invitation to abide with Him and pursue His heart. Let Him mature and establish you in Him by pruning and bringing necessary changes so that you will be prepared to fulfill the call He has on your life, and the purpose for which you were born into this moment in history. There are souls attached to your obedience, your surrender, and your destiny; but He can only choose us if we are living according to His will, His way, and for His pleasure.

Paul Commends Timothy

Philippians 2:19-24 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. 22 But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. 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.

1. Chosen because of faithfulness
2. Chosen because of fruitfulness
3. Chosen because of God's covenant
4. Chosen because of a willingness to change

Philippians 2: 19-24 NLT

19 If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon for a visit. Then he can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. 20 I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. 21 All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. 22 But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. 23 I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. 24 And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.

Paul Commends Epaphroditus

Philippians 2: 25-30 NLT

25 Meanwhile, I thought I should send Epaphroditus back to you. He is a true brother, co-worker, and fellow soldier. And he was your messenger to help me in my need. 26 I am sending him because he has been longing to see you, and he was very distressed that you heard he was ill. 27 And he certainly was ill; in fact, he almost died. But God had mercy on him—and also on me, so that I would not have one sorrow after another.

28 So I am all the more anxious to send him back to you, for I know you will be glad to see him, and then I will not be so worried about you. 29 Welcome him in the Lord's love and with great joy, and give him the honor that people like him deserve. 30 For he risked

his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while doing for me what you couldn't do from far away.

Philippians 2: 25-30 NKJV

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. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; 30 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.

For further study:

Philippians 2: 25-30 and 4:18

Who was Epaphroditus? What was his role in Paul's life and how did he serve the church? What can we learn from him as a fellow believer?

Very little is known about him. He's only mentioned here in Philippians in chapters 2 and 4, but his life is worth taking time to examine and learn some important qualities from since he became a trusted representative of the Philippian church.

His titles as referred to by Paul:

Philippians 2:25; 29-30

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

1. My brother - There is no evidence that he was ever given a title of pastor, evangelist, prophet, teacher or apostle. We only know him by his name, Epaphroditus. He was a believer who made himself available to the Lord to be used however God wanted. Paul was an apostle, yet he elevates Epaphroditus as an equal and calls him "my brother." It is good to remember that regardless of our

office or position, we are all brothers and sisters in Christ; equal in value and necessity.

Question: As pastors, leaders, business owners, people of influence, do I elevate my own importance above others or do I see them as equal in value and importance?

2. My fellow worker - Paul commonly referred to others as “fellow workers” who were involved in furthering the gospel. We see here that this means Epaphroditus was not just a hearer of the Word, but he was also a doer of the Word. He put to practice what he had learned, and was a worker in God’s kingdom. We must be available and willing to do the work of the ministry that we are called to. It is not enough to say we are called to a specific office, position or title; we must diligently work at whatever we are called to do for the sake of building His kingdom; not our own.

Questions: Am I using what God has put in my hands for the kingdom? Am I working for the growth and advancement of God’s kingdom? Am I putting to practice what I am hearing by “doing the work of the ministry?”

3. My fellow soldier - by referring to Epaphroditus as a “fellow soldier” Paul is also giving us insight into the relationship they had. Paul had enemies in many places that he traveled. We also know from his writings that Paul often wrestled with himself in battling the influence of satan in his life (Oh, wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death... Romans 7:15-25) Paul also dealt with demons and false teachers. In referring to Epaphroditus as a “fellow soldier,” this shows us that Paul recognized him as someone who took a stand against enemies, including satan and those who opposed the gospel. We need the support of each other as we are standing in opposition to so many things. Even more so as the days get harder for Christian believers, we need to have each others back and stand together shoulder to shoulder in unity against all the tricks and traps of the enemy, and those he would use to oppose the gospel.

Questions: Are you easily distracted and defeated by the struggles or difficulties that come your way? Would others say that you always seem defeated and under the weight of difficulties, or do you wear the armor of God and stand against the attacks of the enemy? Can others look to you as an example of someone who walks in victory and faith; or does your life represent fear and defeat?

4. Your messenger - In Philippians 4:18 we see he was sent on a mission to deliver money and gifts to Paul who was under house arrest.. The church in Philippi

obviously trusted Epaphroditus with this important task. Research tells us that it would have taken Epaphroditus 7 weeks to make this trip to Rome. He was faithful to this mission, and trusted by the church that he would make sure to deliver everything that the church had gathered for Paul (including the financial support they sent for Paul), and keep it safely guarded until he arrived in Rome.

Questions: Are you trustworthy with the things of God? In a practical sense, can God trust you with the things He gives you? Can your church and others trust you with the responsibilities that you have? Could they place an offering in your hands and send you to someone to deliver money/gifts and be sure that you would handle it properly?

5. Minister to my need - after Epaphroditus arrived in Rome and gave Paul the gift(s) from the church in Philippi he stayed and helped Paul in whatever areas he needed it. He served him even as he was so ill that he almost died.

Questions: Doing simple tasks for others and being a servant to all is a spiritual ministry. Do you look for ways to serve your local church, and the members? Do you care for their needs and take notice of their struggle and areas they may be lacking in?

- **Could the person(s) discipling you write this same thing about you?**

Paul Commends your name

19 If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send your name to you soon for a visit. Then *they* can cheer me up by telling me how you are getting along. 20 I have no one else like your name, who genuinely cares about your welfare. 21 All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. 22 But you know how your name has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has served with me in preaching the Good News. 23 I hope to send him to you just as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me here. 24 And I have confidence from the Lord that I myself will come to see you soon.