

Text: Phil. 2:19-24

Title: "Timothy – an exception to the rule"

Time: 10/31/2021 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: What we refer to today as *the generation gap* is an ancient invention of Satan. In his 1787 painting named "The Death of Socrates," Jacques-Louis David depicts the old philosopher on a couch receiving the poison hemlock he would drink in fulfillment of the sentence against him.



Socrates had been convicted unjustly of poisoning the youth of Athens, and the painting shows the shame of the city's citizens as they execute their great philosopher-teacher.

The death of Socrates is remembered by history as a shameful tragedy because Socrates ministered convicting wisdom to the youth of Athens, which they rejected. Socrates described the youth of Athens this way: "Our youth now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority,

disrespect for older people. Children nowadays are tyrants. They no longer rise when their elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers" [quoted in James Boyce, *Philippians: An Expositional Commentary*, 156].

Timothy was different than most young people. Paul's description of him here is best summarized as an exception to the rule. In a world of generation gaps, young Timothy lived differently, and Paul was greatly encouraged by this difference as he faced the possibility of execution for the cause of Christ.

*Timothy* is short for *Timotheus* (v. 19). *Timotheus* means *the honor of God*. What made Timothy different from most young people begins with the desire of his mother and grandmother that he be someone who grew up to honor God. In our study of the Pastor Epistles Sunday afternoons, we will come to 2 Timothy, where Paul gives us the source of this wonderful difference in Timothy: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (3:15).

Timothy was a young man who honored God because Jesus had saved him from his sins through faith. His mother and grandmother had taught him the holy scriptures. He had learned as a young child what Jesus did for him on the cross of Calvary, dying for his sins and rising from the tomb. Timothy, convicted over his sin and need of a Savior, had trusted in Christ Jesus for his salvation. It is this mighty work of Christ, the salvation of the sinner, that made Timothy an exception to the rule.

If Christ has done the same for us, we too should live lives that honor God in an exceptional, uncommon way, both young and old. I want to highlight two ways in which young Timothy's God-honoring life was the exception to the rule of a dark world divided by generation gaps and so much more.

I. Timothy honored God through his commitment to Jesus Christ (vv. 19-21).

Illustration: I was greatly encouraged by a text message on Tuesday morning, September 14. The day before I had participated in the golf tournament for The Wilds of New England at Crotchet Mountain. I golfed that day with two others in a threesome, one of whom was a brother from Bow named Steve.

What encouraged me on that following morning was that I found a text message that Steve had sent me in the early morning hours. In our message exchange, he told me that he had been unable to sleep because he was concerned for and praying for our church. He just texted me to let me know. We had talked about our ministry here the day before while golfing, and though I slept quite well, this brother needed comfort from the Lord over his concern for us.

Application: I think Paul would have texted the Philippian church in the middle of the night if he could have. His heart of concern for them is the same as Steve's was for us. He needed to know how the Philippian church was doing, so he was going to send Timothy to make sure they were ok (v. 19).

We need that spirit too. We need to have a care for one another, Jesus's church, that is strong enough that we need to

know how one another is doing. We should care about sister churches this way too. Cultivating a mutual care for each other is a big reason why we have one-another assemblies in addition to our worship time. We want to encourage that level of concern in us, which Paul had, and which Paul knew Timothy to have. It is an exceptional concern, and Paul explains why it is so very exceptional (vv. 20-21).

It occurred to me that a good way to help us understand verse 21 is to try to find in our New Testament what things are “the things of Jesus Christ.” A simple way to begin to do that is to look at the passages in the four Gospels where the word “My” is on the lips of Jesus. Jesus called some things His, and these are the things of Jesus Christ.

More so than anything else, Jesus spoke of the heavenly Father as His Father, of God, as His God. Jesus knew God the Father as His Father in a way no one else has: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27). Everything that Jesus called His was His because of His Father, in obedience to His Father, and for the glory of His Father. Like a vineyard exists for the vinedresser, Jesus said, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman” (John 15:1).

At the age of twelve, Jesus determined to be about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49), and when He had finally completed that business, His dying prayer was, “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23:46).

In addition to His Father, Jesus spoke of His words, His voice, His commandments, and His sayings. “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it will be done unto you” (John 15:7); “If ye keep My

commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (John 15:10); "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12); "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also" (John 15:20).

At times, Jesus spoke of His body, His blood, His spirit, His flesh, His life, and His will, but every time He spoke of these things of His, He explained how they would be given for us in death for our sins. And so the purpose of His human existence was to drink His Gethsemane cup and spend His time on the cross bearing our sins. His life and death are life-giving bread from heaven: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

Jesus spoke of His yoke and burden (Matt. 11:30), His peace (John 14:27), His kingdom (John 18:36), His glory (John 17:24), and often of the authority of His name: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16).

All of these things are things of Jesus Christ. But the thing of Christ that I think Paul had in mind, when he wrote these words about the natural tendency of our hearts: "For all seek their own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's," is Jesus's people, His church. He calls them His sheep, His disciples, His friends, and His family: "But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my

mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!" (Matt. 12:48-49).

Paul tells us that Timothy honored God through his commitment to the things of Jesus Christ, and those things are fellow believers like you and me. Timothy sought to care for his fellow believers.

How are we doing with that? Would anyone say of us that we care for the things of Jesus Christ more than we care for our own things? God is dishonored today, because we live in day of the missing Timothys. And no wonder – Timothy was the exception to the rule. But as that exception, he is also an example of the believers, and his life demonstrates what we must be to honor God like he did, with a commitment to Jesus Christ.

II. Timothy honored God through his service with a faithful father (vv. 22-24).

Application: The phrase in verse 20, "who will *naturally* care for your state," is actually a word that speaks of a birthright. One commentator calls it "an instinct derived from his spiritual parentage" [Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians*, 121]. Paul explains that Timothy had served with him like a son with the father. He had learned from Paul that the things of Jesus Christ are His people, and in Christlikeness, he had learned to love them more than he loved himself.

Illustration: I would like for us to go back to that first visit Timothy ever made to the city of Philippi. He was accompanied by two older co-laborers, Paul and Silas, and we know from Acts that Luke had joined their ministry team also.

Not long into their time in Philippi, Paul and Silas are imprisoned. They fill the jail with their singing, but what would Luke and Timothy have been doing that night? How might they have felt left to themselves in this strange land?

That question makes me think of another young companion of Paul's ministry, John Mark. Facing a similar night, John Mark decided he had had enough and headed home. That Timothy made it through a lot of difficult nights in gospel ministry is the reason Paul describes him as he does in verse 22: "But ye know the proof of him."

But there is more to Timothy here than just his courage and faithfulness through the difficulties of gospel ministry. There is also a loyalty to a faithful father in the faith: "as a son with the father, he has served with me." The gospel ministry of the local church is a family business. The family is not connected by flesh and blood, but rather by the new birth and a disciple-making care of older believers for younger ones. In order to honor God the way Timothy did, we need to serve with our faithful fathers in the faith.

I live with the reality that my fathers in the faith would not attend a number of churches that are gospel preaching today. They would tell me that their rock-n-roll worship style is worldly and unbiblical. I do not think I have the wherewithal to tell them that they are wrong. For that reason, in order to serve with those who mentored me, I hope to honor God in a gospel ministry they would attend. I hope to be like Timothy in this regard. I want to honor God like He did, serving as a son with his fathers in the faith.

Conclusion: So how shall we find our young Timothys today, in our world where everyone still seeks his own things and not the things of Jesus Christ?

I think we will find them in the same way Paul found his: “I trust in the Lord Jesus” (vv. 19, 24). We need to trust in the Lord Jesus to set a God-honoring example for young Timothy (v. 24), and then we also need to trust in the Lord Jesus that he will give us a Timothy to send to a needy local church (v. 19). We trust in the Lord Jesus. He is the one who gives our churches their Timothys. We pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into the harvest, while we set the example of people who are laboring there ourselves, committing what we have learned to faithful men who will teach others also.

Have we sought our own things, or are we truly seeking the things of Jesus Christ? Will we let the Lord make us like Timothy, the exception to the rule our world desperately needs today?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*