

# CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
Philippians 2.19-30 | October 18, 2020  
Prepared by Rev. Curtis A. Bronzan  
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

## I. Introduction to this Study

We continue in the Apostle Paul's letter to the first century Philippian church. After encouraging the Philippians to emulate Jesus' example of "looking to the interests of others" and reporting on his own "being poured out like a drink offering," Paul turns his attention to fellow servants Timothy and Epaphroditus.

## II. Connecting with One Another

Who do you look up to? Why?

Do you know of anyone who looks up to you?

## III. Study the Text

### a. Reread **Philippians 2.14-18**.

These verses include rich imagery for Paul's first century audience. Earlier, in verse 7, Paul notes that Jesus "poured out" or "emptied" himself in taking on human flesh. In verse 17, Paul, the "Apostle to the Gentiles," uses similar terminology to describe his own life and ministry.

What metaphor does he use? What does it make you think of? Why do you think he speaks of himself this way?

### b. Read **Philippians 2.19-24**.

What gets your attention in these verses? What questions do you have?

Where do you see similarities to themes that Paul has already engaged?

Why do you think he takes time – and papyrus! – to talk about Timothy? (Feel free to "read between the lines"!)

### c. In verses **20-22**, Paul highlights four things about Timothy. What are they?

Try writing them here in your own words:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)



d. Why do you think Paul held Timothy in such high regard?

Which of Timothy's traits are most praiseworthy? Why?

e. Read **Philippians 2.25-30**.

Paul the Apostle has been commending Timothy, a young pastor, to the Philippians. But Epaphroditus, on the other hand, was what is sometimes called a "layman" (not an apostle, not a pastor, but a member of the Philippian fellowship).

Look through these verses and try answering these questions:

Where is he from?

Why is he with Paul?

Why is he returning?

What happened to him?

Why does Paul want him to be "welcomed" and "honored"?

f. Despite not being an "apostle" or a "pastor," Epaphroditus gets the most of Paul's attention – even more than Timothy. First, he is called a *brother*. Despite being Greek with a name inspired by the goddess Aphrodite, Paul uses one of the closest familial terms. What do you think bonded them together so closely?

Have you ever been that close with someone outside of your family? What bound you together?

g. Secondly, Paul calls Epaphroditus his *coworker*. Remember, Paul is "the Apostle to the Gentiles"! Timothy is called as a pastor. But this Epaphroditus, mentioned only in Philippians, is considered a coworker of Paul's?

What does this reveal about hierarchy within the Christian church?

h. Lastly, Paul calls Epaphroditus a *fellow soldier*.

What does this imply about his level of commitment? (Note again, verse 27, for the effects of the "battle" upon him)

i. Where do Paul's three illustrations of Christ-like faith (himself, Timothy, Epaphroditus) most challenge you? Why?

How will you respond to this challenge to live into Christ-likeness?

IV. Pray

a. Lift up areas of your own life where God is calling and causing you to grow.

b. Pray for the witness of the church during this difficult and divisive election season.

c. Ask God for the wisdom and courage for how you can best mirror the humility of Jesus Christ.

