

>>>>>> *Philippians - Lesson 04* <<<<<<<

21) When we last met, we had spent some time discussing a list of characteristics that Paul had called us to have:

- i) Same love.
- ii) United in spirit.
- iii) One purpose.
- iv) Not conceited and self centered.
- v) Considering others more important than ourselves.
- vi) Looking out for the interests of others.

22) Paul continues with a call to the ultimate example of one who got the list completely correct.

23) This will be a description of Christ as the ultimate “servant of God” and our model for all time.

Philippians 2:5–8 (NASB 2020)

⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, as He *already* existed in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself *by* taking the form of a bond-servant *and* being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death: death on a cross.

24) What Paul has given us here in his description of Jesus as the perfect example of one who fulfilled our list of descriptions from a bit ago.

- a) This description models primarily the vertical component of Christ’s relationships.

25) Paul opens the passage with a challenge to his readers; “***Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.***”

26) Obviously, we need that vertical relationship as did Christ. However, there are differences.

27) There are several components to this attitude which Paul describes.

- a) Even though He existed in the form of God did not grasp equality with God.
- b) He emptied himself:
 - i) taking the form of a bondservant
 - ii) being born in the likeness of men
 - iii) humbled Himself
 - (1) by being obedient to the point of death on a cross

28) There is an interesting word here that we should look at.

- a) In verse 6 there is a phrase “something to be grasped”.
- b) The Greek word used here for “grasped” is *harpagmos*. It appears only here in the Bible.
- c) It seems to mean “robbery” or “something to be seized by force.”
- d) John Berry in his Faithlife Study Bible says:

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“Paul may be saying that Christ did not consider equality with God, which He already possessed, something to be exploited for selfish gain. Alternatively, Paul could be saying that Christ did not consider the state of being equal to God to consist in acts of grasping and taking. Either way, Paul’s emphasis is on Christ’s humble attitude and refusal to act selfishly despite His equality with God.”⁴

29) Of course, those comments really take us back to our list that we opened with – not acting selfishly is really the bottom line of that list.

What does it mean that Jesus “emptied” himself? Of what did Jesus empty himself by becoming human?

When we face pressure in life, do we tend to become more selfish or less selfish?

What steps can you think of that would help us ensure that we consistently look to others’ interests instead of our own?

Philippians 2:9–11 (NASB 2020)

⁹For this reason also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and *that* every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

30) Our God was and is pleased greatly by the attitude which Christ displayed.

31) What we must realize here is that He will also be pleased when we show that same selfless, servant attitude.

- a) Obviously we will not be given the name and exultation afforded Jesus but God is pleased none the less.

So, here is a question for your pondering – How much joy would you feel in your heart to have God feel that way about you – to be that pleased with your attitude and life?

Philippians 2:12–13 (NASB 2020)

¹²So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and

⁴ John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Php 2:6.

trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for *His* good pleasure.

32) A couple of facts we need to emphasize here.

- a) First, Paul knows he wants to visit Philippi again but he also knows it will not be before they read this letter and, truthfully, it may not be at all.
- b) Paul had just been saying in order for them to make his joy complete, they should
 - i) be of the same mind
 - ii) maintain the same love
 - iii) be united in spirit
 - iv) Don't be selfish and consider others more important than themselves.
 - v) Have the attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...

33) Since they were doing this in his presence he wanted them to continue to do it when he was not there.

34) Paul then tells them something a bit odd “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”

How do you define what Paul meant by his comment “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”?

Comment: NLT = reverence and fear. One commentator calls it “utter seriousness”.

35) Another way to ask the question perhaps in a clarifying manner is,

What would it mean for you to work out the practical implications of your salvation in this way?

36) N.T. Wright, Dale and Sandy Larsen in their Philippian Study Commentary make the comment:

Paul is telling the Philippians that they must grow into maturity and take responsibility for themselves. Paul isn't there, and for all either of them know he may never be there again. He wants them to work out for themselves (on their own without him, but not without God) **what this business of being saved will mean in practice**. He stresses that the work of salvation is God's work from start to finish.⁵

37) We must be clear here – this is important.

- a) We know how we are saved; however, we also know that we cannot go through the act of accepting the Lord as our savior and just continue to live as we please.
- b) This is the part that each of us must work out for ourselves.

⁵ Tom Wright, Dale Larsen, and Sandy Larsen, [*Philippians: 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups*](#), For Everyone Bible Study Guides (London: SPCK, 2010), 32.

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- c) Each of us is different in our temptations, weaknesses, and strengths.
- d) Each of us is different in what our talents are and how we need to use them.
- e) All of which are part of the overall picture of our salvation.
- f) Never let us think we can work for our salvation but –
 - i) Always know that salvation involves a response of living for our Lord.

38) We would really be remiss if we did not tie in the last part of this passage, verse 13 as well.

- a) The reason we must work out our salvation is:

¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to desire and to work for *His* good pleasure.

39) In other words, by accomplishing this we allow God to work in us and to accomplish what He wants and needs to.

40) Continuing...

Philippians 2:14–18 (NASB 2020)

¹⁴Do all things without complaining or arguments; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding firmly the word of life, so that on the day of Christ I can take pride because I did not run in vain nor labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸ You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

41) As we begin this set of verses, Paul, unlike the last set begins with what seems to be a simple command – basically, don't complain or argue.

42) We saw a perfect example of what that means in the last chapter. I call us back to Phil 1:12-18.

- a) Paul's attitude in these verses is absolutely amazing!
 - i) He has been in prison for more than four years at this point yet, he begins by calling it "my circumstances."
 - ii) He does not complain about his lack of freedom or any other negative point.
 - iii) Instead he simply lists all the positive things that have happened as a result:

43) He goes on to tell us here that if we do these things, there are some things that are given:

- i) Prove ourselves to be blameless, innocent, children of God, and above reproach.
- ii) Lights in the world holding to the word of life.

44) The obvious question is "how do we do this?" – as selfish humans, this is not easy.

45) Leaving that as a given, a somewhat different question is in two parts.

How would our lives be impacted if we set our minds and hearts to accomplish these two things?

Second question –

How would the kingdom (the immediate portion that we are a part of) be affected?