

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

- 1) Moving on to chapter 2, we will see that virtually the entire chapter is about being like Christ.
 - a) His humility, obedience, His life as the beloved Son of God and most importantly, what that should mean to us.

Philippians 2:1–2 (NASB 2020)

Be like Christ

¹ Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

- 2) I think it is important to see the key to this introductory paragraph as the word “***if***.”
 - a) In these statements, Paul is using a technique which in essence sets the user up to give an expected answer for themselves.
 - b) These clauses could have easily been written as:
 - i) Since there is encouragement in Christ
 - ii) Since there is consolation of love
 - iii) Since there is a fellowship of the Spirit
 - iv) Since there is affection and compassion
 - c) In fact, some argue that they should be translated this way.
 - d) However, in that case, the answers are given – no thought is required.
 - i) Instead, the statements are affirmations on the part of the writer.
 - e) By making the statements in the form of “***if clauses***”, it forces us to mentally conclude the positive answer for ourselves, not stating it for us.
 - f) Paul’s goal was not to make us question these things as true or false.
 - g) It was instead to remind us that they are present so we mentally convert them to...
 - i) There ***is*** encouragement in Christ
 - ii) There ***is*** consolation of love
 - iii) There ***is*** a fellowship of the Spirit
 - iv) There ***is*** affection and compassion
 - h) If we think about it in those terms, they become our affirmations – affirmations on the part of the reader!
 - i) Those positive conclusions are key to the completion of the statement in verse 2 where there is an unstated “***then***”
 - j) Paul leaves us no choice – ***(then) AGREE WITH EACH OTHER!***

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- k) Before we say we are going to do that, let’s do our “do diligence,”
- l) Let’s talk about each one of these ideas for just a moment and make sure we first understand them and then agree with them.
- m) Remember, these are all in relation to our being Christians, being in Christ and being in Fellowship.

Encouragement in Christ – seems simple enough, somebody put a definition to it?

- 3) Consolation means the comfort received by a person after a loss or disappointment.

What about consolation of love?

And fellowship of the Spirit?

NIV if any common sharing in the Spirit⁸

ESV any participation in the Spirit⁹

Finally, affection and compassion?

- 4) Eugene Peterson’s “the Message” does a really good job of summarizing what we have just been talking about.

Philippians 2:1–2 (MSG)

2 If you’ve gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you *care*—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends.

- 5) So, reading on, we look at Paul’s ideas about agreeing with each other in some detail.
- 6) And, in doing we see that he lays the foundation of what it means to be like Christ.

Philippians 2:2–4 (NASB 2020)

² make my joy complete

- 1) This is an imperative – a command.
- 2) What follows is a string of how’s.

by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility consider

⁸ [*The New International Version*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), Php 2:1.

⁹ [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 2:1.

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one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not *merely* look out for your own personal *interests*, but also for the *interests* of others.

3) A more literal (more formal vs. functional) translation of verses 2 and 3:

²complete my joy, that you think the same thing, having the same love, [being] united in spirit, thinking the one thing, ³[doing] nothing according to selfish ambition or according to empty conceit, but in humility considering one another as surpassing yourselves¹⁰

4) That is obviously more pointed than the NASB rendering but the message is the same.

5) The phrase “empty conceit” used here is a single Greek word (*kenodoxia*) used only here in the entire New Testament.

a) It means according to BDAG –

i) Note, BDAG stands for Baur, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich. This is the best Greek lexicon we have today. Saying BDAG is to Greek as saying Webster is to English.

a vain or exaggerated self-evaluation, vanity, conceit, excessive ambition.

6) The primary item in all of this is *being of the same mind*.

a) Most of the items in the list simply go to the completion of that thought.

i) being of the same mind

ii) being of Same love.

iii) being United in spirit.

iv) being of One purpose. (In the literal, “thinking one thing”)

v) Not being conceited and self centered.

vi) Considering others more important than ourselves.

vii) Looking out for the interests of others.

7) These are ideas which anyone wanting to be like Jesus would need to take into their lives and live out each day.

8) As we said in the introduction, though this is a very personal letter and Paul does keep it positive and upbeat throughout, there are still issues he must deal with.

9) Here he is dealing gently with some amount of disunity and perhaps divisive rivalry.

10) It is likely **not** pervasive in the church but as we will see in chapter 4:2, there are at least a couple of folks who need these thoughts directly.

Philippians 4:2 (NASB 2020)

² I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

11) Looking at the list again,

¹⁰ Lidija Novakovic, [*Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*](#), ed. Lidija Novakovic, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2020), 41.

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

Though they are related, there are two major themes in this list – can you pick out what they are?

- 12) Unity and Selflessness.

What do you think would be the most important *individual* item in the list?

Why?

Is there a least important *individual* item in the list? **DON'T SEE ONE**

Why?

Which one of these do you think most of us have a problem with?

- 13) We said earlier that we would see more of what Paul meant when he said:

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

- 14) As we concluded, this perhaps means that we are “being consumed” by His concerns, values, and mission.

Is there any part of Paul’s list that does not fit into Christ’s concerns, values, or mission?

Is this all encompassing? (to say it another way, If we get this right, are we good to go?) **What if anything is missing?**

- 15) Not really, this is really the horizontal components of Christianity – us to our fellowman.

- 16) It is vital however that we also remember the vertical component – us to God our creator.

- 17) It perhaps all comes down to WHY we do all these things.

- 18) We can be the nicest person in the world but if we do not have a relationship with God and Christ as we should, we are just that – a nice person – nothing more!

- 1) Paul continues with a call to the ultimate example of one who got the list completely correct.
- 2) This will be a description of Christ as the ultimate “servant of God” and our model for all time.
- 3) As an aside, many scholars consider verses 6-11 to be from a hymn which was used by the early Christian church.

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- a) This is why it is shown in an indented poetic like format in some translations. (NIV, NET, NA28, and CSB)
- b) It shows Jesus as a model of servanthood.

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.

- 4) We know that Jesus fulfilled the horizontal relationships that we were just discussing by observing His life.
- 5) What Paul has given us here is a description of Jesus as the perfect example of that vertical relationship.
- 6) Paul opens the passage with a challenge to his readers; **“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”**
- 7) Obviously, we need that vertical relationship as did Christ. However, there are differences.
- 8) There are several components to this attitude which Paul describes.
- 9) As we discuss them think not only of the vertical relationship but think of how they play into the fulfillment of that horizontal relationship we were just discussing.
- 10) First, Paul says **“He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped.”**
 - a) This word grasped is an interesting word.
 - i) The word used here for “grasped” appears only here in the Bible.
 - ii) It seems to mean “robbery” or “something to be seized by force.”
 - iii) John Berry in his Faithlife Study Bible says:

“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.”¹¹

- 11) Second – **“He emptied himself.”**

What does it mean that Jesus “emptied” himself?

¹¹ John D. Barry et al., Faithlife Study Bible (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Php 2:6.

To ask it another way perhaps, What did Jesus empty himself of by becoming human?

12) The next three items really take us back to our list that we considered earlier – especially the not acting selfishly part of that list.

- a) **taking the form of a bondservant**
- b) **being born in the likeness of men**
- c) **humbled Himself**

13) Finally, **“being obedient to the point of death on a cross.”**

14) Here is a different, but I think related question.

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?

1) Next, Paul shows the Philippians and us what the results of having that perfect vertical and horizontal relationship are.

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.

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

3) 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 with us as His children none the less.

So, here is a question for us to think about – 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?

The answer, of course, goes to our motivation for living as Christ!

4) So, continuing on...

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

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

- 5) 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) Same love.
 - iii) United in spirit.
 - iv) One purpose.
 - v) Not conceited and self centered.
 - vi) Considering others more important than ourselves.
 - vii) Looking out for the interests of others.
 - c) Then in the last passage he added – have the attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus...
- 6) Since they were doing this in his presence he wanted them to continue to do all of it when he was not there.
- 7) Paul then tells them something that at first glance seems a bit odd “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”
 - a) The New Living Translation renders that last phrase as “reverence and fear”.
 - b) One commentator called it “utter seriousness”.
 - c) That covers the “HOW” or seriousness of it but...

What do you think Paul meant by his comment “work out your own salvation”?

- 8) 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 our salvation?

- 9) 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.¹²

10) 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.
- 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 is 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.

11) 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.

12) In other words, by accomplishing this “working out of our salvation” we allow God to work in us and to accomplish what He wants and needs to.

13) This also ties to motivation and a proper relationship with Him AND all of this should be a true source of JOY for us everyday.

¹² Tom Wright, Dale Larsen, and Sandy Larsen, [*Philippians: 8 Studies for Individuals or Groups*](#), For Everyone Bible Study Guides (London: SPCK, 2010), 32.