

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

PHIL. 2:1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

NOTES

Affection for Christ's Church

Lesson Text: Philippians 2:1-13

Related Scriptures: I Corinthians 12:4-13; 14:1-5;
Ephesians 4:1-6; 5:15-21; Hebrews 10:19-25

TIME: A.D. 60-61

PLACE: from Rome

GOLDEN TEXT—"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3).

Lesson Exposition

Paul expressed thanksgiving to the Lord for the Philippians. Still, Paul knew that there were some interpersonal conflicts plaguing the church. Notably, two women, Euodia and Syntyche, presumably leaders in the church, disagreed over some aspect of ministry in Philippi (Phil. 4:2). One of Paul's main purposes in his letter was to urge them to keep corporate unity.

PLEA FOR A CHRISTLIKE MIND—Phil. 2:1-4

Potential for unity (Phil. 2:1). Paul begins his plea for a Christlike mind by reminding the Philippians of the blessings they had experienced already. What they shared in Christ could overcome their personal differences.

Preservation of unity (Phil. 2:2). Four times in verse 2, Paul referred to Christian unity. He urged the believers to be like-minded, rather than each one thinking of his own priorities.

Priority of unity (Phil. 2:3-4). Paul explained, using both negative and positive commands, how Christ brings unity.

From the negative perspective, Paul told the Philippians not to live for their own interests. "Strife" speaks of the conflict that comes from seeking personal gain and from lashing out in selfishness when one does not get what one wants. "Vainglory" is empty pride that places personal ambition ahead of the good of others.

On the positive side, Paul challenged the Philippians to demonstrate a humble mind by valuing other people as better than themselves. Instead of focusing on their own interests, they were to value the interests of others above their own.

PATTERN FOR A CHRISTLIKE MIND—Phil. 2:5-11

Example of selflessness (Phil. 2:5-6). In verse 2, Paul urged the Philippians to be like-minded and of one mind. Rather than insisting on their own way, they needed to develop the kind of mind that characterized Christ Jesus. Paul challenged them to focus on Christ and to follow His selfless example. Paul gave the Philippians the perfect example for their thinking and

living. His life demonstrates how God values humble service. Despite Christ's exalted status, He did not cling selfishly to His rights as God. Instead, He freely gave up His rights.

By doing that, Christ showed that those who have His mind do not think less of themselves but rather choose to think more of others. Instead of selfishly grasping their own rights, they surrender their rights for the benefit of others.

Example of submissiveness (Phil. 2:7-8). Temporarily setting aside the independent use of His divine powers, the almighty Son of God willingly humbled Himself. He experienced life as one who was also fully man. Jesus took on the form of a servant even to the point of taking upon Himself the sins of the human race. Christ thus revealed that His mind is characterized by costly submissiveness.

Example of satisfaction (Phil. 2:9-10). Because Jesus humbled Himself, the Father exalted Him through resurrection, ascension, and glorification. This will culminate with every living being one day bowing before Him.

Example of significance (Phil. 2:11). Serving as Christ served leads to genuine exaltation. The implication for the Philippians was clear. First and foremost, they ought to worship and serve Christ as Lord now. All of creation will one day kneel before Him, and He is worthy of worship now. Second, in order to get over self-centeredness, they needed to cultivate the selfless mind of Christ in serving others.

PRACTICE OF A CHRISTLIKE MIND **—Phil. 2:12-13**

Commitment to growth (Phil. 2:12). After pleading with the Philippians to be of one mind (vss. 1-4) and describing the perfect example of Christ (vss. 5-11), Paul explained how a Christlike mind functions in practice.

Paul urged them to work out their

salvation with fear and trembling. They were to nurture the salvation God implanted in their hearts, showing it in Christlike attitudes and actions.

Cooperation with God (Phil. 2:13). Paul's challenge to work out our salvation may seem overwhelming. We are well aware of how powerful sinful desires can be.

Paul assures us of God's help in that effort. As we work out our salvation, we can be confident that God is working with us. Although we are actively involved, God is the one who provides the power for spiritual victory. God will give us the power to accomplish what pleases Him through His Spirit.

—Daniel J. Estes

QUESTIONS

1. What spiritual resources did the Philippians share that gave them the potential for unity?
2. How did Paul emphasize the need for unity?
3. What did Paul tell the Philippians to avoid?
4. How did Christ serve as the perfect example of selfless humility for the Philippians?
5. How did Christ's example evidence the true worth of servants?
6. What steps in submissiveness did Christ take as He was on earth?
7. How did God the Father exalt Jesus Christ after His humiliation?
8. How will Christ be acknowledged by all creatures?
9. What part do Christians play in their own spiritual growth?
10. What does God provide to make spiritual growth possible?

—Daniel J. Estes

PRACTICAL POINTS

1. We cannot manufacture unity; it comes through humble submission to Him (Phil. 2:1-2).
2. Christlikeness requires putting others first (vss. 3-4).
3. We should imitate Christ, who humbly served others (vss. 5-7).
4. God honors Jesus' sacrifice. He is our model (vss. 8-9).
5. Jesus Christ is exalted! Let us praise Him (vss. 10-11).
6. We are to work out salvation's implications by conforming to God's will (vss. 12-13).

—Jarl K. Waggoner

RESEARCH AND DISCUSSION

1. How can like-mindedness and unity be promoted in Christ's body (Phil. 2:1-2)? Why is that important?
2. Why is it so difficult to esteem others better than ourselves (vs. 3)? What steps can be taken to combat the problem?
3. What do we learn about Jesus from this passage? Why is admiring Him so beneficial (cf. 1 John 3:2)?
4. What does it mean to have the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5)? What is the key to possessing the mind of Christ (cf. Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 2:13-16)?
5. How was true humility demonstrated by Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:6-8)? Can you cite examples of people, past or present, who have exhibited Christlike humility?
6. What does it mean that God gave Jesus the name that is above every name?

—Jarl K. Waggoner

Golden Text Illuminated

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3).

Paul rooted his appeal for humility directly in Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Our ho-hum moments of washing dishes and taking out the trash can be rooted in the breathtaking reality of God becoming a man, dying, and rising to eternal glory.

As God, Jesus clearly has infinitely more skill, power, and knowledge than us, and He is unquestionably our moral superior. He is perfect! How could He count anyone as “better” than Himself? The answer is that He was willing to humble Himself and serve others. Likewise, we are not called to false humility or to compare ourselves with others. We are called to humbly serve one another the way Christ did.

Paul's admonition opposes what society tells us to do. In a world that is focused on the relentless pursuit of getting ahead, Christians are called to willingly put others before ourselves.

Are there ways that you have prioritized personal success at the expense of others? Are there ways you have sought the spotlight and praise, rather than simply looking to do the right thing? Ask God in prayer to reveal and identify any areas where you are living selfishly, and take a few moments to reflect and examine your heart.

—Tom Greene