

Jesus Christ the Supreme Example of Unity

Philippians 2:1-11

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Outline

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Background Summary

The writer of this text is Apostle Paul. Paul was one receive his conversion from the lord in Acts 9: 1-20. Some people believe Paul experience a name change upon his conversion. But according to Acts 13:9 (KJV) 9 Then Saul, (who also *is called* Paul,) filled with the Holy Ghost, set his eyes on him. This verse bears witness that Saul was his Hebrew name and Paul his Greek name.

Paul establishes the church of Philippi according to Acts 16:1-40 on his second missionary journey. Philippi was a place known of “crooked and perverse nation,” according to Philippians 2:15. Paul met a prominent lady by the name of Lydia, who became a convert of the gospel. The church met in Lydia house from the start according to *Acts 16:40 (NASB)* 40 They went out of the prison and entered *the house of* Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Theologian has given several possible dates for the writing of this letter. They have given dates of the early fifties until the early sixties. Theologians cannot pinpoint what prison term Paul was serving when he wrote Philippians letter, because of this accurate date is unknown. What they all agree on is this is one of his letters written from prison. Paul gives proof in *Philippians 1:12-13(KJV)* But I would have you to understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather furtherance of the gospel; (13) so that many bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, in all places;

The book was written according to Philippians 1:1 to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. It believes the letter was sent back by Epaphroditus, one who visits Paul in prison. There are at least four reasons for Paul writing the letter to the Philippians. First, He wishes to prevent any criticism against Epaphroditus, who was sent by the Philippians church to give Paul gifts and encourage him while in prison. Epaphroditus became extremely sick almost at the point of death while visiting Paul. Paul wrote to ease the path back home (Phil.2:25-30). Secondly, Paul wishes to call the church to unity and harmony. Two ladies were causing a disturbance in the church. Paul asks the Elders to sit them down and talk to them (Phil. 4:2). Thirdly, Paul wanted to thank the church for supporting him throughout his ministry. Forth, some false teachers had crept in the church, and Paul wanted to warn the church (Phil.3:1)¹.

Introduction

The church of Philippians was solid. When you have a strong church, there can sometimes be a conflict of interest in the vision cast by the pastor. The stronger the church, the more the pastor must pay attention to unity. The reason being the church must keep the unity to reach higher grounds in Christ. Paul understood this, so he had to put the Philippians church on Guard. The

¹ Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures. Victor, an Imprint of Cook Communications Ministries, 2004.

church had to protect itself against disunity and division. For a church to stay in unity, it must walk in unity. Paul gives the steps of walking in unity in this second chapter. The second chapter Paul tells them to walk in unity, and the only way is to follow Christ's footsteps. The second chapter can very easily be called the "Unity Chapter." Unity is something the twenty-first-century church must understand today as the church begins to grow unity can sometimes become a problem because everyone begins to want to start their plan or lean-to their understanding². This is what make this chapter applicable today.

Point (1) The Characters of Unity Verses 1-4

There are two words in verse one we must look at before we can understand this text. The first word is "IF" which present a conditional clause in this verse. The next word if "therefore," this word lets me know I need to go back and see what happens for, therefore, which brings a subject to a conclusion. The word, therefore, took me back to Philippians 1:27-30, Paul encouraged them to work together in one mind and one spirit for the faith of the gospel. He tells them working together will bring suffering but be encouraged because the suffering is for Christ's sake. The word "IF" puts a condition on this verse but a guarantee at the same time. The guarantee is if you walk in unity according to the example of Christ, you will have unity. A word study on the word consolation in verse one comes from a Greek word (par-ak-lay-sis). This is the same word your English words comfort, encouragement, and exhort, derive

² The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible – Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, (Chattanooga: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 1991), WORDsearch Cross e-book, Under: "Philippians."

These words also help enhance a spirit of unity³. Paul presents in verse (1) four characters blessings a Christian shared from God that allow them to walk in unity; they receive consolation, comfort, the fellowship of the spirit, and mercies allow them to walk in unity. Paul was telling them being in Christ should encourage them to stay in unity in Christ. Because you are encouraged in Christ, it keeps you committed to unity in Christ. Paul share with them Christians, comfort from the love of Christ because of his unconditional love. Fellowshiping in the spirit allows believers to have compassion with one another. These shared blessings will enable them to encourage one another to share God characteristics blessing⁴.

Verse (2) Paul presents some character a Christian should have to walk in unity. Because of the Philippians possessing the characteristics that he gives in verse two, they will fulfill his Joy. The characters Paul present four characters of unity to them in verse two: to be likeminded, having the same love for one another being of one accord and likeminded. These are all characteristics needed to keep unity among them. To be likeminded is to put on the mind of Christ. Likeminded keeps everyone thinking the same way. Have the same love for one another, this means they should not have favorites or picks, but love ever on unconditional as Christ has loved us unconditional. Being of one accord and one mind, everyone should be traveling the same direction. When everyone is one accord, we see in act chapter two, what the holy spirit can do. Paul tells them

³ Strong, James, Strong's Talking Greek & Hebrew Dictionary, (Austin. Tx: WORDsearch Corp.,2007), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "3874".

⁴ Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, 2004

these characters will keep them in unity, and it will also fulfill his Joy because of the unity they had in the church. There was a joy for Paul to know his teaching was not in vain⁵.

Paul, in verse three, encourages the Philippians to keep a balance in unity. He gives them a negative and positive on character for balancing in unity. The negative, the Philippians were to avoid selfish ambition and vain conceit. *New American Commentary* stated Paul possible could have been thinking back to verse 17, where he warns the Philippians of selfish preachers. Philippians 1:17 (NASB) 17 the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. Paul was encouraging them not to be selfish because it creates a problem in unity. Selfishness and unity are like oil and water; there is no mix between the two. Selfishness in ministry takes the glory from God and gives glory to oneself, which gets you nowhere in God. Selfishness also creates problems among believers, and it destroys the yoke of unity. The way to stay balanced is to stay away from selfishness and humble yourself. Paul gave the positive side of balancing, and it is to be lowliness of the mind. Lowliness means to be humble-minded. The *New American Commentary* stated humility introduces a key theme in this passage. Humility was the standard of Christ evaluating the worth of others and action toward them. Paul urged the Philippians to count others excelling over themselves. Paul presents Jesus Christ as the supreme example of humility. Humility is the key to keeping unity in the church. We all must serve

⁵ Ibid, Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, 2004

in humility as we look at the life of Jesus as the supreme example of humility. Another way to balance unity is to consider the way we treat others. Verse four Paul tell them to look out for other interest as well as they look after their own. Paul was teaching a great example of staying in unity with others first. Looking after the things of others will eliminate the self-centeredness and keep unity in the body of Christ. When you think of others Christ came to save others, he was already in heaven, but he gave up his position in heaven to come down and save others⁶.

Point (2) Jesus Christ the Supreme Example of Unity – Verses 5-11

Paul presents Jesus Christ as the supreme example of unity. In John 10:30, Jesus states, "I and my father are one." Jesus knowing and understanding his position with the father but made himself no reputation and humbled himself. These verses present Jesus' humility and servanthood as an example of life for Christians. Philippians 2: 6-11 has been view by theologians as "Christ hymn. "sung by the early church. The glory of the gospel is seen in Jesus preexistence state in (2:6). Jesus humbleness and obedient to the father in every aspect, from taking on the limitation of human flesh. To the culminating act of the humiliating and excruciating death on a cross (2:7-8). The exalted position of the resurrected Christ is shown in (2:9-11) the one every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess⁷. Some theologians have called verses 6-8 *kenosis*

⁶ Melick, Richard R. Jr. New American Commentary: Philippians, Colossians, Philemon (Broadman Press, Nashville, Tenn,1991).

⁷ Köstenberger, Andreas, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, The Cradle, The Cross, And The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament (B&H Academic, Nashville, Tennessee) p.653

doctrine meaning Christ empty himself of certain aspects of his prerogatives of deity.

There is one view we all can agree on and that is these verses present Christ as the supreme example of denying self for unity. Verses five through eight shows Christ as the supreme example of humility and selfless concern for others. Verses nine through eleven present Christology in Jesus. Verse five believers are exhorted to have the same attitude of Christ, selfless and humility. Verses 6 Paul uses the word "form" this refers to the inner essence of God. Jesus did not hesitate to put aside his deity to become a man. As God he had all rights of deity but doing his incarnate state, he surrenders his rights to manifest himself visibly as the God of all splendor⁸.

Verse seven indicates Christ became an actual human being. He "made himself of no reputation," meaning he made himself nothing; he emptied himself. Jesus taking on the form of a servant show his humbleness and his lowly position, He was willing to obey the father and serve others. The word "likeness of men" in this text means he had a similarity of man for as build and stature but was different, meaning he was sinless. Verse eight stated being found in the fashion of man, meaning he looks like a man, but his behavior was not of man but God⁹. Verse eight also shows his humiliation because the cross was the worst way any man could die. The cross was a way of humiliation for worst criminal, and none – Romans, but Jesus was obedient to unto death and

⁸Ibid, Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, 2004

⁹ Ibid, Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, 2004

the cross because of his unity with his father. Christ is the supreme example of humiliation and a selfless attitude for believers to follow. Paul uses Christ to show the Philippians what it is to be likeminded. As Christians, we have to understand what the purpose of the church is. The church is to be likeminded with Christ to keep unity and the mission of the church alive and healthy. Jesus kept the purpose and mission of God by humility and obedience that kept the unity between him and God as they redeemed man¹⁰.

Point (3) The Exaltation of Christ

Verses nine through eleven Paul present the exaltation of Christ. Because of Christ's obedience, God has exalted him and given him a name above every name. The exaltation refers to Christ's resurrection, ascension, and glorification. The name refers to the person and position and not the title as much as the others. God has exalted him to a place of dignity and honor; exaltation is the answer to Jesus' prayer in John 17:5. Verse ten tell us that one day every knee will bow and acknowledge Jesus for who he is. It doesn't matter what your location or destination you will bow willingly, or you will be made to bow. Verse eleven states that everyone will confess Jesus is Lord. He is the son of God, The son the Savior, and the exalted Christ¹¹.

Conclusion

¹⁰ Ibid, Walvoord, John F. and Roy B. Zuck, 2004

¹¹ Ibid

Paul writes to the Philippians to encourage them to keep unity in the church. He tells them Jesus Christ is the supreme example of unity. He asks them to follow the example of Christ that they might fulfill his joy. He gives them the characteristic of unity in verses one through four, by telling the blessing of characters they share through Christ. He encourages them to be like-minded, not self-serving, and look on the things of others. In verses five through eight, he encourages them to look at Jesus Christ for the supreme example of unity. This means to be like-minded with Jesus. Jesus took on the form of man but made himself no reputation; he empties himself to do the will of God. If the Philippians were going to keep unity in the church, they had to be like-minded with Jesus. They had to make themselves of no reputation by not blowing their whistle and look at the things of others. Verses nine through eleven Paul tells them because of Jesus obedient to the Father unto death, the Father exalts him. God has given him a name above every name; at the name of Jesus, every knee must bow in all places, and every tongue must confess he is Lord as he stated he from the beginning. They will one day be with Jesus if they follow Jesus' Example.

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