

Book Studies

Philippians – Epistle to the Church at Philippi

Chapter 2

Php 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,

The IF, does not express any doubt here, but on the contrary is to be considered as a strong affirmation; AS there is consolation in Christ, AS there is comfort of love, etc. (Clarke)

A better rendering would thus be;

Since *there is* therefore consolation in Christ, since there is comfort of love, since there is fellowship of the Spirit and since there are deep feelings of mercy,

These attributes of what we have in Christ are not in any way under question! They are a true and established fact! These attributes are not manifested sporadically, as when we are in need; but are a constant outflow from the Spirit of God.

Consolation, comfort, fellowship and mercy are constantly available to us; if we would but approach the Lord and take it. We have the Spirit and the Word – use them!

Php 2:2 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being of one accord, of one mind.*

In light of the benefits we have in Christ, there should follow unity and love amongst the believers – Paul says this would fulfill his joy or make his joy complete.

Like-mindedness is thinking and believing the same.

Amo 3:3 *Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*

Psa 133:1 *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

Psa 133:2 *it is like the precious ointment upon the head; that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;*

Psa 133:3 *as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.*

Some areas where there should be unity

- *Unity of purpose.*

*What is the purpose of the local visible church? If our destination is heaven, then why are we not “taken home” at the time of conversion? Would it not avoid much heartache and conflict? The prime reason is that the visible church is to be a witness and a light in the dark sinful world we live in! There was a song popular in the ‘70’s that went like this; “Let’s all get together in communion sweet...” There is nothing wrong with communion, but if our communion doesn’t issue in worship of the Lord and service for him, it is meaningless. The gatherings of the local church members are not primarily to **have a good time**; though the presence of the Lord yields the*

best times ever, but our gatherings are for instruction in the Word of God to better equip us for service in His Kingdom. We need to remember why we are here!

- **Unity in Worship and Praise.**

2Ch 5:13 *it came even to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the LORD, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endures for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD,*
2Ch 5:14 *so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.*

- **Unity of spirit.**

Eph 4:3 *Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit; in the bond of peace.*

- **Unity in doctrine and practice.**

Eph 4:13 *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:*

While this is important and the ultimate goal in the body of Christ, it should not be a point of division that is the unfortunate outcome of differences of opinion. If the leadership and gift ministries to the Church followed after **Unity of Spirit**, this it would filter down to the congregation. People follow and interpret the scriptures as they are taught.

Php 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*

How do we arrive at the unity the Lord wants? Paul mentions the attitudes that need to be displayed to achieve this:

- *Avoid things and words and teachings that cause strife and are divisive. However, if the plain truth is divisive, then we **must** maintain truth at expense of unity. However we must ever **hold forth the truth in love.***
- *Avoid the exaltation of self – stop being self-seeking, but rather seek and do things that are of benefit to the entire church or group.*
- *Be humble by not **“thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think,”***
- *Consider others better than yourself – once again avoid self-promotion. So often we hear **“my ministry”**; **“my gift”**; **“my talent”**; **“my calling”** etc. **A man’s gift makes way for him!** Rather get on with the ministry in the body the Lord has called you to do than trying to impress people and assert your superiority. **IF** you do indeed have a ministry, it will **make way for you**; it will be recognized by others and doors will be opened for exercise of that gift or ministry. I’ve seen so much self-promotion through the years and seen its divisive effects. Like an orchestra, each member of the body needs to be in-tune to produce the **“beautiful music”** that is the Life of Christ. When each member is playing his own tune or in his own key, we have a cacophony of unpleasant noise that drives people away instead of drawing them to the Lord Jesus.*

Php 2:4 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*

*Paul here contrasts selfishness with liberality. Our Christian walk should be characterized by liberality to others; not by the selfishness so evident in the world. Sometimes our legitimate needs and pursuits so dominate our lives, that we are blind to the needs of others around us. There never seems to be an end to our wants and needs. However, if we would **seek the Kingdom of God** first, we would have all our needs*

supplied by the Lord. Taking care of the needs of others whether spiritual or temporal for Jesus' sake **IS** seeking first His Kingdom.

Php 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Paul cites the attitudes and life of the Lord Jesus as the example we should be emulating. Not only was Jesus our Savior, but also **left us an example that we should follow in His steps**. In the next verses he is going to explain what attitudes of Christ we should strive for.

Are we able to emulate Christ? Can we be like him **when he was reviled, reviled not again?** Yes and no! Yes as we walk in the spirit – No as we walk in self-effort and in the flesh.

What Paul is actually saying here is **NOT** as we suppose; that we should slavishly try and be like Jesus – and fail time and again; but to **ALLOW** the Mind of Christ to be manifested in us by the Holy Spirit! The recorded examples of Christ's life can be a plumb-line by which we can judge our own lives; or it can be a mirror to show us precisely how we look; not like Jesus at all. The mirror exposes and doesn't give the power to perform. Once we are exposed we need to rush to Him who alone can live like Him! Paul now states the important thing we need to know and understand about Jesus.

Php 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Heb 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Col 2:9 for in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

If any man makes the claim to be divine, it is robbery – he is intruding into an area he has no right to be; he demonstrates belief in the lie of Satan “**ye shall be as gods.**” Jesus could claim to be God in the fullest sense of the word and not be robbing God. As a man His deity was veiled in flesh. He never ceased to be God, but veiled it for the purpose of redemption. Today society blatantly uses the term loosely when they glorify men or woman. “She is a goddess” or “he is a god” are often heard – what blasphemy!

Php 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Php 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Paul had stated who and what Jesus was and is – Almighty God in the fullest sense – yet He did something that we are encouraged to do – **take a few steps down for the benefit of others!**

What steps did God take for our benefit?

- He became the Man Christ Jesus; the Son of God.
- He was born in the poorest and humblest way – in a manger, not the king's palace.
- As a man He took the form of a servant among men – made like a man in every way.
As God he held the universe in His hand; “**...upholding all things by the word of His power...**”; As God he “**...slumbers not nor sleeps...**”; As God He is the eternal, undying one; As God He is the **Father of Eternity**; however, as a man, he took ALL the attributes of man excepting the sinful nature.
- As a man he humbled himself. He washed His disciples' feet. As a man he was subject to His parents. As a man he learned the business and trade of Joseph, Mary's husband. As a man He humbled Himself to the most demeaning death there was – open shame crucifixion on a wooden cross. There was no need for the sinless Lamb of God to die – death is for the sinful. Jesus willingly laid down His life in death – **He paid a debt He did not owe. He paid our debt!**

In summary, Jesus left His former exalted position. He became poor that we could be rich. He became a servant and was willing to die for others that they could enjoy the riches and privileges He formerly had. The suffering and death of ONE resulted in the blessing and enrichment of MANY!

We are encouraged to have the same attitude and care for each other. We are to arm ourselves with the same mind. **ONLY JESUS CAN BE JESUS!** Let Him be himself in us. **All to Jesus I surrender** should be on our lips. With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. **Lord; fill us with yourself!**

Php 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

In view of what the Lord Jesus did, he earned the exaltation that followed. The Father at one time spoke audibly and said **“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”** He pleased the Father in every way as a man – even to the death on the cross. He thus can lay claim to the Name above ALL Names.

What is that Name?

- **Lord.** We lose the power of that assignation today. In the day the scriptures were written the title **Lord** had greater significance. It meant absolute Master. It was like the owner of a slave. The **LORD** had all the rights and the slave none. There is however a difference in our relationship – we willingly make him our Lord. In the title Lord; deity is implied.
- **Jesus.** This is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew Ja-Oshea or Joshua or Jeshuah. A literal meaning of the word is **Jehovah our Savior.** Satan has tried to minimize the import of that name. In Latin countries the name is very common. Satan has further tried to corrupt the name by inspiring the ungodly to use it as a curse. **Note:** I wonder; why they don't use the names of the gods of other religions in cursing? To me this is proof positive of the greatness of Jesus Christ – Satan hates the Name of the One who bruised his head! Once again deity is implied in the name Jesus.
- **Christ.** The Old Testament scriptures foretold of the coming Messiah; the one who would bring deliverance to Israel. This One who was to come was called **the Anointed One.** The Greek form of Messiah is **Christ.** So **Christ** basically means anointed one. In this part of His Name, humanity is implied.

So the full name is: **Lord Jesus Christ.** By using and acknowledging that name, we acknowledge Him as God, as Man, as Deliverer, as Master, as Savior.

On the day of Pentecost as recorded in the book of Acts, we read this:

Act 4:12 neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

There are **NOT** many ways to God – **ONLY ONE.** Approach God in any other name and you will be rejected. Salvation is **ONLY** to be found in Jehovah-Jesus. God doesn't tolerate any other method or approach.

Like Jesus, we are to humble ourselves.

1Pe 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Promotion comes from the Lord – don't promote yourself. It's His Kingdom, He is Lord, submit to Him in all things.

Php 2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

There is a practice of bowing towards an icon of Jesus on the cross that is practiced in certain religious circles. First of all, we are expressly forbidden neither to have “idols” of any sort nor to make “graven images.” Secondly, this scripture doesn't teach an outward practice or rite here, but an attitude of heart. One can **bow the knee** all you like yet not have done so in the heart!

*The story of the young student illustrates this well. Young Johnny was jumping up and down and running around to the dismay of his teacher and distraction of the other students. Eventually the teacher issued a threat of punishment if he didn't **sit down and shut-up**, Johnny obliged, but was heard to say, "I'm sitting down on the outside but standing up on the inside!"*

*How many are **play-acting** the part, but internally have never ever bowed their knees to the Lord Jesus Christ? You may fool mankind, but God sees the heart!*

"Of things in heaven, earth and under the earth" implies that everything in creation should and will bow to Him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The people who refuse to bow their knees now in humble submission to Him will someday have to acknowledge Him at the judgment seat. However, then it will be too late. Today is the accepted time. Now is the day of salvation. Even Satan and all the hoards of darkness must bow out to that Name. When the enemy comes against us, we can use that Name as a weapon – Satan must obey – and he will. "Submit to God, resist the devil and he will flee."

Php 2:11 ...and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; to the glory of God the Father.

*Once again we need to understand the word **Lord** in its original context. It means absolute master and sovereign ruler. Note "every tongue" should confess. God is interested in all of mankind coming under His Lordship. Jesus Christ – the God-Man, the most unique person in the universe is Lord. Please note that acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord brings glory to God the Father. Why is this? Because "**in Him permanently dwells all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form**" (Free paraphrase of Col 2:9) Honoring Christ is honoring God the Father. Reject Christ and you reject God the Father. Submit to Christ and you submit to God the Father.*

Php 2:12 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.

Php 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

(Free paraphrase of Verse 12)

In light of your submission to the Lord Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, outwork or allow the Spirit to manifest salvation in your lives. As you've always manifested when I was with you; to help and assist you; even more so now in my absence. Let the Lord be your teacher and guide. Walk in "fear and trembling" - that is in humble reverent submission to him; acknowledging your weakness.

*We cannot "work out" or plan the path or plan the execution of our salvation! We can only allow the inner reality to work out through our daily living and so manifest our submission to the Lord Jesus and the salvation He so graciously provided for us. This phase of **salvation** is not the re-birth, but the process of **sanctification** or being changed into the image of our Lord. It is the phase of salvation which progressively saves us from the power of sin.*

*We submit to this inner working of the Holy Spirit because it is God at work in us. The word "**worketh**" implies an ongoing process. There is no such thing as "second blessing" or "entire sanctification" which is a misunderstanding of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. There is blessing and a sense of cleansing in this experience though. Our being changed into the image of Christ is progressive and not a crisis experience. We live in a world of **instant everything** – the only thing we get instantly from the Lord is regeneration and forgiveness of sin.*

Note that it is God's work in us – not only the doing, but also causing us to be willing to allow His work. Our wills are so weak and our hearts so rebellious, but as we yield to His gentle and loving touch, our hearts melt in love and adoration to Him.

Php 2:14 Do all things without murmuring and disputing:

*The apostle now deals with some of the practical aspects of our walk of faith. In my own life I must admit that I really love reading about our privileges in Christ. I love reading about the goodness of God and the greatness of our salvation – BUT when it comes to these practical things, they seemed so boring and uninspiring. **If our faith doesn't result in the practical outworking then it is vain!***

I find I want to murmur and complain. Why do others get the choicest and I am left with the dregs. Why does God use others – who are obviously inferior to me and bypasses me? Why are some favored and I'm not? Why are others so rich in this world's goods and I lack? Why do others have such beautiful healthy bodies and I don't and constantly battle illness? Why/ Why/ Why? Murmur! Murmur! Murmur!

I love to dispute and prove I'm better and know more than others. I love to prove someone wrong so I look good. I love to have a good argument – and win of course – else it's not so good.

*Notice how many times the little word; "I" appears? These traits prove beyond a doubt that the Spirit of God is not in control of my life, but that I am. **Inner conflict manifests in outer chaos!** We need application of the Cross of Christ to our lives.*

Php 2:15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

*Murmuring and disputing often ends in conflict. The Lord wants us to be blameless and harmless in this wicked society in which we live. We may be branded as **nuts**, but believe me, privately people will respect us as we shine a lights. The darkness is great in the world – only light can dispel it. Light travels at 186 000 miles per second; darkness disappears at the same speed. A little candle can dispel the darkness. More light reveals more – we need to unite all our "little candles" and dispel the darkness in this world.*

We are so apt to admire and idolize men of stature and esteem in society. Remember we live in a crooked and perverse nation. Just read the daily news and watch the TV newscasts and you will see how corrupt even society's best are. They are not to be admired, but pitied. What they have is all they've got – without Christ their eternal estate is dark and gloomy.

Php 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

In verse (15) we are encouraged to shine as lights – how? By holding forth the Word of Life we declare and demonstrate Jesus as the Light of the world. This was Paul's mission in life, and he desired those he had been instrumental in leading to Christ to be the same. This would give him rejoicing in that day. If he didn't produce in them the same passion he himself had for the Lord, then he considered his race to have been in vain. All his labors would have been for nothing.

Php 2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

Php 2:18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

*He further says that in any case, even if his life were to end on account of his service to them in imparting the faith; he was joyful. He could rejoice with them in the Lord. It is; humanly speaking, ridiculous how often Paul talks about his joy – even in the dire circumstances he was in. Living a **crucified life** I believe is the key. We certainly cannot have joy because of circumstances, but we can have joy in the Lord – because He is unchanging. **The joy of the Lord is our strength.***

Php 2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Paul had desire to know their state. He cared for them and as a father cares for his kids, so Paul cared for the churches he had “fathered.” He prayed the Lord would make it possible for Timothy to visit them shortly and give him a report.

Php 2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Timothy’s heart beat as Paul’s did. He also bore the care and love for the church at Philippi that Paul had. This is how well Timothy had been mentored by Paul. He had set an example which was Christ-like, and Timothy emulated that example.

Php 2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.

For all seek their own - *That is; all who are with me. Who Paul had with him at this time is not fully known; but he doubtless means that this remark should apply to the mass of Christians and Christian ministers then in Rome. Perhaps he had proposed to some of them to go and visit the church at Philippi, and they had declined it because of the distance and the dangers of the way. When the trial of Paul came on before the emperor, all who were with him in Rome fled from him (2Ti 4:16), and it is possible that the same disregard of his wishes and his welfare had already begun to manifest itself among the Christians who were at Rome, so that he was constrained to say that, as a general thing, they sought their own ease and comfort, and were unwilling to deny themselves in order to promote the happiness of those who lived in the remote parts of the world. Let us not be harsh in judging them. How many professing Christians in our cities and towns are there now who would be willing to leave their business and their comfortable homes and go on embassy like this to Philippi? How many are there who would not seek some excuse, and show that it was a characteristic that they “sought their own” rather than the things which pertained to the kingdom of Jesus Christ? (Barnes)*

Once again carnality reared its ugly head. Someone said about Jesus; “If He’s not Lord of all then He’s not Lord at all!” When carnality and self seeking are evident, SELF is lord of that one’s life – even if it is so-called ministry for the Lord – who’s getting the glory?

Php 2:22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

Timothy had a history of faithfulness in ministry that was well known to the churches. He had proven he could be trusted. He had accompanied Paul and served with him. Possibly he had been asked many times to “share the Word”. The point is Paul trusted him and he was known to the churches, thus was qualified to be Paul’s ambassador to Philippi.

Before there can be ministry to God’s people and acceptance by them, the minister must be proved. This takes time! Unfortunately there is no shortcut here. To be a leader of the Lord’s sheep is a high and holy calling. Too many novices and unproven men have been placed over churches and failed because they have never been proven. I’ve seen “greenhorns” placed as pastors over “problem churches” that really required the most senior and experienced men of God. The results were disastrous to the church as well as to the budding minister of the Gospel. Senior ministers in denominational headquarters stand guilty of failing in this matter.

Php 2:23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

After bringing to their attention the facts concerning Timothy and his worthiness to be Paul’s ambassador, he says he will send him a.s.a.p. As soon as Paul knew what his fate was to be – because he still desired to visit them personally.

Php 2:24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

Paul still expresses hope and trust in the Lord granting him release to visit them himself in the near future.

Php 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus is nowhere else mentioned but in this Epistle; see [Phi 4:18](#). All that is known of him, therefore, is what is mentioned here. He was from Philippi, and was a member of the church there. He had been employed by the Philippians to carry relief to Paul when he was in Rome [Phi 4:18](#), and while in Rome he was taken dangerously sick. News of this had been conveyed to Philippi, and again intelligence had been brought to him that they had heard of his sickness and that they were much affected by it. On his recovery, Paul thought it best that he should return at once to Philippi, and doubtless sent this Epistle by him. He is much commended by Paul for his faithfulness and zeal. (Barnes)

Php 2:26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

Epaphroditus seems to have been in some sort of leadership ministry in the church at Philippi. I think the caring pastoral spirit of this man is evident in his concern for the church. He had been ill and the church knew of it. Why was he concerned? A couple of reasons could be named; if he was the pastor of the church then the flock would feel threatened being leaderless and without a shepherd should he die. This would be a concern to him. Maybe some would lose faith – wondering why their fellow should be ill while visiting Paul and not receive physical healing. In any case, he was concerned and longed to return to comfort them.

Php 2:27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death - Dr. Paley has remarked (*Hor. Paul. on Phil no. ii.*) that the account of the sickness and recovery of Epaphroditus is such as to lead us to suppose that he was not restored by miracle; and he infers that the power of healing the sick was conferred on the apostles only occasionally, and did not depend at all on their will, since, if it had, there is every reason to suppose that Paul would at once have restored him to health. This account, he adds, shows also that this Epistle is not the work of an impostor. Had it been, a miracle would not have been spared. Paul would not have been introduced as showing such anxiety about a friend lying at the point of death, and as being unable to restore him. It would have been said that he interposed at once, and raised him up to health.

But God had mercy on him - By restoring him to health evidently not by miracle, but by the use of ordinary means.

On me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow - In addition to all the sorrows of imprisonment, and the prospect of a trial, and the want of friends. The sources of his sorrow had Epaphroditus died, would have been such as these:

(1) He would have lost a valued friend, and one whom he esteemed as a brother and worthy fellow-laborer.

(2) He would have felt that the church at Philippi had lost a valuable member.

(3) His grief might have been aggravated from the consideration that his life had been lost in endeavoring to do him good. He would have felt that he was the occasion, though innocent, of his exposure to danger.

(Barnes).

Php 2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

I send him therefore the more carefully - With more diligence, or speed; I was the more ready to send him.

That I may be the less sorrowful - That is, on account of my solicitude for you; that I may know that your minds are at ease, and that you rejoice in his being among you (Barnes).

Php 2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

Receive him therefore in the Lord - As the servant of the Lord, or as now restored to you by the Lord, and therefore to be regarded as a fresh gift from God. Our friends restored to us after a long absence, we should receive as the gift of God, and as a proof of his mercy.

And hold such in reputation - Margin, honor such. This is a high commendation of Epaphroditus, and, at the same time, it enjoins an important duty in regard to the proper treatment of those who sustain such a character. It is a Christian duty to honor those who ought to be honored, to respect the virtuous and the pious, and especially to honor those who evince fidelity in the work of the Lord. (Barnes)

Php 2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Paul says Epaphroditus had almost died of his illness; but God had mercy and raised him up again. He had been sick because of his commitment to the Lord's work. Evidently he had taken some form of support to Paul.

Because for the work of Christ - That is, either by exposing himself in his journey to see the apostle in Rome, or by his labors there.

Not regarding his life - Exposing himself to danger, regardless of life.

To supply your lack of service toward me - Not that they had been indifferent to him, or inattentive to his wants, for he does not mean to blame them; but they had not had an opportunity to send to his relief (see [Phi 4:10](#)), and Epaphroditus therefore made a special journey to Rome on his account. He came and rendered to him the service which they could not do in person; and what the church would have done, if Paul had been among them, he performed in their name and on their behalf. (Barnes)