

Philippians
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CHAPTER 2

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

Paul's joy would be complete by seeing that the brethren were united in their love for each other in the Family of God. The "if" is surely assuming each of the four driving forces for unity is true. He lists these four causes for unity of love among God's children. The first is the encouragement in Christ as He prayed:

John 17:20 "I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.

There is certainly the spiritual unity as all of His children are in Christ but there is more intended here as Jesus wanted this unity to be a witness to the world:

John 17:22 "And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one;

John 17:23 I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, that the world may know that Thou didst send Me, and didst love them, even as Thou didst love Me.

Paul was emphasizing this importance so that no divisions would creep into the group of believers. The second driving force is the consolation of love that will heal many differences between people and will show the world that we are disciples of Jesus Christ:

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

John 13:35 "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

This love should draw us all together as we long for a closeness that will be complete in heaven. The third driving force is the fellowship of the Spirit. Our fellowship is not like a worldly friendship between friends attending a ball game or a gathering of friends at a home. Our fellowship is with fellow temples of the Holy Spirit:

1Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

1Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

If there is something separating us from having such fellowship with someone in our congregation then we should hasten to heal the relationship. There is a song that I like very much that we used to sing in a church youth group: "Bless be the Tie that Binds". One of the verses is "the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above". Because our minds are focused on Jesus we long for the fellowship among fellow believers. The fourth driving force for our fellowship is the affection and compassion that God has given us. The Greek word translated "compassion" is always related to God and we see it in the following two verse where in this translation it is translated as "mercies":

*2Cor 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of **mercies** and God of all comfort;*

The word is translated "compassion" in this text:

*James 5:11 Behold, we count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of **compassion** and is merciful.*

We see that Paul is equating compassion with mercy that God gives to all of His children. We might have some disagreements with people over some method of Biblical translation of some doctrine that is not really divisive but such should not keep us from unity in love. However we must always remember that unity is not to be achieved at the cost of compromising basic attributes of the Gospel. Maintaining the truth must trump unity.

Gal 1:9 As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed.

When we recognize the above we can see how Paul's joy would be made complete as he saw and heard of them being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit and intent on one purpose. Of course the purpose is obeying the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Phil 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself;

Phil 2:4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

These two verses are the opposite of the result of the working out of the four driving forces above. When we concentrate on the previous two verses we will not be tempted to behave as noted in verses 3 and 4. The world is centered upon the self but Christians are to be centered first on Jesus and then on other believers as Paul noted elsewhere also:

Gal 6:2 Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ.

Rom 12:10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;

Jesus even set the example for us when He humbled himself as we will read in verses 7 and 8 below. Developing a humble mind is not easy task! Fortunately we have the Holy Spirit to aid in its progress. The first step for us in working out this law of spirituality within believers is to truly admit who we are apart from Christ and to admit to problems that we can see in ourselves that prevent us from really treating others as more important than us. We have to admit that we have a pride problem and that we really do want to let others know how important we are. Humility cannot be achieved when we deceive ourselves about our character. Part of our Adam nature is that desire to lift ourselves up above others. We also have to admit jealousy. We must fight against the three major sins of Christians against each other:

Gal 5:26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

Sanctification is the working out of the Christ nature in our conscience and character and putting down the Adam nature. When we exhibit, even just mentally, any of the deeds of the flesh or the sins of Gal 5:26 we grieve the Holy Spirit and He lets us know. So we have to develop our discernment, not only of evil, but also of the pain of the Holy Spirit within us. One of the best ways to aid ourselves in overcoming our sin nature and our self interest is to take a sincere interest in other Christians as Paul stated in verse four.

**Phil 2:5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,
Phil 2:6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,
Phil 2:7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.
Phil 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
Phil 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,
Phil 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,
Phil 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

As mentioned earlier, here is the example set for us by Jesus in being humble. What a comparison exists between Jesus as God as us as thinking we are some form of supreme human! Although Paul puts these verses here as an example of humbleness, they are a supreme statement of the Christology of Jesus. The Greek word, *huparko*, is translated “existed” and does not mean just in appearance but as an outward manifestation of an internal quality. Some translations take the phrase to be “being in the form”. He then was totally God and not a created being. What an opposite event in the life of Satan and the life of Jesus. Satan said that he would go up and be like God but God said that he would be cast into hell. Jesus said that He would go down to earth and be the sacrifice for man’s sins and God gave Him the name above every name!

Isa 14:13 "But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north.

Isa 14:14 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'

Isa 14:15 "Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol, To the recesses of the pit.

These statements about Jesus were written about 30 years after His death and resurrection yet they are made in a manner consistent with the statement of any known fact, without any restriction or hesitation. These seven verses are the cornerstone of the Christian faith. Paul knew them to be true because he met Jesus and was taught by Him. Paul here teaches the divinity of Christ, his preexistence, His equality with God the Father, His incarnation and true humanity, His voluntary death on the cross, the certainty of His ultimate triumph over evil, and the eternity of His reign. Some people try to teach that the church evolved these doctrines but they were all stated clearly here at the very beginning of the church era. John also taught some of these facts:

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:2 He was in the beginning with God.

John 1:3 All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

John 1:4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Jesus also stated His previous glory:

John 17:5 "And now, glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was.

Verse seven says that He emptied himself of something and we see in John 17:5 that it was the glory of God (the insignia of majesty) that was emptied at His incarnation. The word “taking” does not imply an exchange but an addition. He added to His being the state of a bond servant since God cannot cease to be God but He can add an aspect to Himself as Jesus did. He did sometimes display His glory, such as in miracles and the Transformation, but they were always done under the direction of the Father and the Spirit:

Luke 4:14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit; and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

John 5:19 Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner.

John 8:28 Jesus therefore said, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.

John 14:10 "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.

The Greek word translated “form” is morphee that means the outward appearance that corresponds to the essence of one’s being. This form He took was as a lowly bond-servant just as Paul described himself:

Rom 1:1 Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

When he goes on to say that Jesus was made in the likeness of men, the Greek word for “likeness” is “homoiomati” and it does not mean exactness as does “eikon” but it leaves room for differences and not exactness. Thus Jesus became fully human as well as remaining fully God but there were certain aspects in which He was not like other men. Paul may have had in mind the unique combination of fully human and fully God.

Verses eight rather concludes the previous verse to generalize that people saw Him as a man so as far as outward appearances are concerned He appeared to be a man. Then Paul says that this unique God-man humbled Himself to the utmost as He allowed Himself to be crucified on a cross, the cruelest form of execution. Crucifixion had been practiced by the Phoenicians and the Persians and then taken over by the Romans.

The “therefore” of verse nine is not what we would expect from what preceded unless we had at least a fundamental understanding of the Gospel. God “highly exalted” Him and this could be translated “super exalted”. The reference is to the resurrection, ascension, and glorification of Jesus after His humiliating death. At this point His glory was restored and He was given the name that is above every name. Since this verse chronologically is after the death, the name is not “Jesus” but is likely “Lord” that is the equivalent of the OT “Jehovah”. Certainly there is no name above that of Jehovah.

Verse ten may complicate this explanation of the name unless we know that the Greek word used for Jesus is “Iesou” that can be either genitive or dative. The translation preferable is then “at the name of Jesus” and we understand that name to be “Lord”. This must be the correct interpretation of the phrase since it occurs after the giving of the name and it is the interpretation used by the NAS Bible. There will be a time when every created being either still living on earth, having already died and in hell, or those who died and are in heaven will bow before Jesus as Lord.

Verse eleven concluded this magnificent section by saying that not only will every being bow before Him but they will declare Him to be the Lord Jesus Christ and such will bring great glory to the Father. Paul is not teaching universal salvation but that everyone will recognize Him as the Lord Jesus Christ. The demons believe that Jesus is Lord but that does not grant them salvation:

James 2:19 You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

Paul ends with the statement about the glory going to the Father because this end is the result of the grand scheme of salvation for God’s children that brings the glory to the Father. This result is the fulfillment of the first covenant made before the creation of the world by the Trinity.

Phil 2:12 So 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 salvation with fear and trembling;

Phil 2:13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Because of the previous verses, the Christians at Philippi should be anxious to work out their salvation and, because of the above-stated nature of Jesus Christ, they should do so in fear and

trembling since they knew that one day they would be bowing before Him and declaring Him Lord. When they make such a declaration they knew that God would see their heart and they knew that they had better really mean what they were saying. There has been considerable misunderstanding about what Paul meant by “work out your salvation”. He is not saying that salvation is achieved by our works but rather that our salvation is made operational. Salvation has three tenses. First is justification and that is a monotheistic work, meaning that such is caused solely by God. The second step is sanctification and that is the aspect of salvation to which Paul is referring since we are to participate in that step. The final step is glorification and that is also a monotheistic work by God.

Of course we are not working out our sanctification alone. He says in verse 13 that God is working in us to enable us to will and work for His good pleasure. Often we may have the will to do something but not the initiative to do that work. God’s work within us makes us to both have the will to do His commands but also the initiative to carry out that will. This aspect of our sanctification is enabled by the Holy Spirit’s indwelling presence in the life of every child of God:

1 Cor 6:19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?

Phil 2:14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing;

Phil 2:15 that you may 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,

Phil 2:16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may have cause to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

These three verses contain excellent advice for us to follow in walking the Christian life here and now. Some translations use the words “complaining or arguing” rather than “grumbling or disputing”. A Christian should never grumble or complain about anything! When we understand that God is sovereign and we have Rom 8:28 chiseled into our brain then there is no reason to grumble or complain about any situation. The purpose of our attitude that is seen by the world is so that we prove to the world that we are children of God. Being blameless and innocent before God is a gift from God through double imputation regarding the work of Jesus Christ. As we work out that justification in our living in the world we become proof to the world of the work of God in our individual lives. We must make the distinction that we are “in the world” but we are not “of the world”:

*John 17:11 "And I am no more in the world; and yet **they themselves are in the world**, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are.*

*John 17:16 "**They are not of the world**, even as I am not of the world.*

We appear to the world as lights or stars in the black night sky. Humans are blessed by the stars in the sky for if there were nothing but the blackness of space, as perceived by our senses, the outlook would look hopeless. The light of Christians is certainly an irritant to the world but it

does still offer hope to many. Daniel is a great example of a child of God living in a Godless environment. He was not hidden but employed in full light in the king's service. He did not violate his dedication to God even in the possibility of being devoured by lions because of not stopping his worship of God.

The word "disputing" or "arguing" refers to people disagreeing with some commands or suggestions, in this context the disputing would be about Christian matters. When we are told to love our enemies, people might argue that we should be more like Peter and cut off their ear! They might even lift up some OT narratives about Israel being told to destroy their enemies and then they would say that the NT must mean that we are to love them if possible. War with enemies is still an allowed option for a government but not for an individual.

Rom 13:3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;

Rom 13:4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.

Paul then gives us advice for dealing individually with enemies:

Rom 12:17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men.

Rom 12:18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.

Rom 12:19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

Rom 12:20 "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head."

Rom 12:21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The word of life is the gospel and we are to hold it up for the world to see as well as holding it fast to ourselves as it is our confirmation of our eternal state before God. The "day of Christ" is His second advent and Paul wants them to focus on that event as he tells them that when they work out their salvation as mentioned in these verses he will glory in their accomplishments as he will then know by their evidence that he did not toil in vain.

Phil 2:17 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.

Phil 2:18 And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

As Paul reflected upon the day of Christ he was reminded that his death and thus his immediate presence with Jesus could be soon since he was in prison awaiting a trial and possible execution. If an execution was what was coming, Paul was satisfied that such would be a fitting climax to his ministry and so a reason for joy as God had accomplished His tasks for Paul. The Christian sacrifice and service of these people that was worked out because of the faith given them by God would be evidence of God working through him to them. Since the service of the Philippians and Paul were linked, they could share the joy of Paul. He and they were priests offering the

sacrifices of their bodies for service to God and so they should all share in the joy of the successful work of God and not be bitter about any sufferings or even martyrdom.

Phil 2:19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.

Phil 2:20 For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.

Phil 2:21 For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.

Phil 2:22 But you know of his proven worth that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father.

We had already learned that this letter was from Paul and Timothy and now Paul says that he intends to send Timothy to visit them and to return to give him feedback concerning the state of the Philippians. Paul thinks very highly of Timothy and knows his heart for these other brothers in Christ. In verse 20 he is not saying that there are no other people dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ anywhere but at his location (in prison in Rome) there are no others there who love the Christians at Philippi as much as Paul does. It is likely that Luke and Aristarchus were away on other missions and so unavailable for this trip to Philippi. In verse 21 we are not certain to whom he is referring. The comment at first blush seems to be rather caustic but he may just be meaning that anyone else that he would ask already had other assignments that were of their own ministry. Since he says that their interests are not those of Jesus, he may be referring to those whom he previously mentioned in 1:14-17. Timothy was the perfect person to send because of his true love for the other Christians and because his worth had already been proven to the church at Philippi. Paul and Timothy had been serving together for the cause of Christ since the beginning of Paul's second missionary journey about 10 years prior to this time. They had a father-son relationship as Paul described earlier:

1 Cor 4:17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Phil 2:23 Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me;

Phil 2:24 and I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly.

Phil 2:25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

Phil 2:26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

Phil 2:27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Paul is not going to send Timothy until he finds out what the legal verdict will probably be for he did expect to be released. There is no record in Acts about his release from prison but there is sufficient evidence to state that he was released from this first imprisonment and had some travels to Crete, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Achaia. It seems that he was then later imprisoned in Rome and was then beheaded. Thus it seems that his hope for a release from this prison was

realized. But before hearing about his verdict he did want to go ahead and send someone to them. He thus chose the layman Epaphroditus to come to them now and Timothy would come later when there was solid news about his impending release. Epaphroditus had been ministering to Paul and now he was to be a messenger to the Christians at Philippi. Paul gives this man high praise so the church can expect a man very capable of also ministering to them. Epaphroditus is mentioned only in this verse and in 4:18 but these accolades are sufficient for us to know that he was a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. He was Paul's brother in Christ, his fellow worker in the mission field, and soldier for the cause of Jesus Christ. Saying that he was a soldier means that he had endured similar hardships as those suffered by Paul, and that he was faithful in his service.

We also see that he had a heart for the Christians at Philippi as he was longing to visit with them. He was also distressed because he knew that they had heard that he had been very ill and they were concerned for his life. His distress was because he knew that they were so concerned and he was anxious to show them that he was now well. We do not know the illness of Epaphroditus but Paul said that he would have died had not God intervened. Philippi was about 800 miles from Rome and it would have taken about six weeks to make the one-way trip. He had been sick long enough for news of his illness to travel to Philippi and then the concern of the people to be reported back to Rome. Thus he was sick for at least three months.

Christians do not have the gift of a totally healthy life and sickness is not a curse from God. His children face the same illness and unfortunate events in life as anyone else. The difference between Christians and non-Christians is that we can have joy in our illness or heartbreaks. Just because we are God's children working in a ministry does not mean that God will heal us of illnesses. God works miracles to verify His works and not for our personal benefit. It seems that God healed him both for the work that he still had to perform and also for the sake of Paul who was spared additional sadness at the death of Epaphroditus. It is apparent that God did not work through Paul in the healing but directly intervened.

Phil 2:28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.

Phil 2:29 Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard;

Phil 2:30 because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Paul's concern was not for his health or even for his release from prison. He was ready to die for Christ or live for Christ. His concern was for the wellbeing of the Christians at other churches such as at Philippi. Paul could have asked Epaphroditus to stay with him and comfort him but he was more concerned about the other Christians. Thus he eagerly sent him so that they could see him again and so that Epaphroditus would be pleased at being with them. Paul wanted the people to rejoice at the return of Epaphroditus and then Paul could also be less concerned about them. He asked them to receive Epaphroditus with all joy and that they should have men like him as their role model and do whatever they can to help them in their mission for Christ. Oh that we in America could have such men as our role model instead of the professional athletes and other entertainers. Men such as Epaphroditus put their life and happiness behind their desire

to serve Jesus Christ and to further the kingdom of heaven. We should all make a point of becoming familiar with the needs of missionaries at home and abroad who are suffering much more than we can imagine for the Kingdom. The second reason they should receive him with such joy is that he had been making up for the Philippians absence from Paul and taking care of him in ways that they could not because of the distance between them. We will see in chapter four that the church at Philippi had done a lot for Paul so it seems that the only reason for any deficiency of service to Paul was due to the distance separating them. Epaphroditus had provided Paul with his personal care that the Christians at Philippi could not provide at that time.