

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

I like the way the NLT reads for these two verses.

Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and sympathetic? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one heart and purpose.

Paul is speaking to the heart of the Philippians. He begins by asking them questions that require thoughtful introspection. Paul expected them to have positive responses to the questions and wants to use those responses as the basis for challenging them to even greater spiritual maturity. He wants them not only to benefit personally through their relationship with the Lord, but to benefit the church as a whole. As stated in the previous chapter, unity and love permeating the body of believers presents the most powerful testimony before the world of the truth of the gospel. The spread of that truth is Paul's priority before the Lord and would bring him great joy.

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

Paul continues to hammer home the truth that our ministry before the Lord should be done with the right motives, the right heart attitude. We should never act with a self-serving attitude or to impress other people. We should serve with humility and take great pleasure in the success of others. We should never have a "know it all" spirit or treat others with condescension. We need to remember that it is only through Christ working in and through us that we can accomplish anything that is of eternal value.

John 15:5 I am the vine, ye *are* the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for **without me ye can do nothing.**

I like this quote from David Guzik:

"If I consider you above me, and you consider me above you, a marvelous thing happens: we have a community where everyone is looked up to, and no one is looked down on!"

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

As members of one body, the church, the body of Christ, we should be just as interested in the spiritual and physical well-being of other members of the body as we are ourselves. Paul states this truth more clearly in his letter to the Romans with the application made clear in his letter to the Corinthians.

Rom. 12:5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

1Cor. 12:24-26 ...but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that *part* which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but *that* the members should have the same care one

for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. The health of the body as a whole is affected by the health of its individual members. I believe that is why the testimony of the church before the world today is much weaker than it should or could be. We have so many schisms in the body of believers that it is hard for the unbelieving world to see how our lives are any different than theirs. We all claim the same Lord yet live as though we are strangers rather than members of the same family.

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

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

Phil. 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:

Phil. 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 now puts forth Christ Jesus as the perfect example of how we are to live before others—as a servant. That is the point that Jesus was making when He washed the disciples feet at the last supper.

John 13:13-17 Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. **For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Jesus was God in flesh. The Son, the very equal of God the Father, chose to become a servant in the likeness of men. He chose to lay aside His divine attributes to live in flesh as a man filled with the Spirit—the way Adam was created and meant to live—sinless and in perfect fellowship with God. He didn't live as "God" on planet earth; He lived as the "man" Jesus. The writer of Hebrews words it beautifully.

Heb. 2:6-9 But one in a certain place testified, saying, **What is man, that thou art mindful of him?** or the son of man, that thou visitest him? **Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;** thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing *that is* not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him. **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels** for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Heb. 10:10 & 12 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of **Jesus Christ** once *for all*....But **this man**, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; Paul also emphasized Christ coming as man in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 5:19 For as by **one man's** disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of **one [man]** shall many be made righteous.
[bracket mine]

Christ purposed to come as a man in order to redeem man, to provide a way of salvation and restore us to the righteousness in which we were created.

“made himself of no reputation” and “He humbled Himself” – These phrases emphasize that Jesus came willingly in obedience to the Father to provide the sacrifice needed to redeem man. He affirmed that truth to His disciples during His time of ministry as told us by the Apostle John in one of my favorite chapters in scripture.

John 10:17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

John 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

The Greek for *no reputation* emphasizes the truth that He *emptied* Himself; He lived in the flesh as a man; He lived in dependence upon the Spirit—just as we are supposed to. He didn’t cease being God; He just **chose** to live with the limitations of a man, albeit a sinless man indwelt by the Spirit—just as Adam was created and intended to live. (I know I am repeating myself, but I think this truth is very important.) I think this truth is the basis for Paul’s statement in chapter 15 of 1Corinthians.

1Cor. 15:20-22 But now is Christ risen from the dead, *and* become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since **by man came** death, **by man came** also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

He also boldly declared His equality with the Father.

John 10:30 **I and my Father are one.**

John 14:9-11 Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? **he that hath seen me hath seen the Father**; and how sayest thou *then*, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I *am* in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.

Although Christ chose to empty Himself, He never quit being God. He humbled Himself in obedience, but He always remained the Son of God, inseparable part of the triune God. I don’t know how to say it any more clearly.....and I don’t really know how to understand it. My little granddaughter made the statement one day shortly before she was four, “Jesus is God, and God is God; and that is hard to understand.” Such an amazing truth from a child!

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

Phil. 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;**

Phil. 2:11 **And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Things can become confusing when dealing with the concept of the Trinity. I have to look at things simply. Whom did God the Father exalt? His Son, the man Jesus. It is the man Jesus that the Father gave a name that is above every other name. The confusing truth is that this man, Jesus, is also the Son of God, the express image of God, equal with God.

“every knee” – The supplied words in verse 10 are not helpful. I believe this is a reference to every thinking created being “in heaven” (angels, redeemed men), “in earth” (living on earth), and under the earth (Satan and his legions and lost mankind). Every tongue that has the ability to speak will be made to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord. This universal confession will be to the glory of God the Father. The Apostle John echoes this truth in the Revelation.

Rev. 5:13 And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Paul affirms this truth in his letter to the Romans.

Rom. 14:11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

In his letter to the Romans Paul is quoting the prophet Isaiah.

Is. 45:22 Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else.

Is. 45:23 I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth *in* righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

This is another affirmation of the equality of Father and Son.

What does it mean to “confess that Jesus Christ is Lord?” It means to admit that Jesus, the man, The Son of God in flesh, the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer of mankind, is Lord—supreme in authority, Master in the universe. In other words, He is God; there is no being more powerful. In fact, there is no other like Him. I love the words of God through the prophet Isaiah.

Is. 45:5 I *am* the LORD, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me:

Is. 45:18 For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I *am* the LORD; and *there is* none else.

Is. 46:9 Remember the former things of old: for I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me...

Phil. 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.

Paul is talking in the spirit of a loving, spiritual parent in this verse. It’s always easier to do what is right when your parents are around; the test of your character comes when you are away from your parents. You may be held in check a while based on your upbringing, but the temptations become stronger and the flesh grows weaker with constant assault from the world.

Paul acknowledges that the Philippian believers have been obedient to the Word both in his presence as well as his absence. He is concerned that they continue to do so. The Greek for “work out” states “to work fully, finish.” He is not making reference to their salvation being dependent upon their works. We know that he is not contradicting the truth that salvation is through faith—as he states so clearly in Ephesians.

Eph. 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Eph. 2:9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

He is concerned that they remain obedient and not suffer the consequences of becoming disobedient. The Greek for *salvation* is a reference to staying safe or being rescued. Obedience is what “saves” one from the consequences of sin. The attitude of their obedience is to be “with fear and trembling.” In other words, they are to have a serious mindset regarding the consequences of disobedience. God is holy and just and merciful as a loving parent. His word states terrible consequences for sin. The child of God doesn’t lose his/her salvation when he sins, but he will suffer accordingly. I believe that is part of the beautiful intent of the Lord’s teaching on the prodigal son (Luke 15). He didn’t lose his position in the family, but he certainly suffered from his rebellion.

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

“For” = because

In other words, you don’t need to be dependent upon me for your spiritual growth. I think that is an important truth. If a church is dependent upon a man for its stability and growth, it is doomed to eventual failure because men are not dependable; they are susceptible to the attack of the enemy and are appointed to death. Our dependence is to be upon the Lord.

This is another one of those wonderful verses that gives me strength when I start feeling down. God is working in me in the person of the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t leave us alone to fend for ourselves. The working of the Spirit in our lives to convict us and encourage us is a constant affirmation of our salvation. No matter how many times we fall down, He is there to pick us up and help us make a new start. The Spirit is always encouraging us to desire the things of God and empowering us to act on that desire. If that desire is not there, then we have serious reason to question our profession of faith. I loved it when I looked at the Greek for *worketh* and it stated, “to be active, efficient:—do, (be) effectual (fervent), be mighty in....from a root word that states, ‘effectual, powerful.’” The Holy Spirit isn’t a dormant resource that is activated sporadically. He is energetic and persuasive on my behalf to spur me own to accomplish the will of God in my life. It tells me that it takes more work on my part to be rebellious or stagnant in my faith than to submit to His working in me. I have recognized that truth more and more as I have grown spiritually. Although my flesh wants to rebel or choose unwisely sometimes, it’s more of a struggle not to be submissive and obedient than to submit and obey.....and I am really grateful for that. The Spirit won’t force you into obedience, but the more you are in the Word and desire to submit and obey, the more He makes it harder for you not to.

Phil. 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

I love the CJB translation of this verse:

Do everything without *kvetching* or arguing, *Murmuring* speaks of complaining in an undertone; the word *kvetching* sounds much more descriptive to me. *Disputing* is a reference to outright arguing. It is important to note that in context this statement follows those talking about being obedient to the Lord. Everything we do in obedience to the Lord should be done joyfully and sincerely from a heart of love.

Josh. 22:5 But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

1Sam. 12:24 Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great *things* he hath done for you.

Psa. 100:2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

Phil. 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;

“blameless” = faultless

“harmless” = unmixed, innocent

Sincere and loving obedience will result in a “blameless and harmless” testimony before the world. The world loves nothing better than to be able to bring accusation against a Christian who has succumbed to temptation. They love to be able to have grounds for declaring the Lord to be insufficient or to state that Christians are no different than the rest of the world no matter what they claim. The Greek for “crooked and perverse” is a reference to “warped, distorted and morally corrupt.”

Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount that we are supposed to be lights in the world.

Matt. 5:14 Ye are the light of the world.

Matt. 5:16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Light is most visible in the darkness. Notice that light is connected to “good works.” Scripture is full of comparisons of wickedness and evil to darkness.

Is. 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness;

Matt. 6:23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness.

John 3:19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Eph. 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

It’s interesting that “moral corruption” was the term used to describe *perverse*. Satan was the instrument that introduced sin into creation. He was created perfect but became morally corrupt. The prophet Ezekiel affirms this truth.

Ezek. 28:15 Thou *wast* perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.

His moral corruption was the introduction of darkness into the creation. I believe that because we are told that “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.” (1John 1:5) I think that’s why the first thing recorded in the Genesis account of creation was that God created a division between the light and dark.

Phil. 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 laboured in vain.

The only way we can be effective lights in the world is by “holding forth the word of life,” the scripture. Again, this is a reference to living in obedience and acting in accordance with what the scripture teaches.

Paul wants to be able to rejoice before the Lord because of the obedience of these believers. He wants to be able to say, “Look, Lord, at these spiritual children of mine who love you and showed it by how they lived.” It makes me think of how the Lord’s heart must have felt as he pointed out Job to Satan.

Paul had invested of himself into this body of believers. In his mind, whether his investment was a good one or not was dependent upon their response to that investment. I believe that type of investment is always a good one because the scripture teaches us that the Lord is responsible for the outcome of His message of truth; we are responsible to be obedient in sharing that truth. Paul personally shared that truth with the Corinthians.

1Cor. 3:7 So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

Still, Paul is human and falls into the trap of “human thinking” at times. I think he is trying to motivate this body of believers based on their love for him.

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

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

“offered” = to pour out as a libation, i.e. (figuratively) to devote (one’s life or blood, as a sacrifice)

The wording of these verses is hard for me. I am reminded that Paul is in prison as he writes this letter. He is totally aware that life is uncertain and that he could eventually die for his faith. I don’t think he is saying that his death would be because of his ministry among the Philippians. He is equating his faith with their faith, his service with their service. Paul is not afraid of dying for his faith. In fact, he would consider it a privilege to give his life for *their* faith. He is reminding them that they should look at life the same way. It is cause for rejoicing when the Lord allows a loved one to die for his/her faith because it glorifies God (cf 1:20) and it is “far better” to be with Christ (cf 1:21&23).

Phil. 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.

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

I believe the NLT gives the intent of the first part of verse 19, “If the Lord Jesus is willing, I hope to send Timothy to you soon.” Part of his reason for sending

Timothy is selfish, He wants to have personal affirmation of their spiritual well being. I think this is tied directly to his comments in verse 16 above. He declares Timothy as being most connected to him in spirit and one who is genuinely interested in their well being—a true shepherd of the sheep.

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

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

Paul was well aware that the motives of men are not always good. Not everyone who claims to serve the Lord is purely motivated. Already, at this young stage of the church, there were men in the ministry for selfish reasons. Timothy, however, had proven himself. Paul considered him like a son. He had partnered with Paul in sharing the gospel and had proven his faithfulness.

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

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

Paul is expressing his hope that he will get to come to Philippi personally; but, if not, he will send Timothy. Paul has a feeling, however, that he is going to get to visit Philippi again.

That's interesting to me. Paul had obviously not received a revelation that he would get to go or would have stated it as a fact. Instead, he had a "feeling in his heart," for want of a better way to put it, that he attributed to the Lord. I have often had feelings or thoughts that I believed to have been from the Lord, but I couldn't be sure—especially about my children. Some have been proven right and others not.

Phil. 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

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

Evidently, Epaphroditus had delivered a gift from the Philippians to Paul.

Phil. 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *which were sent* from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

According to verse 26, he must have gotten sick while staying to minister to and with Paul and was getting homesick by the time of Paul's writing this letter. He knew that he had loved ones who were worried about him. Paul has words of praise for this man. He describes him as:

- his brother – a fellow believer
- a companion in labor – A co-laborer, one who was willing to jump in and work for the spread of the gospel; a man whose actions proved his faith.
- a fellowsoldier – One who was willing to defend his faith despite the cost.
- your messenger – This indicates a servant spirit.
- "he that ministered to my wants" – Again, an indication of a servant spirit and of a heart of love and concern for fellow believers. The Greek for

wants is a reference to demands and requirements, so it also describes an humble spirit.

Phil. 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.

Phil. 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.

Paul affirms that Epaphroditus had been seriously ill, but that God had shown His mercy in healing him. Paul considered that an act of mercy toward him as well because Epaphroditus had served him so well, and he would have been grieved at losing him—as a friend and as a co-laborer in the gospel (sorrow upon sorrow). The Greek for “carefully” indicates that Paul was sending Epaphroditus home “sooner than otherwise.” He knows that the Philippians will rejoice at seeing him, and their happiness adds to Paul’s happiness.

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

Phil. 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.

The wording in the King James comes across as critical to the Philippians. I think the NLT is a better translation:

Welcome him with Christian love and with great joy, and be sure to honor people like him. For he risked his life for the work of Christ, and he was at the point of death while trying to do for me the things you couldn’t do because you were far away.

Paul was grateful to the Philippians for sending Epaphroditus and held him up as someone of great worth, someone worth emulating. He was dedicated to serving the Lord whatever the cost.

David Guzik had an interesting comment on the phrase “not regarding his life.”

The ancient Greek phrase not regarding his life uses a gambler's word that meant to risk everything on the roll of the dice. Paul says that for the sake of Jesus Christ, Epaphroditus was willing to gamble everything.