

## Philippians 2

**Introduction:** Today we turn our attention to one of the most well known and most often questioned chapters in Scripture.

### Review:

1. Philippians is written to the church in the city of Philippi between AD 58-60 from the Apostle Paul (and Timothy)
2. He is writing from a prison in Caesarea

### Context

- a. Paul warned—Acts 21:1-4
- b. Prophecy in Caesarea—Acts 21:8-12
- c. Paul's intent—Acts 21:13, 14
- d. Paul arrested—Acts 21:26-40
- e. Paul's detention—Acts 22:1-21
- f. Paul taken to prison—Acts 22:22-30
- g. Jews disagreed, Paul saved—Acts 23:7-10
- h. Plot to kill Paul—Acts 23:16-23
- i. Sent to Felix, but Felix left him bound more than 2 years

*But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound. Acts 24:27 NKJV*

This is when he wrote Philippians

3. He is writing to the Church he loves for several reasons
  - a. To thank them for generosity

*Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. Philippians 4:18-19 NKJV*

- b. Encourage them to stand firm

*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. Philippians 1:27 NKJV*

c. Warning to guard against competing theologies

*That you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ. Philippians 1:10 NKJV*

*For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ. Philippians 3:18 NKJV*

(Worldliness, Word of Faith, Political Idols)

4. Disarm growing factions of internal unrest that would hinder the Gospel advancement

*Do all things without complaining and disputing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-15 NKJV*

*I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. 3 And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. Philippians 4:2-3 NKJV*

Three Big Questions/Challenges

- Can God's people live joyfully despite adverse circumstances, in order to ensure that the Gospel is preached?
- Can God's people lay down the right to complain, argue, and oppose each other, in order to ensure that the Gospel is preached?
- Can God's people remain steadfast, resisting all compromise in order to ensure that the Gospel is preached?

Boils down to living lives that are...

- Worthy of the Gospel

*Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. Philippians 1:27 NKJV*

— Manifest our heavenly citizenship

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:20 NKJV*

**I. Unity exists where humility is practiced (2:1-4).**

A. Since we have been recipients of so much blessing—effort at unity should not be too much to ask (2:1, 2)

1. If (ei) also means since
2. He's discussed his own suffering. Remember he was in Caesarean prison (1:12, 13)
3. Philippians have suffered (1:29)
4. God has been gracious to them (NOTE: Trinitarian language) v. 1
5. If you have any affection for me in prison
6. Make me happy—fulfill my joy

NOTE: If you are grateful for God's work in your life, if you care about me—GET ALONG!

IMPORTANT: This read to them in Church—it's a letter from Paul

a. Like-minded (auto phroneo)

- Not things they think about everyday
- Same way of looking at things
- Kingdom/Gospel minded

b. Same love (as God has had for them)

*“Love begins when someone else's needs are more important than my own.”*

c. Being of One accord (sympsychos)

- Soul, emotions
- Soul and mind
- Feeling and thinking
- Same goal/same passion

B. What does this attempt at unity look like (3, 4)

1. Selfish ambition

- a. Heart of human fallen-ness
  - b. To act this way stands against Paul and Christ—see v. 7
  - c. Act of greedily attempting to gain the upper hand
2. Vain Conceit (empty-glory)
    - a. Think too highly of themselves
  3. Put others first
    - a. Esteem them higher—better than you
    - b. Look out for each other
  4. Humility is not false modesty
    - a. Proper estimation of oneself
    - b. Not creature to creature compassion
    - c. Creator to creature comparison
  5. Just as selfish ambition and conceit will erode relationships—healthy ones come from putting one another first

SUMMARY:

Basis of Paul's Appeal

- Gods care for them, even in suffering
- Their relationship with Paul

Concern of Appeal—Unity that will advance the Gospel

Content of Appeal—Put away human nature embrace Divine nature

IMPORTANT: A Word for all seasons

- Just imagine what it could be!

**II. Humility was modeled perfectly by Christ (2:5-8).**

- A. Mindset called for is that of Christ (5)
- B. As God, He emptied Himself (6-7)
  1. Form of God—pre-existent One (being in the very nature of God—NIV)
  2. “Not robbing” to be equal with Him

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- a. Harpagmos/harpagma
- b. To take advantage of
- c. Saw divinity not as something to be exploited or as a matter of privilege
- d. Saw it instead as a means of unselfish giving

NOTE: This is nature of biblical God and Jesus

- 6. Demonstrated by making Himself of no reputation (kenoo)—Ka-nah-□

Four times in the New Testament

*For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise made of no effect. Romans 4:14 NKJV*

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. 1 Corinthians 1:17 NKJV*

*Yet I have sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this respect, that, as I said, you may be ready. 2 Corinthians 9:3 NKJV*

*But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. 1 Corinthians 9:15 NKJV*

NOTE: Not emptied, but nullified, making it of no account

- 7. Made it of no affect by taking form of a servant and being found in likeness of man
  - a. Became a servant—"a douli"—deprived of most basic of human rights
  - b. Same way—laid down right of Deity to serve

NOTE: So, of course Paul felt all should do too for Christ (see 1:1)

- c. Came in the likeness of man (7)

*For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh. Romans 8:3 NKJV*

Likeness—homoimati

*Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. Romans 5:14 NKJV*

Likeness—exactly

NOTE: He was God—He was Deity

One way He used that deity was by not exploiting his status, but instead manifest it by humble service, becoming a slave, and taking essential identity of humanity.

C. As God He gave Himself (2:8)

1. Crucifixion—the cruelest form of execution in Roman culture
2. Reserved for lower class—especially slaves
3. This is why the Jews and Greeks struggled with Jesus

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness. 1 Corinthians 1:18-23 NKJV*

**III. Humility was honored by the Father (2:9-11).**

- A. God's response to the obedience and selfless humility of Christ  
B. He exalted Jesus to the highest place

1. Resurrection
2. Ascension—seated at the Right Hand

C. He gave Jesus name above all names

1. Name—LORD—over all creation
2. Not universal worship
3. Universal acceptance

- D. The example of Jesus' obedience and humility is placed before the divided Philippian church—ACT THIS WAY!

**IV. Humble unity is expected of us (12-18).**

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- A. Paul calls on them (us) to obey or align ourselves with his instruction (12)
- B. Work out your own salvation (12, 13)

- 1. What can this mean?

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV*

*But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Romans 4:5 NKJV*

- 2. Paul sees a difference between justification and salvation

*Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. Romans 5:9 NKJV*

- a. Not working FOR salvation
- b. Conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of justification until the day of His return
- c. Discern what is best (1:10)
- d. Serve one another one self

- 3. Paul still insists that our justification is an act of God entirely (13)

- C. Specific instruction (14)

- 1. Complaining—Septuagint—describes Israel in the wilderness
- 2. Disputing—division

- D. Reason this posture is so important (15-18)

- 1. Present a unified witness to a lost world
- 2. Make His sacrifice worthwhile

## V. Examples of Humble Unity (2:19-30)

NOTE: After some rich theology in vv. 1-18, this section seems to focus on Paul's travel plans and the travel plans of his associates. Why? Karl Barth says this section contains, "no direct teaching."

- Did he plan to close letter and then change his mind?
- Was he trying to assert his authority?
- Was he just alerting them his travel plans?

Likely

- Called them to lives of humble service and obedience
- Example—his own
- Example—Christ
- Now two men—Timothy and Epaphroditus

A. Timothy will come shortly (2:19-24)

1. Want to send him soon (but not immediately)
2. Had to wait till outcome of his own trial (23)
3. Once he can he will send him so he can bring back the good news about Philippians
4. Timothy is an excellent ally—3 reasons
  - a. He has a like mind with Paul and Philippians (hard to find in ministry)—v. 20
  - b. Timothy stands alone as a selfless ally in ministry—v. 21
  - c. Timothy was proven, his motives had been tested and he was faithful—v. 22

NOTE: Paul needed Timothy with him for now

*Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: 16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. 19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:15-19 NKJV*

B. Epaphroditus would come immediately (25-30)

1. He had returned to Philippi after being sent by them to Paul to minister to him and carry their gift

*Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need. Philippians 2:25 NKJV*

*Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. Philippians 4:18 NKJV*

2. Had been sent back for a few reasons

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- a. He wanted to be re-united with friends especially since he had been sick (26)
  - b. His sickness, life-threatening, was a result of his carrying out a mission of ministry to Paul
  - c. So he could be happy, the people relieved, and Paul less stressed
3. Dignity of Epaphroditus
- a. Messenger (25) “apostolos”
  - b. Minister, brother, fellow worker, soldier
- C. These two men had modeled the ministry of Christ
- 1. No complaining and murmuring
  - 2. No selfish ambition or divisiveness
  - 3. Both seek the interest of others and Christ
  - 4. Christ suffered to death and God exalted and Epaphroditus suffered almost to death and should be heard

**Conclusion:**

*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5 NKJV*

God does not ask more of us than He gives power to obey

TRUTH: Theology is one thing but to live it out, quite another. James—faith without works is dead!

- 1. Paul believed the humility of Christ to be theologically true.
- 2. He also believed that truth had implications
- 3. He understood that a theology abstracted from the believer it demanded was distorted and inadequate (Frank Thielman)

Karl Barth

*“This is how it looks when a man does not only think these thoughts, but because they are true and necessary thoughts must live constantly in their shadows and can never get away from them in his concrete decisions.”*