



## PHILIPPIANS 2 LEARN FROM CHRIST

### INTRODUCTION

In the first part of his epistle to the Philippians, Paul had carefully explained the circumstances of his imprisonment. He was not in chains because of any criminal offense. His chains were for the sake of Christ and the gospel (1:13), so he was able to rejoice, even while under adverse circumstances. Paul lived for Christ (1:21) and he was filled with joy because his imprisonment was encouraging the spread of the gospel! Paul had no concern for his own comfort or his own agenda. The totality of Paul's concern and desire was wrapped up in Christ and in the furtherance of the gospel so that others might know Him.

How does one explain such unselfishness and humility? The reason is found in Christ. Not only was Christ Paul's reason for living; Christ was Paul's example in humility.

In Chapter 2, Paul sets forth Christ as our example. Christ was Lord of all, but He humbled himself to become the servant of all. As Christians come to understand and take on the mind or attitude of Christ, we learn to live together in love and unity and we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (1:27). Paul gives a lesson in true humility as he calls his readers to do just that. Seeing the Philippians live in such a way would make his joy complete.

### OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS 2

- I. Let Christ's Love Be in You - Philippians 2:1-4
- II. Let Christ's Mind Be in You -  
Philippians 2:5-18
- III. Lesson from Timothy - Philippians 2:19-24
- IV. Lesson from Epaphroditus -  
Philippians 2:25-30

#### I. Let Christ's Love Be in You - Philippians 2:1-4

Paul sets forth the great blessings believers have in Christ and calls for a demonstration of Christ's love in our lives. Loving unity is possible in the church because of all Christ has done for us.

##### A. Blessings of Christ's love — Philippians 2:1

Christ's love should exert a persuasive power upon Christians as His love fills and inspires us through the heavenly graces Paul mentions.

#### 1. Consolation

This is the personal encouragement and comfort which believers have in Christ.

#### 2. Comfort of love

God's love in our hearts works through us to love others and live in Christian unity.

#### 3. Fellowship of the Spirit

All believers are filled with the Holy Spirit, giving us a common ground for fellowship with one another, with God the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3).

#### 4. Affection and mercy

We demonstrate human kindness toward one another as a result of the heavenly affection and mercy which has been shown to us through Christ.

#### B. Outworking of Christ's love - Philippians 2:2-4

Paul explains how Christ's love should exhibit itself in the lives of believers.

##### 1. Like-mindedness - 2:2

Paul's joy will be complete if the Philippians show that they are of one mind by loving one another and living in spiritual unity. How do you show Christ's love to others? How do you promote unity in Christ in your church?

##### 2. Lowly-mindedness - 2:3-4

The believers' motives are never to be selfish. Others are to be put ahead of oneself. Humility accepts a place of service with concern for the interests and needs of others and not just your own. *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another* (Romans 12:10). Matthew Henry in his Commentary notes that, "If we are lowly-minded we will be like-minded."

#### II. Let Christ's Mind Be in You - Philippians 2:5-18

Jesus Christ is our supreme example of humility and

selfless concern for others. To learn to imitate His ways, we must learn what is in His mind. Paul calls us to reflect Christ's mind in our own minds.

#### A. Christ's example - Philippians 2:5-11

Those who love God's word see this passage as pure poetry. The words expressed are a hymn to Christ, celebrating His humiliation and His exaltation.

##### 1. Humility - 2:5-8

###### a. He is sovereign God - 2:6

From the beginning, Christ existed in the *form of God*. His being in the *form of God* means that He is divine and one with God. The word stresses the inner quality of His association with God, and not the outward physical form. See John 1:1-4 and 14; Colossians 1:15-18 and Hebrews 1:2-3. Although Christ existed in the *form of God*, having the essential essence of God, He did not consider His position a prize to be selfishly hoarded. Christ's great object was to identify Himself with humanity; not to appear to men as divine but as human. "Had He come into the world emphasizing His equality with God, the world would have been amazed, but not saved. He did not grasp at this. He rather counted humanity His prize, and so laid aside the conditions of His preexistent state, and became man" (M. R. Vincent, Word Studies In The New Testament).

###### b. He became a *servant* - 2:7

Christ laid aside His privileges. The phrase, *made Himself of no reputation*, is the translation of the Greek word, "ekenosen", which means "emptied". M. R. Vincent (cited above) says it is "a graphic expression of His self-renunciation." He stripped Himself of all His self-interests to take the form of a *servant*, a lowly man.

###### c. He became our sacrifice -2:8

The extent of Christ's humility is seen in His obedience in submitting to death, even death on the cross. Paul writes in Galatians that He became *a curse for us*, *For it is written 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree'* (Galatians 3:13) Peter wrote, *And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously; and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed* (1 Peter 2:23-24 NASB). And the writer of Hebrews says, *Jesus who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame* (Hebrews 12:2).

##### 2. Exaltation - 2:9-11

*Therefore God* (verse 9), shows that God's action was a direct response to Christ's actions. Christ's humility, shown through His obedience, led God to exalt Him to the highest place of honor, that place being the right hand of God (Mark 16:19; Acts 7:54-60; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22).

###### a. *The name which is above every name* - 2:9

Most scholars agree that the *name* does not refer to any one specific or personal title of Christ. Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, concludes that "*the name* represents the rank, titles, and dignity of Christ, just as in Ephesians 1:21 and Hebrews 1:4." "*The name* includes every aspect of the living, victorious Lord who, as God and man, fought our fight and won it, accepted our debt as His own and paid it, took our sins and died under them and rose to set us free" (A. W. Tozer, Renewed Day by Day).

###### b. The honor which is His -2:10-11

God has exalted Christ to the position of highest authority, a position which demands the worship of all: *those in heaven*, referring to the angels and saints, *those on earth*, referring to living human beings and *those under the earth*, including satan, demons, and the unsaved. One day all of these will recognize Him for who He is. They will fall down on their knees and be compelled to confess that *Jesus Christ is Lord*. Jesus Christ is God Himself (Compare Exodus 3:14-15 with Mark 14:62; John 8:24; 28; 58; Revelation 1:8; 18. Also see 1 John 5:20).

###### c. Application

He who possessed the form of God humbled Himself to take the form of a servant and suffer death for sinners. Therefore God was pleased to exalt Him above all. *Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time* (1 Peter 5:6).

#### B. Christian's response - Philippians 2:12-18

Paul follows His hymn to Christ with an exhortation to respond in the proper way.

##### 1. *Work out your own salvation* - 2:12-13

It is God, by His grace, who has done the work of salvation in our souls. As believers, each of us is a work of God (Ephesians 2:8-10). Paul calls us to put into practice

what God has worked in us. We are to work because God is effectively working (1 Thessalonians 2:13) in us, energizing and enabling us to do what pleases Him. He will do the work in each one of us as we cooperate with Him. Paul said, *I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me* (4:13). Matthew Henry's statement in his Commentary assesses what Paul is saying, "It concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls; whatever becomes of other things, let us take care of our best interests."

## 2. With fear and trembling - 2:12

Recognize God's greatness and your own lowliness. Respond with humility.

## 3. Without murmuring and disputing - 2:14-15

*Murmuring* is basically a bad attitude expressed by complaining or grumbling. A classic example is the Israelites in the wilderness after God delivered them from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 15:24; 16:7-9; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13).

An example of *disputing* is Korah, who led a rebellion against Moses in the wilderness (Numbers 16). Christians are to live peaceably, in humility of spirit, in order to become a positive witness to others. Christians are to show themselves *blameless*, or above reproach, and *harmless*, or innocent. The Greek word translated *harmless*, literally means "pure", "unmixed with any foreign matter." It is a word that is used of unmixed wine or unalloyed metal. Are your own motives and intentions unmixed? Are your actions and words pure?

## 4. As lights in the world - 2:15

Moses called his own generation *perverse and crooked* in Deuteronomy 32:5. The apostle Peter referred to his generation as *perverse* in his speech to the crowds on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:20). The words depict a world which has gone against God and the truth. Our own generation is probably no less deserving of that description. As God works through His own, He shines through us and we shine, *as lights in the world*. Does God's light shine through you clearly and undimmed? *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16).

## 5. Hold fast the word of life - 2:16

*Hold fast* is the Greek "epechontes" which can mean either "hold fast" or "hold forth". *The word of life* is the gospel of Jesus Christ. All believers should cling to the truth of the gospel and also hold it forth and

share it with others. Paul writes that if the Philippian believers do this, he will have reason to rejoice on the great day when Christ returns. His labors will not have been in vain.

## 6. Rejoice - 2:17-18

The picture which Paul paints in these verses is of the Philippians as priests, offering their faith up to God through their spiritual sacrifices and their Christian service. Paul describes some of the Philippians' sacrifice and service in 4:14-18. He pictured his own life as a *drink offering*, a libation of wine which accompanied the sacrifices of the Old Testament (Numbers 15:1-10), being poured out upon their sacrifice. The picture of the double sacrifice was a reason for Paul to rejoice. He rejoiced in the sacrifice and service of his beloved Philippians. He rejoiced that his own life was being poured out for Christ and the church. He called the Philippians to be glad and rejoice with him. Is your own outlook one of rejoicing as you offer spiritual sacrifices and service to God? Do you find joy in pouring your life out for Christ and for others?

## III. Lesson from Timothy - Philippians 2:19-24

Paul portrays Timothy as an image of Christ's humility and an example of selflessness. Timothy was more concerned about others than himself.

### A. Like-mindedness - Philippians 2:19-21

Paul desired to send Timothy to visit the Philippian church soon because he knew Timothy genuinely cared for them (verse 20) and because he looked forward to receiving an encouraging report about them (verse 19). No one else was *like-minded*, literally "of equal soul," like Timothy. Timothy cared and served from the heart. He did it because he loved doing it and not because he had to. He stood out in a world of self-seekers who cared more about their own glory, comfort, and safety than they did about truth, holiness, and glorifying God. What are your secret innermost motives in serving God and others?

### B. Proven character - Philippians 2:22-24

The Philippians knew Timothy's character because they had been with him and seen him in action as he worked alongside Paul (Acts 16). He had been tested and had been proved to be genuine.

To Paul, Timothy was like a son. What higher compliment could the great mentor pay to the one who had worked with him in spreading the gospel? He would send Timothy to the Philippians as soon as possible, and trust in the Lord that he also would see them shortly.

**IV. Lesson from Epaphroditus -  
Philippians 2:25-30**

Epaphroditus was the one who carried Paul's letter to the Philippians. His name means "charming". He put others first and willingly took the role as servant of Christ to Paul and to the Philippians.

**A. As a minister to the needs of others - 2:25**

Paul refers to Epaphroditus as *my brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, your messenger, and the one who ministered to my need*. He was obviously respected and trusted by the Philippians who had sent him to deliver a gift and be of help to Paul. The Philippians had done all they could for Paul. The only thing lacking was their being with Paul in person, and Epaphroditus would supply that (verse 30b).

**B. Did not regard his own life - 2:26-27**

Epaphroditus threw himself into the service of Christ for the Philippian church. He did what they could not do for Paul, not regarding his own life. Unfortunately, he became ill and was even close to death. Even then his concern was not for himself. He was *distressed*, literally "beside himself," because the Philippians had heard that he was sick.

**C. A man to be held in high regard - 2:28-30**

Paul was sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians so they could rejoice in seeing him restored to health by the mercy of God. It would also make Paul less sorrowful to know that their minds would be relieved and that they would be rejoicing over Epaphroditus.

Therefore, they should receive him gladly, as a valuable gift from Paul, and treat him with utmost respect because of his humble and selfless service toward Paul and Christ.

**Applications**

1. How do you treat those who are in the service of Christ? Do you uphold them with your respect, prayers, and material support?
2. How are you serving Christ through serving others?
3. Do you have an attitude of humility and selflessness like Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus? How does it show in your life?
4. Do you lead the kind of life which merits the respect of others? What can you change in your life to be more of an example and encouragement to others?