

Truth for Today

The Bible teaching radio programme

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A Look at Philippians: The Mind of Christ - Philippians 2:1-30

Good morning. Our talk this morning comes from Philippians 2:1-30 which I will cover under five headings.

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| I. Philippians 2:1-4 | Sacrifice - Unity and Others, likeminded. |
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I. Philippians 2:1-4 Sacrifice - Unity and Others, likeminded

Let us read Philippians 2:1-4, *"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."*

As Paul opens this chapter with the word "if" it is not to cast doubt but to make the intended readers and ourselves to think carefully for a moment on these qualities found in Christ and the Spirit of God. We could re-phrase this verse by saying "Since you know there are consolations and comforts of love in Christ and since there is fellowship and intense deep mercies with the Spirit". This then becomes a link with the fear and suffering in Philippians 1:28-30 and the positive blessing of living in these blessed qualities associated with Christ and the Spirit of God. Paul then goes on to say *"fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"* (Philippians 2:2). This is what Paul wants for the Philippians so that he might have joy. If we understand what we have as believers the same self sacrificing love, the same togetherness and the same understanding then a powerful Christian testimony will be seen.

In Philippians 2:3 Paul warns the Philippians, *"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory"*. What is the answer to such destructive forces? The verse goes on to provide the answer, *"but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves."* This goes against the grain of human nature; human nature is self centred. Do we treat every other person in our Christian fellowship as better than self, as more worthy? This is the sacrifice of self for the good of the whole Christian fellowship. Of course this only works well when everyone is likeminded. Then our Lord Jesus Christ can start using the whole fellowship to do those things that He wants us to do.

Finally in Philippians 2:4, *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* This re-emphasises what has been brought out in Philippians 2:3. This is not interference and being a busy body in the affairs of others but rather the care and concern for the wellbeing of fellow believers. In other words it is putting others first. Unity and others in the Christian fellowship is first and self is sacrificed.

II. Philippians 2:5-8 Sacrifice - Christ Jesus, let this mind be in you

Let us read Philippians 2:5-8, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."*

As we consider the opening words we are challenged by the statement, *"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus"*. It is intended to re-enforce the teaching of Philippians 2:1-4. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is both God and man, never claimed anything which was not rightfully His. Christ Jesus is God, God the Son, and as we know through His incarnation fully and completely man in every way except He has always been sinless in every respect. Philippians 2:7-8 focus upon what our Lord Jesus Christ has done, as He stooped from the glory to the cross.

1. *"made himself of no reputation"* (Philippians 2:7)

When our Lord Jesus Christ started that amazing journey from the glory to become man a number of things were necessary. A lot has been said by theologians concerning this phrase but we must guard against anything which would lessen the greatness of this divine Person. At his birth he looked like any other new born baby boy. He never ceased to be God at any point in His earthly life. But, in the manger there was no regal, majestic, Godhead glory displayed. The Son of God made Himself of no reputation. We have something similar in Genesis 18:1-15 when the Lord accompanied by two angels appeared to Abraham. It was not incarnation but the Lord appeared as a man in order to communicate with His servant. So we see that our Lord has always been able to visit and come close to His faithful servants. But the incarnation was more so, a unique experience for the Son of God to take upon Himself manhood. If we want confirmation that this "*made Himself of no reputation*" has to do with displayed glory then we only need to turn to John 17:4-5, "*I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.*" He laid aside His glory and now anticipating the completion of His work He desires that glory to be restored.

2. "*took upon him the form of a servant*" (Philippians 2:7)

This next statement is different. We have a deliberate action in that Christ Jesus voluntarily became a servant to do the will of God His Father. As Son He is equal, as servant He came to carry out the purposes of God. In order to understand more fully the servant character of our Lord Jesus Christ then we need to read the gospels, especially the Gospel of Mark which largely portrays the Son of God in His servant character.

3. "*was made in the likeness of men*" (Philippians 2:7)

The word likeness guards against any thought that the Lord Jesus Christ was exactly like you or I. We are sinners by birth and nature and need salvation to cleanse us from our sins and deal with the judgment that is or was upon us as sinners. Without Christ as our Saviour and Lord we are already condemned in God's sight. It is only those who know Christ as their Lord and Saviour that have the judgment removed. What is true of our Lord Jesus Christ is that He looked like us but was never a sinner under condemnation. As like us He was hungry (Matthew 4:2), tired (John 4:6), he grew from a baby into manhood (Luke 2:52) and so on.

4. "*and being found in fashion as a man*" (Philippians 2:8)

This statement strengthens the above phrase in that the Lord Jesus Christ looked like a man to everyone else. Remember when He stilled the storm, the disciples said, "*What manner of man is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?*" (Matthew 8:27, Mark 4:41) As we read the gospel accounts of the life of the Lord Jesus we find that time and again through His words and deeds shone out the amazing testimony that this man was indeed God.

5. "*he humbled himself*" (Philippians 2:8)

This simply means that He who is the very Son of God took the lowly place of a man as He lived in this world. Jesus lived in Nazareth, not the most desirable of locations (John 1:46). Jesus became a carpenter, He learned a trade (Mark 6:3). We read of Him being tired (John 4:6) and hungry (Matthew 4:2). The Lord Jesus Christ experienced what it was to be a real person in this world, He came to understand but much more as the next points indicate.

6. "*and became obedient unto death*" (Philippians 2:8)

It was not only to live here and experience life but there was a work of the utmost importance to be completed. The Lord Jesus Christ was the truly obedient servant of God. Part of the coming, in response to the purpose of God, included the Lord Jesus, as man, dying. From other scriptures we know that He had full control of His life and He would lay His life down and take it up again. However, there was something distinct about the Lord dying and this we see in the last phrase of Philippians 2:8.

7. "*even the death of the cross*" (Philippians 2:8)

The Lord's death was not simply that. It was the death of the cross. So much is involved in this phrase, "*the death of the cross*". Here we have the sacrifice to meet and exhaust the judgment of God, a sacrifice for sin. It is where God is propitiated for sin. It is an acceptable sacrifice exceeding those animal sacrifices which were so prominent and yet ineffective in the Old Testament. It was here that the work of redemption was accomplished. Through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ we can know sins forgiven completely.

III. Philippians 2:9-11 Sacrifice - Justified, the Father is minded

I use the word "justified" because the Father acknowledges the completion of the work the Lord Jesus Christ had been given to fulfil. Therefore, God places additional honours upon the Son due to His accomplishments as the perfect man. We have just considered the seven downward steps of Christ. In Philippians 2:9-11 we have God exalting Christ above all.

Let us read Philippians 2:9-11: "*Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*"

1. *"Wherefore God also"* (Philippians 2:9)

On account of what has happened as outlined in Philippians 2:5-8 God is going to under take certain steps to give additional honour to His Son. But God does so in relation to His manhood as the use of His personal name, Jesus, implies. We might say that God reciprocates Jesus for all that He has done. God looks back to what has been accomplished and forward to give additional honour to Jesus.

2. *"hath highly exalted him"* (Philippians 2:9)

In John 3:14, *"as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up"*. The words *"lifted up"* as applied to the Lord being placed on the cross is superseded by the words *"highly exalted"*, this is a *"super"* lifting up, far greater and much more significant. Jesus holds a unique and all powerful place as the pre-eminent man in the realm of glory.

3. *"and given him a name which is above every name"* (Philippians 2:9)

The Lord Jesus Christ was indeed given a name, Matthew 1:21. The angel communicated to Joseph that his name was to be Jesus. Now the meaning of Jesus in Hebrew is *"Jehovah Saviour"*. So we can readily see the greatness of the name Jesus and as Jehovah the Saviour it is certainly a name that is above every name. For the vast majority of people in the world the precious name of Jesus is used in anything but reverence. It is only Christians who have the wonderful opportunity to reverence our Lord Jesus Christ as He should be.

4. *"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"* (Philippians 2:10)

In this statement we have the answer to the rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ. What a surprise it will be to those who have misused the name of Jesus during their life time to be confronted with Jesus as the Judge. Every knee will bow. It is better to own Him as sovereign Lord now than be forced to do so in the judgment day.

5. *"of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth"* (Philippians 2:10)

There will be no place of escape, every knee will bow. This it is the time of reckoning.

6. *"and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"* (Philippians 2:11)

Christians confess Him as Lord now. In the judgment day all who have opposed God and His Son will have to own verbally that Jesus Christ is Lord. This is not salvation it is simply acknowledging what is true and a reminder that God was right all along about His Son.

7. *"to the glory of God the Father"* (Philippians 2:11)

In the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Father is honoured now, is honoured by the confession of every true believer who comes to know Christ as Saviour and He will be honoured in the coming day when everyone is forced to acknowledge what is true of Jesus. What an exalted name.

IV. Philippians 2:12-18 Service - Paul, the features of a servant -obedient minded

Let us read Philippians 2:12-18, *"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. For, it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 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; 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. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me."*

Paul commences in Philippians 2:12 with words of encouragement, *"ye have always obeyed"* but this is followed with the challenge for greater effort during the time of his absence with the words *"work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"*. This is not a way of achieving salvation by works. This is the growth and development of their already obtained salvation which came by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. As believers on Christ we are expected to grow spiritually and develop a Christian lifestyle that is God honouring. The fear and trembling emphasises that we are representing a holy God in an ungodly world.

God desires to have a people that live and work for Him. As such we are not to be a grumbling people. Just the opposite, we have every reason to be happy. In addition we are expected to be honest and law abiding because we live among those who are un-regenerated, who display the characteristics of being crooked and perverse (Philippians 2:15). Paul wants to see this victorious living so that in the day of Christ he will be able to rejoice because of their faithful service.

V. Philippians 2:19-30 Service - Timothy and Epaphroditus, examples of God's servants - service minded

As the chapter closes we are brought to consider two other servants of God. Let us read Philippians 2:19-24 about Timothy, *"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. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly."*

At present Paul was hindered from visiting the Christians at Philippi (Philippians 2:12-14). Therefore, his only option is to send Timothy. Paul states that Timothy has the same interests as himself. Paul calls him a *"likeminded"* person (Philippians 2:20). Notice the qualities of Timothy, he *"will naturally care for your state"*. The word state has the meaning of total. Timothy would have a holistic approach to their wellbeing (Philippians 2:19).

Timothy's qualifications are next outlined, *"as a son"* (Philippians 2:22) he worked with Paul in the gospel. With Timothy's visit Paul would find out how the Philippians were progressing and this would be sufficient until Paul was able to visit them himself.

Let us read Philippians 2:25-30 about Epaphroditus *"Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 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. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me."*

A number of positive Christian features are brought out in these few verses. The Philippians are concerned about Paul because he is in prison. Sadly Epaphroditus takes seriously ill and nearly died (Philippians 2:26-27). This causes much concern back at Philippi (Philippians 2:26). Once recovered, Paul thinks it wise to send him back home so that all may see that he is fully recovered (Philippians 2:28). Paul thinks very highly of this visitor that he calls him *"my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier"* (Philippians 2:25). What a commendation for a prison visitor!

Epaphroditus was probably the messenger who carried the letter to Philippi and it is sent with a reminder to value the Lord's servants, *"Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death"* (Philippians 2:29). This must challenge us today. The self sacrificing attitude of Epaphroditus shows that he viewed his work as *"the work of Christ"* (Philippians 2:30). This is key to Christian service. If our focus is right then the service will be right. No matter how great or small we might think our particular role is in our fellowship, if we do it for the Lord, then it will be seen and appreciated. The Lord must get all the glory and if that is true the Father will be honoured also.

Let us close with some verses from KB Wilkinson's hymn

*May the mind of Christ my Saviour
Live in me from day to day,
By His love and power controlling
All I do and say.*

*May the Word of God dwell richly
In my heart from hour to hour,
So that all may see I triumph
Only through His power.*

*May the love of Jesus fill me,
As the waters fill the sea;
Him exalting, self abasing,
This is victory.*

Thank you for listening and the Lord bless you this Lord's Day.

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