

Philippians 2:1-2
Women's Bible Study, January 17, 2024
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Our passage today is better understood if we read the last two verses of chapter one and then go directly into what we will be studying today.

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Philippians 2:1-2

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, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

In Chapter 1 of Philippians Paul is urging single minded focus on Christ. It is because of Jesus that Paul and the Philippians were able to live joyfully in all circumstances. He talked at length about how the sufferings they were experiencing were not a reason to stop preaching Christ. Indeed, the sufferings were proof of their salvation! Paul rejoiced in their partnership and reminded them of his confidence that God would continue the good work he had begun.

Now the tone of the letter changes a little. Paul has received a report that the Philippians were not getting along as true believers should. He ends chapter 1 in an almost triumphal encouragement. "You are being persecuted. It's hard but glorious! It proves that you are believers." The focus in chapter 2 is humility and submission. The story of the Christian life should be love. We should be characterized by love and the world should stand amazed at the love we have within our churches. As we all know this is often not the case. It is sad when people say they don't go to church because the people in the church are so mean to each other.

We cannot love others if we are always thinking about ourselves. We are born with a focus on ourselves. Babies are adorable, but they are very self-centered. They certainly do not care if mom and dad are sleeping when they wake up in the middle of the night hungry. When people become followers of Christ, they are spiritual babies. They are still thinking about themselves, but God never allows his children to remain in this state. Paul gives us five reasons to strive for like mindedness in the church. The first four are because of what we have

received because of God saving our souls. The fifth is because of the people who serve us. This was Paul for the Philippians. For us it would be our elders and church leaders.

1. If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ

The word “if” here is not to be thought of as expressing any doubt but instead to be a strong affirmation. The word “therefore” is because Paul is expanding on what he said at the end of chapter one. Encouragement is translated consolation in the King James Version.

What we have received because of our relationship with Christ is so amazing that the word “encouragement” almost seems an understatement. Our sins are forgiven! God did all the work for us because we were unable to do anything for ourselves.

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Acts 9:31

So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

Romans 15:5

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus.

2 Corinthians 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

The consolation in Christ is that which Christ furnishes or imparts. Paul regarded him as the source of all comfort, and earnestly prays that they might so live that he and they might avail themselves in the fullest sense of that unspeakable enjoyment. The idea is, that Christians ought at all times, and especially in affliction, so to act as to secure the highest possible happiness which their Saviour can impart to them. Albert Barnes NT Commentary

What God has done for us should be enough to cause us to stop thinking about ourselves all the time.

- Have we received consolation (comfort) because of knowing Jesus?

2. If there is any consolation of love

Have we received love because of the faith that God so graciously gave us? Yes!! God's love toward us is huge. It is extravagant. He sacrificed what was most valuable to him. Think about how much God must love us.

Ephesians 1:3-6

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the kind intention of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

John 15:13

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.

Romans 8:38-39

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 3:1-2

See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.

1 John 4:10

In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

With this love poured out on us how can we hang on so tightly to our own selfish desires? What he has given us is infinitely valuable.

We have also been loved in the body of Christ. Not perfectly of course since it is humans in the body of Christ. We know ourselves that we haven't loved perfectly so how could we judge someone else's treatment of us. We can be thankful for the love we have received.

- Have we experienced love because of the faith God has given us?

3. ...if there is any fellowship of the Spirit

If we have received eternal life through faith in Christ, we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. How marvelous that God makes his home within us. This is of such great benefit to the believer. We can pray at any and all times and we know that we are heard. God himself knows our thoughts. This is intimacy way beyond human intimacy. There is not a single person that knows the thoughts of another, but God knows what we are going to think or say even before we do.

John 14:26

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Romans 8:26-27

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness, for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and he who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because he intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Psalms 139:1-4

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you understand my thought from afar. You scrutinize my path and my lying down and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Even before there is a word on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it all.

We not only have the Holy Spirit within us, but fellow believers have the same Spirit within them. This should cause us to be united, not suspicious and jealous of each other. The word “fellowship” is the Greek word *koinonia* which means fellowship, association, community, communion, or joint participation.

Philippians 1:27

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

- Do we benefit from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit? Does this cause us to be of one mind and striving toward the same goal?

4. If any affection and compassion

The affection and compassion that we have received from God should cause us to act that way toward other people. We should especially be affectionate and compassionate toward others who are our brothers and sisters in Christ. Since we are intimately aware of how desperately we need compassion surely, we can look on others with a compassionate manner. We should not behave in a critical way toward others. Remember the parable Jesus told about the servant that was forgiven a huge debt but then he found a fellow servant who owed him a paltry amount and tried to demand it of him? We are the servants who were forgiven a debt so large that we could never in a million lifetimes repay it.

Affection and compassion are translated bowels and mercies in the King James Version. It means a deep feeling from the very inmost being of the person.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind and compassionate toward one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

Colossians 3:12

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

- We have also received affection and compassion from God if he has given us faith. He has forgiven our sins and declared us justified in his sight. Because of this are we able to also show affection and compassion toward others?
 - Does compassion also mean forgiveness when we are wronged?
5. Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Paul uses a little bit of his considerable influence to let them know that he would like it if they got along and kept themselves focused on the task of obeying and glorifying Jesus and making known the gospel.

Fulfil ye my joy, says the apostle; as if he had said, Sufferings I have enough already; O! do not you, by your divisions and dissensions, add more: I am already a prisoner, expecting the sentence of death, preparing for the sword of persecution, but none of these things move me; I can rejoice in a dungeon, sing in the stocks, triumph in death, if I can but hear you stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel. But, if I hear that you are broken by divisions, my heart is broke; the news of differences and dissensions among you will be heavier to me than my chain, darker than my dungeon, sharper than Nero's sword. Do not thus add to my sorrow and sufferings; but as you have begun and occasioned joy in me, I beseech you fulfil and complete my joy, by your being of one heart, of one mind, entirely one. William Burkitt NT

We also have leaders in our church who long for the people they are shepherding to be unified in the goal of glorifying God and sharing the gospel with the world. Our leaders work tirelessly to encourage, teach, and admonish us. This is not because they consider themselves better than us or that they have “arrived”. God has put them in their position. We should be able to humble ourselves and submit to their teaching. This does not excuse us from our responsibility to study and know the scriptures. We should be so thankful for leaders such as ours.

1 Corinthians 1:10

Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree, and there be no divisions among you; but you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1 Peter 3:8

To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit.

The apostle here uses a great variety of expressions to denote the same thing. The object which he aimed at was union of heart, of feeling, of plan, of purpose. He wished them to avoid all divisions and strifes; and to show the power of religion by being united in the common cause. Probably there is no single thing so much insisted on in the New Testament as the importance of harmony among Christians. Now, there is almost nothing so little known; but if it prevailed, the world would soon be converted to God. Albert Barnes NT Commentary

Paul wanted the Philippians to be like-minded and he used very forceful arguments to cause them to hopefully abandon their self-centered disagreements and instead focus on the goal of promoting the gospel of Jesus Christ. We also can be forgetful of our goal. The only way we can stay the course is by constantly renewing our mind with scripture and prayer.

Philippians 3:12-14

Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.