

Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus, who emptied himself, who humbled himself, who became a bondservant, who became obedient to the death, even death of a cross –

Summarized theme of Philippians from chapter 2 verses 5-8.

During the introduction we discussed the structure of Philippians as having one major theological point. The letter is set up with examples and challenges for the Philippian saints to have the mind of Christ.

The Mind of Christ

The main focus of Philippians Chapter 2 is the mind of Christ is humble.

Overview of Philippians 2:1-11

The intensity and doctrinal peak occur in these eleven verses.

These verses are very encouraging and challenging.

The model is Jesus Christ in His humanity, His humility.

Because of the intensity and doctrinal points, we are going to slow down and glean as much as possible from these verses.

Method of study

In Philippians 2:1-11, we will look at each phrase and possibly every word will be examined for understanding. At various intervals we will summarize a section though retranslation or rendering in an expounded understanding. The purpose is to remove ambiguity and mystification so that we know exactly what is expected of believers in relation to the character and attributes of Jesus Christ.

1. Vocabulary
2. Grammatical considerations
3. Historical references of the person of Jesus

Review of verse 1

Based upon the construction of verse 1 using “if any (εἴ τις),” this does not speak to attributes that are of an absolute nature but that of the potential of believers to demonstrate these principles.

Encouragement in Christ

“παράκλησις *paraklēsis*” is a noun that literally means “to call alongside.” We settled on a definition of “an act of emboldening another in belief or course of action (encouragement, exhortation).”

“ἐν Χριστῷ” is the means or formula (the means and manner). The source of true encouragement is in Christ, but that source is only available to those who are in Christ.

***With the view of our position in Christ, there are grounds for, and believers should, encourage one another, understanding that true encouragement is sourced in Christ.

Consolation of love

“παραμύθιον *paramuthion*” is defined as “to come alongside someone to speak to one in a positive, friendly way.” Each instance is given to someone who is grieving or in need of help or support.

Love “ἀγάπη *agapē*” is defined as unconditional desire for the benefit of another. The way that we speak is in view of love, based upon a desire for the betterment of the individual.

***Believers should positively and gently speak to someone who is in need, to demonstrate the desire for the benefit of the other that is selfless and unconditional.

Fellowship of the Spirit

“κοινωνία πνεύματος” – “κοινωνία *koinōnia*” means to have things in common. The context indicates what it is that is in common. The idea here is a common interest and mutual participation.

“πνεῦμα *pneuma*” is the word for “spirit.” Every major translation capitalizes “Spirit.” This is interpretational. This is probably based upon 2nd Corinthians 13:14. This would indicate that what is in common is the Spirit of God or that we have things in common with the Holy Spirit. But there is no descriptive of spirit in this text: no article, no holy, or of God/Christ. “πνεῦμα *pneuma*” in the genitive. In fact, this can be understood as descriptive adding a quality to the noun.

This would be understood as “spiritual fellowship.” We all can have physical things in common or have common interests (career, sports, etc.), but those in a local body are supposed to have a spiritual fellowship. We are united based upon spiritual truth and spiritual wisdom and spiritual goals.

***Believers should have spiritual fellowship.

Affection and Compassion

“σπλάγχνον *splanchnon*” is the emotion associated with love – affection

“οἰκτιρισμός *oiktirmosis*” the emotion associated with mercy – pity

One of the aspects of true godly activity is to not ignore emotion but to have emotion accompany actions that reflect the character of God. We are not driven by the emotion we should act regardless of emotion but realize that emotions are part of who we are.

***Believers should have affection and pity for one another.

Verse 1

Therefore, with the view of our position in Christ, there are grounds for, and believers should, encourage one another understanding that true encouragement is sourced in Christ. Believers should positively and gently speak to someone who is in need; that is done to demonstrate the desire for the benefit of the other that is selfless and unconditional. Believers should have spiritual fellowship. Believers should have affection and pity for one another.

Notice that my rendering does not have the “if any” and I replaced it with “believers should.” The reason that I have it like this is because of the potential nature of “if any.” Also, the letter is written to and for believers in Jesus Christ. In the first phrase, the source and the manner are stated: “in Christ.”

Last lesson, I stated that the grammar indicates that verse 1 is potential and not assured. Many insist that Paul's statement is not a question but a certainty. It would read "if there is a consolation in Christ, and there is..." the question comes in with the understanding of "*ei tis*," which last time I demonstrated that the consistent use of this construction is that of possibility not assurance. There is another indication in this text that also demonstrates that this is potential and admonishment. This information is found in verse 2.

Verse 2

Make my joy complete

“πληρώσατέ μου τὴν χαρὰν” – literally “fulfill my the joy.” “πληρώω *plēroō*” is in the grammatical form of 2nd Person Plural Aorist Active Imperative. The command is to all the church as a collective. The implication is the activity is designed to be collective and not just by one person. In fact, based upon the goal, this cannot be accomplished by one person.

“*plēroō*” means to fill, complete, accomplish, fulfill. This is not a difficult word to define, but in this context, we have to ask, “How does the Philippian church complete Paul's joy?” We will come back to that.

“*χαρά chara*” is not the emotion but that which cause the emotion of rejoicing. This can also be used for “the experience of gladness.” The word is better understood as content or satisfied with someone, something, or some circumstance.

Now for the question, how does the Philippian church fulfill Paul's joy? The next word in the text is “*ἵνα hina*,” the rest of verse 2 gives the results or the intended purpose of making Paul's joy complete.

Therefore, we have to make a determination. Is the joy fulfilled by completing the intended result or is there instruction that would result in the rest of verse 2? Does one make Paul's joy complete by being unified? Or is the result of the previous verses – being unified and completing Paul's joy?

This is my proposal: verse 1 is set up as possibility; this is a different way of admonishment and encouragement to do the things which are described in the form of “if any...”

This would mean that being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on purpose is accomplished with exhortation in Christ, consolation of love, spiritual fellowship, and having affection and pity including going back to 1:27-30 where behavior and contending for the faith of the gospel (the doctrines concerning the good news of Jesus Christ).

The content (the goal/intended result) of verse 2 seems to restate in various ways the content of 1:27-2:1

Being of the same mind

“τὸ αὐτὸ φρονῆτε” – as previously stated, this is the first phrase in the “*hina*” clause. The literal translation is “the same thing you would think.” The NASB translates this “being of the same mind.” One can argue the NASB captures the idea, but that is not even close.

The verb “φρονέω *phroneō*” means to think, to have an understanding, to have a certain frame of mind (attitude). This is the same word as in 1:7, 2:5, 3:15, 4:2.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 2

The word has both content and manner attached to it. What to think and how to think are presented throughout this letter and all Paul's letters using this word in those contexts.

The pronoun “αὐτός *autos*” with the article means “the same one/thing.” What is the thing that they are supposed to be thinking? Is this an admonishment to have the same content or the same attitude? As stated, I am convinced that this both. The content is found in 1:27 — “One soul striving together for the faith of the gospel” — doctrinal consistency.

This also speaks to attitude. In what way are they supposed to think? Think with humility, not regarding yourself as better than anyone but as Jesus did; humble yourself and think like a servant.

The unification in thinking is not only in thinking the same thing but thinking the right things. This speaks to content as well as manner (what and how/attitude).

Romans 15:5-6 – be unified in thinking according to Christ Jesus so that you would with one voice glorify God.

Philippians 3:12-16 – unification in thinking is based upon the manner in which Paul demonstrated. As an Apostle he is the authority and the responsibility to be an example to those believers. Verse 17 states to follow his example and in 4:9 the instruction is clear.

Colossians 3:2 – Set your thinking (content and attitude) on the things above.

This phrase is the “*hina*” clause, “so that you should think the same thing.” This is then followed by three phrases that elaborate on this result/purpose statement.

Maintaining the same love

“τὴν αὐτὴν ἀγάπην ἔχοντες” – the word translated *maintaining* is the participle “ἔχω *echō*” and means to have. The implication of this word also includes holding or keeping. Maintaining seems to fit, but to me, it seems too mechanical. This word is better understood as clinging to, holding to, or possessing.

The same love – this is a very literal translation using the same pronoun from the previous clause – “αὐτός *autos*” with the article means “the same one/thing.” This clause adds an object, “love.” What does it mean to have the same love?

1 Corinthians 13:1-3, 13 – Love is the chief result that God desires for us

2 Corinthians 2:4 – Love demands that we confront error but with affection and mercy

2 Timothy 1:13 – Love is sourced in Christ; this entails that we maintain the doctrines of Jesus Christ

Philemon 1:5-7 – Love is primarily toward Jesus and all the saints.

How does one love Jesus? Desiring and acting in such a manner that is in His best interest

Biblical love is not from emotion; it is not self-serving. This same love can also be focused on the love that is received from Jesus Christ, that is holding on to the thought about the demonstrated love of God. As we know, we love because He first loved us.

In this context, “having/maintaining the same love” is due to the fact that they speak to each other. The example in the rest of the section is the love of Jesus Christ in His sacrifice (Romans 5:6-8). We love (Jesus and the brethren) because He first love us (1 John 4:9-10, 19).

United in spirit

“σύμψυχοι” – “σύμψυχος sumpsuchos” is a one-word adjective that is a compound word, “with soul.” The prefix “sun” indicates a combination “co-souled.”

What does it mean to be “co-souled?” That is a difficult question because this is the only use of the term (2nd Corinthians 1:23; Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:21). The soul is often used as the source for passion; therefore, this can mean “united in desires and passions.”

It is interesting that the use of “with the soul” in both Ephesians and Colossians are in relationship to their secular employment and work obligations. With the soul seems to indicate an observable effort in their function. Perhaps “co-souled” indicates the effort behind their work here, Philippians 1:27 “with one soul striving together for the faith of the Gospel.”

Intent on purpose

“τὸ ἐν φρονούντες” — the word for *purpose* is the same word for think but in the participial form (adverbial). Literally, this is “while thinking the one thing. The word “ἐν” looks like “ἐν (in),” but the former means “one.” This could be translated “unified in thinking.”

Verse 2 should not be over-thought too much. In the lightest sense possible, we understand this to be Paul speaking in terms that say the same thing in a different way to make a stronger point (a tautology). But the Holy Spirit inspired each phrase because it is important. Even though this has the sense of saying the same thing, having the mind and the soul in unity with everyone else’s mind and soul is the goal of this passage.

Why? What is the purpose of unity?

1. Protection from within - If we are in agreement in content and attitude, then there is no believer left out. Each has his part and each one is content in his role.
2. Protection from the outside - When attacked by the world, we have a support system to encourage and protect the mind of the believer using Scripture to encourage and love.
3. As a witness to the world - Often times, it is our love for one another that is attractive to the outside world. When asked why we support each other, the love of God can be told in the gospel.