



GOSPEL
partnership

DEVOTIONALS 4

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

DAY 1

PHILIPPIANS 2:1, 5

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

If you are like me, you appreciate the comforts of life. If you are like me, you appreciate being around people who are an encouragement and who have a unified vision for life. Yet if you are like me, you find yourself in situations where that isn't always true. There are times when the cares of this world (which are many and valid) and the people around us bring us heartache.

Paul's encouragement here to the Philippians is one that is vitally important for you and me. He says in verse 1, "If there is *any encouragement...*" Our ears and minds should perk up. If there is anyone who can encourage us, it's Christ. To have one mind among each other is ours in Christ. Christ is the source.

Not too long ago, we looked at Jesus's "I am" statements. These statements are profound and get at the central idea that Christ is the source. Jesus is the bread of life (John 6), the very substance that provides life for the follower of Christ. Jesus is the light of the world (John 8), the very thing that brings illumination to the darkness that surrounds us. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14) by which we can know for certain and live with assurance that we are children of God. These statements are meant to remind us that in Christ we find the source for all things in this world. This includes how we treat one another, how we go about our work and callings. It includes the way we raise our children, how we treat people at the grocery store or on a walk. It influences the way we participate in government and politics and social causes. And, of course, it influences how we operate as the Body of Christ, the Church.

Today, consider the areas of your life where you struggle to see Christ as the source. Is he the source of all your joy? Purpose? Meaning? Community? The invitation is to look to him for all these things.

PRAYER

Father in heaven, today would you grant me the ability to see Jesus as the source, the center to all of life. Help me to turn from my sins, my wrongdoings, and to trust fully in the love of Christ. From this would my life reflect the beauty that comes from Jesus as the source. Would my care for others be like the care he has for me. Grant it, Father, as you are so pleased to, through the work of the Spirit. Amen.

-Addison Hawkins

DAY 2

PHILIPPIANS 2:2-4

² Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

When Paul said “complete my joy by being of the same mind” to the Philippians, he was calling them to be unified with each other in the message he was preaching. (So he wasn’t calling them to be of the same mind in what they ate for dinner, how they earned a living, or in their attire!) He called them to love each other and be unified in the gospel.

Then he defined for them how they could work together for the gospel: to do nothing from selfish ambition; to do nothing from conceit; to count others as more significant; to look to the interests of others (in addition to looking to their own needs--Paul wasn’t calling them to neglect themselves!).

In Ephesians 4:1-3, Paul writes: *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to **maintain the unity of the Spirit** in the bond of peace.*

The Holy Spirit already gave us unity; we have only to maintain it. Why do we resist unity? Why do we focus on the minutia when we have so much in common: one faith, one hope and one baptism, one God and Father of all? As a way to work in unity, God has given us the ability to serve others. It is one of his good gifts. Paul speaks from experience because he called it his joy. Let’s think upon these things, for the good of ourselves, each other, the Church, the world, and the heavenly kingdom.

PRAYER

Father, show us, in a deep and meaningful way, what it means to do nothing out of selfish ambition. How can we take care of ourselves and also those around us? Give us your love. Amen.

-Linda Bokma-deJong and Susan Guerra

DAY 3

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8

⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

When you break down this passage and list all that Christ has done on our behalf, it is overwhelming:

He did not count his equality with God as something to hang on to.

He emptied himself.

He took on the form of a servant.

He was born as a man.

He humbled himself.

He became obedient to death on a cross.

Any one of these statements about Christ by itself is a mystery well beyond us, but they are central to understanding who Christ is and what he has done. While it would be tough for most of us to articulate the full theological meaning of all these concepts (theologians have debated them for centuries), it is interesting to know that most scholars think these words were part of a hymn used in the early church's worship. In that context, memorizing these words could help us internalize these truths about Christ and make them part of our relationship with him. Then as we read other passages of scripture that expound more on these ideas, we can more fully understand them.

Perhaps the easiest of these concepts to understand is the idea of Jesus becoming a servant. The language of servanthood is commonplace in the scriptures and in the church. Church staff and officers are known to serve the church. Deacons serve the congregation.

Servant-leadership is the best way to lead. So we have many good examples of servanthood in the church and a good idea about how it works.

It may help our understanding about servanthood to think about the life of domestic servants. They are always on call. They serve and live to make the lives of their households better. They take on the dirty and mundane tasks. They accept and operate in a humble role. They lack authority. They sign up for their masters' agenda. Jesus was doing all these things that seem a bit remote to us. So, we may have a bit of trouble fully understanding what it means to be a servant.

The early Jewish believers who sang this hymn, however, would have had a better understanding of what Jesus's servant role was and what it meant. They would have been taught and come to know that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 was God's Messiah who would serve his people by bearing their sins and making them righteous. While Jesus's work on the cross fulfilled his role as a suffering servant, it also transcended every bit of work known to man as the ultimate act of love. His humiliation put him in the position to act in the ultimate servant's role for once and for all.

PRAYER

Charles Wesley describes Christ's work in the hymn *And Can It Be*. Let's use it today as a prayer of praise:

*He left His Father's throne above,
So free, so infinite His grace;
Emptied Himself of all but love,
And bled for Adam's helpless race;
'Tis mercy all, immense and free;
For, O my God, It found out me. Amen.*

-Richard Malone

DAY 4

PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11

⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

First, let's think about the "therefore" at the beginning of Philippians 2:9. The previous section is concerned not merely with Jesus's incarnation but that "he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (v. 8). Jesus's exaltation was a result of his humility and obedience; it was a vindication of his obedient life. Jesus is the obedient second Adam who fulfilled his mission in offering up his life.

However, Jesus wasn't merely exalted as king over Israel, but he became the king that was greater than David for he rules over the whole creation. This includes the whole earth and the heavens, and he is even given "the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev. 1:18). The only thing he doesn't have authority over is the Father (1 Cor. 15:28).

The struggle is that from our vantage point it doesn't seem as if he has that authority. If Jesus is really in control, why does everything seem so chaotic? Why am I suffering? This is one of the questions the book of Hebrews addresses. If Jesus has ascended, why am I suffering? The community of believers was turning away from the heavenly Jesus they couldn't see, which required faith, and were turning back to the things that they could see, like the temple and the sacrifices. Hebrews wants us to have faith in what we can't see because therein lies our hope.

In Philippians, Paul wants Jesus's sacrifice and humility to guide the community in their attitudes. But the exaltation of Jesus also reminds them that their hope lies in both his resurrection and ascension. If Jesus has been resurrected and has ascended to the right hand of the Father, then we too have hope that we will be resurrected and will get to dwell with God through the work of Christ. If Jesus's humility and sacrifice leads to exaltation, we are called to do the same--not because we need to earn salvation and exaltation, but because we have been made new by Jesus's sacrifice and are being transformed into his image.

PRAYER

Psalm 24 A Psalm of David.

¹ *The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof,
the world and those who dwell therein,*

² *for he has founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the rivers.*

³ *Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?
And who shall stand in his holy place?*

⁴ *He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to what is false
and does not swear deceitfully.*

⁵ *He will receive blessing from the Lord
and righteousness from the God of his salvation.*

⁶ *Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Selah*

⁷ *Lift up your heads, O gates!
And be lifted up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

⁸ *Who is this King of glory?
The Lord, strong and mighty,
the Lord, mighty in battle!*

⁹ *Lift up your heads, O gates!
And lift them up, O ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.*

¹⁰ *Who is this King of glory?
The Lord of hosts,
he is the King of glory! Selah*

-Jerry Stutzman

DAY 5

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³ I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

Throughout this week, we have been looking at the mind of Christ and experiencing its call on our lives. Today, Paul gives us an example and picture of what a blessing such an attitude and behavior can be in the lives of others.

His example is Timothy, a much younger man than Paul, one who is like a son to him. We know from other places in the scripture that Timothy is a pastor, has gifts to employ in ministry, is from an ethnically mixed heritage, and has been greatly influenced by his mother and grandmother. But what stands out about Timothy is that he genuinely seeks the interests of Jesus and not his own interests. This drives him to be genuinely concerned for others, and Paul experiences the tenderness of his love. This is the mind of Christ at work that we have been reflecting on throughout the week--to truly put others before ourselves!

Note how rare this is. Paul says, "I have no one like him." On the one hand, we hear Paul bragging about young Timothy as a proud father might brag about a child. On the other hand, we hear the reality that finding people who operate this way is rare. Paul has a lot of people in his life, but no one like Timothy.

So how do we apply this little narrative regarding Timothy? First, it is an example for us to follow. How can we be a blessing to those that we come into contact with? What does it look like to lay aside our own interest to pursue the interest of Christ and his body? How can our interactions with those around us speak to the deep cries of their heart? But second, we must never seek to do this in our own strength or imagine that living this type of other-oriented life will gain us our reward. Rather, in surrendering to Christ by faith, we gain the mind of Christ and the reward is that we think of ourselves less. We are freed from obsessively pursuing our own needs and freed to love and serve others because we know that we are loved to the fullest!

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank you for Timothy and, more importantly, for the work that you did in his heart. We again ask that the mind of Christ might become more and more evident through us. Help us to think of ourselves less and think of others more. May we be a blessing to those around us. We thank you too for the Timothys in our life. Where would we be without the blessings of your people? Thank you for loving us. We pray in Jesus's name. Amen.

-Andrew VanderMaas