



Philippians

Chapter 2

- Author: The Apostle Paul
- Recipients: The Church at Philippi
 - First church in Europe, in the region of Macedonia in northern Greece
 - Founded by Paul on his second Missionary Journey, AD 51 – predominantly Gentile
- Time and Place of Writing: Most likely during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, AD 61 or 62
- Occasion and Purpose: Acknowledging the generosity of the church, sending Epaphroditus back, urging unity in the body
- Significant Themes:
 - Joy
 - Right Thinking – knowing Christ
 - Holy Living
 - Exaltation of Christ

Background to Philippians

- I. Opening 1:1-11
 - A. Salutation 1:1-2
 - B. Thanksgiving 1:3-8
 - C. Prayer 1:9-11
- II. Paul's Missionary Report 1:12-26
 - A. Paul's Circumstances 1:12-17
 - B. Paul's Attitude 1:18-26
- III. A Call to Sanctification 1:27-2:30
 - A. Christian Citizenship 1:27-2:4
 - B. Christian Humility 2:5-11
 - C. Christian Obedience 2:12-18
 - D. Resumption of Paul's Missionary Report 2:19-30
- IV. Doctrinal Polemics 3:1-4:1
 - A. Judaizers as the Context for Theology 3:1-6
 - B. The Essence of Pauline Theology 3:7-11
 - C. Practical Theology 3:12-4:1
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 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

2 Therefore if 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, **2** make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. **3** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; **4** do not *merely* look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

- This is one sentence, around a single imperative: “make my joy complete.” They had lost some of their joy in Christ, and had caused others (perhaps Paul himself) to also lose joy, so Paul’s reminder and call throughout the letter is to be joyful.
- The main emphasis of his appeal is to unity – being of the same mind, same love, united in spirit (sympsychoi), one purpose.
- The key to unity is humility – place more importance on others than on yourself, and look to bless others.
- Paul is continuing his emphasis on right thinking: regard one another, look out for the interests of others.

Christian Citizenship: Unity (Phil 2:1-4)

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus

- This continues two of Paul's themes for the letter: Humility and right thinking
- "Have this attitude" (phroneite) = Think, Adopt this frame of mind. Used in the plural – focus on unity in the body based on right thinking and understanding of the Gospel.
- Paul uses the phrase "Have this attitude...in" only twice outside of this verse. In Phil 4:2, he writes: "I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to **live in harmony in** the Lord."
- Paraphrase from Moises Silva: "Be so disposed toward one another as is proper for those who are united in Christ Jesus."
- The opposition the Philippians were experiencing called for steadfastness, and corporate steadfastness is impossible without spiritual unity, and unity can only come about from an attitude of humility, so Paul is strongly emphasizing the need for humility within the church.

Paul's Exhortation (Phil 2:5)

⁶ Who in the form of God existing
not an advantage considered
His being equal with God

⁷ but nothing He made Himself
The form of a servant adopting
In likeness of men becoming

⁸ and in appearance being found as a man
He Humbled Himself
Becoming obedient to death – and death on a cross

⁹ Therefore also exalted Him God
And granted Him the name
That's above every name

¹⁰ so that in the name of Jesus
every knee may bow of those in heaven
And on earth and under the earth

¹¹ and every tongue may confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord
to God the Father's glory

Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation (Phil 2:6-11)

⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

- “form of God” = *morphe theou*; “form of a servant” = *morphen doulou* – *morphe* emphasizes essential or characteristic attributes
- Compare with Romans 15:3 – “For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, “The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me.””
- Two main verbs here: emptied Himself and humbled Himself, with four participles to expand what is happening
- Emptied himself = to come to nought, to nullify; He made Himself nothing (NIV)
- Humbled Himself = Complete humiliation (not embarrassment or shame, but perfect humility and submission to the Father).

Christ’s Humiliation (Phil 2:6-8)

⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Isaiah 45:23 – “I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.”
- Paul is applying Isaiah 45:18-25 to Jesus, equating Jesus with the LORD of the Hebrew Scriptures.
- Three categories of beings will confess Jesus as Lord: those who are in heaven (angels), those who are on earth (men), and those who are under the earth (demons). Every intelligent creature will eventually bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- James M. Boice: “...we refuse to acknowledge the facts (of Christ’s exaltation), preferring our own fantasies to God’s truth. We do this, not from a worthy motive, but because it makes us more comfortable in sin.”

Christ’s Exaltation (Phil 2:9-11)

¹² So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

- To resolve the question of “working out” our salvation, look to Phil 1:6 – “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Paul was commending the Philippians for their partnership in the Gospel, and simultaneously acknowledging that it was God who was working in them.
- Paul is speaking of the total experience of salvation for the believer – not just initial justification, but ongoing sanctification. Our status before God is fixed in Christ, we cannot add to that status, but we do experience growth in holiness as we walk with Christ and are sanctified.
- God’s working in the life of the Christian is not just limited to the actions of the believer, but to our very wills. He provides the will (desire) to do the work that aligns with His good pleasure.

Christian Obedience: The Believer’s Work (Phil 2:12-13)

¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵ so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

- Paul returns to a call to unity, but instead of the conflict being caused by opponents who bring suffering into the church, here we see the corrupt generation that the Philippian church was called to contrast by their behavior.
- Phil 2:1-4 focuses on the danger of selfish motivations for our actions, while this passage zeroes in on grumbling and disputing.
- Paul is likely drawing from the grumbling of the Israelites in the wilderness, including Deut 32:5 – “They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.”

Christian Obedience: Blameless Children (Phil 2:14-16)

¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸ You too, *I urge you*, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

- Paul is not manipulating their emotions, but making a sincere appeal, and offering an encouragement to rejoice at the same time.
- “Drink offering” = pouring out a liquid (typically wine) that accompanies a sacrifice. He is willing to spend his life for the sake of the Lord and for the converts God has entrusted to him.
- Paul again juxtaposes great suffering with great joy. As in Phil 1:18-20, he recognizes the possibility of death, and yet rejoices as he rests in God’s perfect will.
- He also commands the Philippians to be joyful. If joy were merely an emotion, the command would be hollow. But joy comes from right thinking (“count it all joy...”), so he can call on them to rejoice by focusing their thinking on the things of God.

Christian Obedience: A Personal Appeal (Phil 2:17-18)