

## CHRIST'S MIND IN THE BELIEVER

**PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scriptures for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word.**

### Summary and Historical Background

In Philippians 1, Paul dealt with his personal relationship to the believers in the church at Philippi, and with the spread of the message of Jesus Christ in spite of persecution. In chapter 2, Paul charges the believers to disregard their own selfish motives, to be humble-minded, and to serve others. To help them understand what he meant, he gives them several examples. Paul begins the chapter by exhorting the believers to live in harmony with each other. This would be done by a humble and helpful spirit (2:1-4). Then he asks them to have the mind (attitude) of Christ, who was the perfect example of humility and service (2:5-8). His self-humbling led Him step by step to the cross where He died for man's sins. The Philippian believers were asked to be like Him, to lay aside their personal desires and live or die for others. This self-humbling would result in their exaltation by God, even as it was done for Christ (2:9-11).

On the basis of this example Paul appeals to these believers to continue their obedience so they could experience further growth in their spiritual lives. This growth in godliness would enable them to be shining testimonies for God in a wicked world (2:12-16).

Paul concluded this lesson on humility and helpfulness by giving them the examples of himself (2:17-18), Timothy (2:19-24), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30). The expression of sacrifice and service was evident in each of these men. They had the mind of Christ that these believers were to have.

### Outline

- I. Exhortation of Paul – 2:1-4
- II. Example of Christ – 2:5-8
- III. Exaltation of Christ – 2:9-11
- IV. Experience of Believers – 2:12-16
- V. Expression of Leaders – 2:17-30

### Study Notes for Philippians 2

#### I. Exhortation of Paul — 2:1-4

##### A. Basis of the Exhortation — 2:1

2:1 — The basis of the exhortation for unity is four-fold:

"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ" — "Consolation" has the idea of encouragement. Paul is saying that there is encouragement in Christ for unity - see Jn. 17:21.

"If any comfort of love" — There is comfort in love that supports unity - 1 Thes. 2:11-12.

"If any fellowship of the Spirit" — This refers to the Holy Spirit who creates a common bond among Christians that produces unity in a church.

"If any bowels and mercies" — An expression of deep affection and care for the believers - cf.

1:8. Such love and care for each other will unite a church.

### **B. Heart of the Exhortation — 2:2**

2:2 — The heart of the exhortation for unity is four-fold:

To be "likeminded" — Having an agreeable mind - cf. 4:8.

To have the "same love" — Having God's love for others - 1 Jn. 4:7-12

To be of "one accord" — Having one soul; be in full agreement.

"To have "one mind" — Having a persuaded mind is stronger than an agreeable mind.

### **C. Fruit of the Exhortation — 2:3-4**

2:3-4 — The fruit needed for unity is two-fold:

They needed the fruit of humility, no strife or pride, but lowliness of mind. The word for "lowliness of mind" is not found in secular Greek; it is peculiar to Christian literature.

They needed the fruit of helpfulness, not concerned for their welfare, but for the welfare of others.

## **II. Example of Christ — 2:5-8**

### **A. Mind of Christ — 2:5**

2:5 — The exhortation of Paul is to have the mind of Christ and follow His example. The attitude that Christ had toward others is the attitude believers should have toward others.

### **B. Humility of Christ — 2:6-8**

The example of Christ is profound doctrine and must be studied carefully. It is an example of deepest humility and highest helpfulness.

2:6 — "Form of God" - Refers to the outward appearance of the glory of God, which Christ had before His incarnation (Jn. 17:5).

"Thought it not robbery" — Christ did not think the outer appearance of being equal with God should be tightly grasped and held for Himself. If He had done so, it would have stopped Him from doing His Father's will.

2:7 — "Made Himself of no reputation" - He emptied Himself. This does not mean He emptied Himself of all or even some of His deity. Rather, He emptied Himself of His divine glory and rights, and took on Himself the form of a servant (slave). He did this in one act when He became a man.

"Made in the likeness of men" — He was made like men, though He still retained His divine nature. He did not take man's sinful nature, but rather Adam's sinless nature before his fall. Notice, Satan tried to make himself like God (Isa. 14:14), while Adam wanted to be like a god (Gen. 3:5), but Christ humbled Himself and became like men.

2:8 — "Found in fashion as a man" - "Fashion" has to do with the scheme of life or its culture. "Fashion" allows for change; "form" does not. Christ took on the fashion of men - He subjected Himself to man's meager and backward culture; but He never changed His form. He adapted Himself to the culture of that day, so that He looked like any citizen of Israel in that day. By His outward appearance, no one would have suspected He was God.

"Became obedient unto death" — Christ yielded Himself to death that He might destroy its power. The Prince of life submitted Himself to the worst kind of death - the death of the cross. It was a cruel, painful death, inflicted upon criminals in the eyes of Rome, the worst of sinners.

### III. Exaltation of Christ — 2:9-11

2:9 — Its measure: God exalted Christ above everyone. He went from the lowest humiliation to the highest exaltation.

2:10-11 — Its purpose: that every knee should bow before Christ - the angels and saints in Heaven, the people on earth, and the lost in Hell under the earth; that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, i.e., that He is God; and that God the Father should be glorified.

### IV. Experience of Believers — 2:12-16

#### A. Rely upon God — 2:12-13

2:12 — The process of sanctification is to "work out your own salvation." This does not say, "Work for your own salvation." Salvation is a gift. It says, "Work out" (develop). A person may receive a musical instrument as a gift, and he or she may have an aptitude for music, but much practice is needed before good music is produced. Likewise Christians receive salvation as a free gift, but they must work diligently to develop fruitful Christian lives. This is called sanctification. As Christians *work* out their salvation in sanctification, they will bring unity to the church and glory to God.

The spirit of sanctification is with "fear and trembling." Christians should not take their spiritual lives lightly. If they do; it is a sure sign of pride. Spiritual growth is demanding work and they must depend on the Holy Spirit to help them change into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

2:13 — The power of sanctification is given to believers by "God who works in" them. This refers to the Spirit of God that lives in all believers. God works two things in believers. He works in them both "to will" (the desire) and "to do" (the power) to please Him. This enables them to work out their salvation. Believers do not attain sanctification by their efforts alone; they have the Spirit of God to help them.

#### B. Refrain from Negative Attitudes — 2:14

2:14 — "Do" - This verb is in the present tense, which indicates continual action. Believers keeps on living their Christian lives without negative attitudes.

"All" — Everything is to be done without sinful attitudes. It applies not only to outward activities, but also to inward attitudes.

"Murmurings" — This refers to complaining. Complaints come from a thankless spirit. It reveals a failure to trust God, and it is sin. God brought judgment upon the Israelites for a complaining spirit (Num. 11:1; 21:5, 6).

"Disputings" — Refers to an argumentative spirit. Good Christians do not argue with God or with their fellow believers. Complaining and arguing have no place in a sanctified Christian's life.

### **C. Realize God's Goal — 2:15-16**

2:15 — "Blameless" - Christians should do nothing that would hurt their testimony for Christ.

"Harmless" — Christians seek to have a moral character that is to be pure so that it causes no harm to anyone.

"Without rebuke" — Christians seek to have unblemished lives that do not need to be rebuked.

"Crooked and perverse nation" — Christians should have lives that are a complete contrast to that of the world which is crooked and perverted.

"Among whom you shine" — Christians are to let Christ's light shine out of their lives by their good works (Mt. 5:16) as a testimony to the world of God's glory (2 Cor. 4:6).

2:16 — "Holding forth the Word of life" - The responsibility of Christians is to give God's Word to lost sinners so they can learn of the Father and be drawn to His Son for salvation (Jn 6:44-45). It is not right for believers to keep this good news to themselves (cf. 2 Kings 7:9).

"Day of Christ" — Refers to the rapture after which the believers will be judged (2 Cor. 5:10).

"Have not run in vain" — Christians who produce godly converts by their godly testimony can say that they have not labored in vain. Such persons will be rewarded by Christ (1 Cor. 3:14).

### **V. Expression of Leaders — 2:17-30**

#### **A. Paul Expressed Sacrifice in Spirit — 2:17-18**

2:17 — Paul was willing to sacrifice his life to promote the faith of other believers. This he would do with joy. Paul's expression was an example of the mind of Christ.

2:18 — Paul wanted the believers in Philippi to rejoice with him in his sacrifice.

#### **B. Timothy Expressed Sacrifice in Service — 2:19-24**

2:19 — Timothy was going to be sent by Paul to Philippi to bring back a fresh report of their state of affairs, Paul wanted this report to comfort him. However, Timothy would be detained by Paul until he knew how his trial in Rome was going to turn out (2:23).

2:20 — "Likeminded" - Literally, "of like soul." Paul found in Timothy qualities that matched his own soul more closely than that of any other convert.

"Naturally" — Speaks of Timothy's new nature, not his old one. He cared for the welfare of others. This is another example of the mind of Christ in a believer.

2:21 — Many of Paul's converts remained self-centered and did not seek to serve Christ as they ought. They failed to have the mind of Christ.

2:22 — Timothy had proven himself by his faithfulness to Paul and to the Gospel to be a true servant of the Lord.

### **C. Epaphroditus Expressed Sacrifice in Sickness — 2:25-30**

2:25 — Epaphroditus had been sent by the church at Philippi with a gift from them to take care of Paul's needs. He had become a great blessing to Paul. This is revealed by the terms Paul used of him: "my brother . . . companion in labor . . . fellow soldier."

2:26 — Epaphroditus was selfless. He was saddened when he discovered that the people in Philippi had heard he had been sick. He did not want them to be alarmed. He wanted to serve and not to be served. He was humble (2:3).

2:27 — He was so sick he almost died, but God was merciful to him and to Paul by sparing his life.

2:28 — "Carefully" - Better to translate this word "earnestly, eagerly, diligently." Paul was willing to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi to bring them joy. This would make it easier for Paul to suffer the loss of his help.

2:29 — Paul wanted the church to give him a royal welcome and hold him in high regard.

2:30 — The reason Epaphroditus deserved high honors was due to his service to the Lord in spite of his sickness and near death. He was faithful in his duties to Paul as their representative. He was helpful (2:4). This shows that Epaphroditus had the mind of Christ.