

PHILIPPIANS

LESSON SIX

JOY IN IMITATING JESUS

(2:1-11)

Overview

- I. The Context
 - A. Paul is in prison for preaching the Gospel of Christ
 - B. He has kept in touch with the church at Philippi (2:25-26)
 - C. He has learned of certain dangers facing this faithful congregation
 - D. One such danger was division (1:27; 2:1-4, 14; 4:1-2)

- II. Plea for Unity
 - A. Since they shared in the blessing of Christ, they should stand together
 - B. Their unity would fulfill Paul's joy

- III. Pragmatics of Unity
 - A. Do not serve out of contention or faction
 - B. Do not serve for empty, selfish conceit
 - C. Serve out of humility
 - D. Serve out of compassion for others

- IV. Pattern of Unity
 - A. The great example of humble service is Jesus
 - B. He left Heaven for the benefit of man
 - C. He humbled Himself to be a servant of man
 - D. In submission, He went to the cross for man
 - E. Therefore, He is exalted as Lord
 1. Thus, He is the example of unity through humble service
 2. And, He is the basis for unity
 - F. There is glory beyond the persecution a Christian must endure
 1. Thus, they should remain true and hold fast
 2. And, they should work together as brethren

2:1 If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies

- A. Naturally, this passage builds off of what was written in chapter 1.
 - 1. The ideas of joy, fellowship, love, etc. have been introduced.
 - 2. Now, Paul is going to use them as motivation for both unity and service as Christians.
 - 3. They also provide the strength needed to face and endure persecution and other hardships.
- B. The word “if” in this passage is not intended to express doubt; rather, it means “since” and is a statement of assurance.
- C. “Consolation” is the word for comfort or supplication – it is translated as “exhortation” (ASV) and “encouragement” (ESV).
 - 1. This word literally means “to call to one’s side” especially for help.
 - 2. Thus, it refers to the access to help the Christian has in Christ.
- D. The Christian’s comfort comes out of love – of God and of his brethren.
- E. Our fellowship comes from the Holy Spirit – based upon our obedience to His truth.
- F. The word “bowels” refers to an inward affection or tender mercy.
- G. The word “mercies” includes the idea of pity or compassion.
- H. Since these things are found in Christ – and, therefore, possessed by the Christian – they should motivate the Philipians to unity, service and endurance.

2:2 Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind

- A. Consider what Paul says would fulfill his joy.
 - 1. It was not being released from prison.
 - 2. It was knowing that the church was working together in unity and love!
 - 3. What fulfills your joy?
- B. Christians are to be united in judgment (Rom. 12:16; 15:5-6).
- C. Christians are to be united in love (1 Cor. 13; 1 Pet. 3:8-9).
- D. Christians are to be united in attitude (literally, “co-spirited”).
- E. Christians are to be united in mind (thinking) [1 Cor. 1:10].
- F. Those who live, work, serve and endure with this kind of unity will bring joy to God, themselves and to their community.

2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves

- A. Their motivation should not be strife – contention or faction.
 - 1. Obviously, Paul knew of those who behaved this way (cf. 1:15-16).
 - 2. But, this was not to be the attitude of a child of God.
- B. Their motivation should not be empty glorying, pride or selfish conceit.
- C. Instead, the attitude of a Christian is humility – putting the needs of others before one’s self.

- D. David Lipscomb wrote: “[I]t is only by a wise and lowly estimate of ourselves that we come to know what is due to others. Humility, then, describes the spirit of one who has come to the knowledge of himself in relation to God, and it is, therefore, primarily a Christian grace and not a social virtue. There is no trace in it of the weakness associated with the term in pagan literature. On the contrary, it is the badge of the strong, the first test of a truly great man. For it was the one specific virtue and quality which above all others explains the work and character of Christ, our Savior....”

2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others

- A. Of course, this verse does not mean to look on the things of others with envy or greed.
- B. Instead, it displays the opposite attitude of “vainglory” – consideration for the feelings, needs and situations of others.
1. It is the idea of being considerate to others.
 2. It is the idea of “walking a mile in another’s shoes” (1 Cor. 10:24).
 3. It is becoming “all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).
 4. It is rejoicing and weeping with others (Romans 12:15).

2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus

- A. Paul has been discussing the attitude he desired for the Philippian brethren to possess and to manifest.
- B. Thus, he sets before them the perfect standard – Jesus the Christ.
1. It should be emphasized that the Christian’s standard of comparison is always Jesus.
 2. Compared with other congregations, the Philippians stand out as loyal, dedicated faithful servants of God.
 3. Yet, when compared to Jesus, they could see much room for improvement.
 4. The same is true for each of us (cf. 2 Corinthians 10:12).
- C. The phrase is interesting in the original.
1. Vincent renders it as “Think this in yourselves” or “Have this mind in you.”
 2. Robertson gives it as “Keep on thinking this in you.”
 3. One literal translation reads, “Indeed, be letting the frame of mind [*or, attitude*] be in you” (ALT).
 4. In other words, this attitude was one that they had to work actively to acquire and maintain.
 5. Humility, like all other Christian attitudes, must be pursued.
- D. What follows is the example of Jesus’ humility toward Himself and selfless consideration of others.
1. As we study these things, it is important to keep in mind the ultimate goal of Jesus’ attitudes and actions.
 2. His purpose was to save the lost from sin.
 3. Many try to use passages like these to teach a “social gospel” that is more concerned with physical needs than spiritual ones.
 4. Jesus healed the sick – but not everyone who was ill.
 5. He cared for the poor, but taught that they would always be a part of the world (Mark 14:7).

- 2:6 **Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God**
- A. This verse expresses important truths about Jesus, His nature and His sacrifice for mankind.
- B. First, Paul describes Jesus as “being in the form of God.”
1. The word “being” means, “existing.”
 2. The Greek word actually contains the idea of “beginning;” thus, “from the beginning.”
 3. So, it looks back to Who Jesus was before He became Jesus – born of a virgin, existing in human flesh.
 4. Paul stated that Jesus existed in the form (or, “shape, appearance; fig. nature”) of God.
 5. The Greek word for “form” is *morphe* – think of metamorphosis and its relation to the word “transform.”
 6. However, Paul is not describing the look or appearance of Jesus.
 7. Instead, he is referring to the distinctive character and nature of Jesus.
 8. In other words, in His pre-incarnate existence, Jesus possessed the essence and attributes of God.
 9. He existed as deity – equal in every way to the Father and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 1:1-2).
 10. Vincent wrote: “To say, then, that Christ was *in the form of God*, is to say that He existed as essentially one with God. The expression of deity through human nature thus has its background in the expression of deity *as deity* in the eternal ages of God's being.”
- C. The parallel thought at the end of the verse is that Jesus was “equal with God.”
1. The word means “equal, in quality or quantity.”
 2. Its use in the New Testament illustrates this idea (Matthew 20:12; Mark 14:56, 59; Luke 6:34; John 5:18; Acts 11:17; Rev. 21:16).
- D. Concerning this equality with God, Jesus “thought it not robbery.”
1. The word “thought” means, “to consider, account, deem, esteem or judge.”
 2. It comes from the idea of one who is a leader, commander, ruler or chief and who, in that position, must consider many things before he makes a decision in guiding his followers.
 3. When He thought of His equality with God, Jesus did not think it “robbery.”
 4. This word means, “plunder, a thing to be seized or held fast (retained).”
 5. In other words, He did not consider that equality as something that must be held on to – if it meant the salvation of mankind.
 6. Robert Taylor wrote that “the glory and position he sustained in the Timeless Trinity in the heaven of heavens was not something to be grasped and held on to at the expense of human redemption.”
- E. This does not mean that Jesus gave up His deity when He became a man (cf. John 1:14); instead, He was both the Son of God and the Son of man (cf. John 17:5; 2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15-16; Heb. 1:3, 6, 8).
- F. Imagine leaving Heaven to dwell upon the earth!

2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men

- A. Even though Jesus is God and dwelt in the glories of Heaven, He was willing to make tremendous sacrifices for the salvation of man.
- B. First, He made Himself of no reputation.
 - 1. Literally, this means that He emptied Himself.
 - 2. He laid aside His existence in Heaven and His being in the form of God in order to serve humanity.
 - a. This does not mean that He lost His deity.
 - b. Vincent describes it as a change of state – “the form of a servant for the form of God.”
- C. He took upon Himself the form of a servant.
 - 1. The word “form” is the same as in verse 6 for the “form of God.”
 - 2. Yet, here, Christ was transformed into a servant – a slave.
 - 3. Matthew 12:18; 20:28; Mark 10:44-45; Luke 22:27; John 13:1-14
- D. He was made in the likeness of men.
 - 1. Literally, Jesus “became” or “entered into” the likeness of men.
 - 2. Jesus actually became like a man.
 - 3. John 1:14; Romans 1:3; 8:3; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 2:9-17; 4:15
- E. If He could empty Himself to become our servant, we must be willing to empty ourselves to serve others.

2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross

- A. He was found to be in the fashion of a man.
 - 1. Again, Jesus was really and literally a man.
 - 2. This was not some trick; He was not merely an apparition.
 - 3. The word “fashion” refers to those things that appeal to the physical senses.
 - 4. Thus, when Jesus was examined he was found to be a man.
- B. Yet, even as a man, He humbled Himself.
 - 1. To humble is to make low – to lower one’s pride.
 - 2. Just how low he was willing to be humbled is amazing to consider!
- C. He became obedient unto the death of the cross.
 - 1. He humbled Himself to the will of God by obedience (Psalm 40:6-8; Matthew 26:39, 42; Hebrews 5:8-9; 10:7-9).
 - 2. Death by crucifixion was utterly humiliating (Psalm 22:6; Isaiah 50:6; 52:14; 53:2-3; Mark 9:12; John 10:17-18; Romans 15:3; 1 Corinthians 1:23-25; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).
- D. If Christ showed such humility in order to serve and save us, we must be willing to do the same for others.

2:9 **Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name**

- A. From the depths of humility, suffering and death, we now rise to the heights of exaltation, glory and honor.
- B. Because Jesus humbled Himself in complete submission and obedience, God has highly exalted Him.
 - 1. This is the force of the word “wherefore.”
 - 2. The Greek word for “highly exalted” is *huperupsoo*.
 - a. *Huper* means “over or above.”
 - b. *Hupsoo* means “to elevate, lift up, or exalt”
 - c. When combined, this word means “to elevate above others, to raise to the highest position, to exalt to the highest rank and power, to raise to supreme majesty.”
 - 3. This exaltation is seen in the resurrection (Matthew 28:18; Romans 14:9-11; etc.).
 - 4. This exaltation is seen in the ascension (Psalm 24:7-10; John 17:5; Acts 2:32-36; 5:31; Hebrews 2:9; 12:2; Revelation 1:5).
- C. Ultimately, His exaltation is seen in the name He has been given.
 - 1. Jesus – *Savior*
 - 2. Christ – *Anointed, Messiah (Prophet, Priest & King)*
 - 3. Lord – *King of kings and Lord of lords* (1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 17:14; 19:16)
 - 4. God-Man – *Both divine and human*
 - 5. Exactly what this name is, we do not know; but, it is symbolic of His exalted position (cf. Acts 3:16; 4:12; Revelation 2:17; 3:12).

2:10 **That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth**

- A. Christ is exalted above every other being that exists in both the physical and spiritual realms, save God the Father (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:24-27).
- B. Thus, all should be willing to bow the knee before Him – in worship and submission (cf. Matthew 27:29; Ephesians 3:14-15; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 4:10; 5:13-14).
 - 1. “Things in heaven” are the righteous spiritual beings, such as angels.
 - 2. “Things in earth” are human beings and, in a sense, all creation.
 - 3. “Things under the earth” are the evil spiritual beings, such as demons. {*Possibly, all those in the Hadean realm (Eph. 4:9)*}
- C. How should this knowledge affect my faithfulness to the Lord?

2:11 **And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father**

- A. Confession is an acknowledgement of the authority and supremacy of Jesus.
 - 1. It is essential to salvation (Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10).
 - 2. But, it must be followed with submission and obedience (Acts 8).
 - 3. Nothing should hinder one from making this good confession (cf. John 9:22; 12:42; 2 John 7).
- B. This confession glorifies God by recognizing His righteousness, faithfulness and love.
- C. All will make this confession – either now or later (cf. Romans 14:11).