

Philippians Chapter 2

An Exhortation to Unity - Philippians 2:1-4

If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care—then do me a favor: Agree with each other, love each other, be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.¹ (The Message, pg. 414)

Philippians 2:1-4 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

In these first four verses of chapter two, Paul makes an impassioned plea to the Philippian believers for unity among themselves. We know from a cursory reading of the book that this was one of the major problems faced by the Philippian church. In chapter four, Paul pleads with Euodia and Synteché to “have the same mind in the Lord.” In the next section of this chapter, Paul refers to the example of Christ as a pattern of humility to be followed by all believers. This section fits very well between Paul’s exhortation to “walk worthy” and Christ’s example of humiliation and self-abnegation.

These four verses are patterned according to a somewhat poetic structure.² Verse one consists of four first-class conditional statements (read as since instead of if). Verse two follows a chiasmic pattern (A compares with A¹, B compares with B¹) and verses 3-4 is an example of antithetic parallelism (A is contrasted with B, A¹ is contrasted with B¹). This is outlined as below:

- (1) A: If there be any consolation in Christ,
B: If any comfort of love,
C: If any fellowship of the Spirit,
D: If any bowels and mercies

- (2) A: Fulfill ye my joy that ye be likeminded
B: Having the same love
B¹: Being of one accord
C: Of one mind

- (3-4) A: Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory
B: But in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves
A¹: Look not every man on his own things
B¹: But every man also on the things of others

¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *The Message*, (Colorado Springs: NAVPRESS, 1993), p. 414.

² Peter T. O'Brien, *NIGCT: The Epistle to the Philippians*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 164-166.

As one can clearly see, verse one forms the foundation on which the exhortations of verses two to four are based. The reason for our proper behavior towards one another is based on the great blessings and privileges we have as God's children.

A. The Motives for Unity

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

Verse one gives us the foundation of unity in four first-class conditional clauses. A first-class conditional is something that is sure, not "iffy." A better rendering of "if" in this verse is "if, and there is" or "since."³ Paul lists four foundation stones in his plea for unity.

1. Consolation in Christ

The first motive for unity is consolation in Christ. There are many interpretations of this phrase that have been offered by commentators over the years. One is that Paul is referring to the exhortation of Christ, the word "consolation" being *parakaleo* which is many times translated as exhortation. Others say that this phrase refers to the comfort of Christ, the comfort being the comfort we receive from him. However, what may be the intended meaning here is the word *parakaleo* refers to all that we have in Christ. As such it would be translated "encouragement." One of the greatest motives for godly living is the realization of all that Christ has done for us, from his death on the cross to his constant intercession for us before the throne of God. In that sense, we all share in the mutual encouragement and consolation of Christ.

2. Comfort of Love

The second motive for unity is comfort of love. Again, there are many views on this statement. Some think that it refers to the love of the Philippians believers for one another, others think that it refers to Paul's love for the Philippians believers. Probably the best way to understand it is that it is referring to Christ's love. The word "comfort" is *paramuthion*, and is elsewhere translated as "comfort, consolation, and encouragement."

3. Fellowship of the Spirit

A third motive for unity is fellowship of the Spirit. The word "fellowship" is *koinonia*, which is best rendered "participation." Some think that this participation of the spirit refers to the mutual camaraderie of the Philippian believers, but it is probably best to understand it as referring to the participation in the Holy Spirit that all believers have. Thus, we would read this as "the participation which only the Holy Spirit can give." Paul's point is that one of the reasons we have for unity is that all of us partake of the same Holy Spirit. If we are walking in the Spirit as we ought, we will not be out of fellowship with other believers.

4. Bowels and Mercies

The fourth, and final, motive Paul gives for unity is bowels and mercies. The words used here are *splagchna* and *oiktirmoi*. *Splagchna* refers to the bowel areas, and is used as a picturesque way to talk about compassion

³ William Hendricksen, *New Testament Commentary, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 99.

for others. *Oiktirmoi* is used by Paul elsewhere to refer to God's compassion for us (Romans 12:1, 2 Corinthians 1:3, Colossians 3:12). Some commentators take these two qualities as referring to the feelings that the Philippians have for one another, but it is probably best to understand them as God's feelings towards us.⁴

Thus, the reason for unity is based in a fourfold blessing each of us has from God. First, we have been encouraged by Christ in the sense that he walks beside us and gives us aid. Secondly, we have all received the love of Christ displayed in his sacrifice for us. Thirdly, we all share in the fellowship which only the Holy Spirit can give, and finally we have been recipients of God's compassion and tender care as evidenced by our salvation.

B. The Marks of Unity

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

Having given the basis for unity, Paul now moves on to the marks of unity. In this verse we are given four basic marks of unity in a chiasmic structure. The first and fourth mark refer to having the same mind, the second and third refer to having the same heart. Only when the Philippian believers exhibit unity will Paul's joy be "filled and overflowing."

1. Likemindedness

The first mark of unity is likemindedness. The word translated "likeminded" is *phronate*, which refers to the mental thinking processes. It refers to a unity of thought and will in which the notion of everyone going their own direction is foreign. Many times churches do not accomplish great things for God because they are not singularly intent on any one thing. They are full of people with conflicting ideas on what the church should be about and how the church should accomplish those many conflicting goals. In such an atmosphere, true unity can never be achieved. Only when everyone is bent on attaining a common goal and purpose will unity exist.

2. Having the same love

A second mark of unity is having the same love. This refers to the Philippian's love for one another as opposed to Christ's love for us as seen in verse one. A reading of 1 Corinthians 13 tells us some of the marks of true love, none of which is disunity and self-aggrandizement. The word "same", *autan*, means "of the same kind." Our love for one another is to be the same kind of love that Christ has for us, not a different or inferior love. Christ's love was such that it caused him to have to die in order to save us from our sins. If we love others to this same extent, many of the divisions and strifes in the church would cease to exist.

3. One accord

A third mark of unity is being of one accord. A single Greek word is used to translate this phrase, *sympsuchoi*. It literally means "one-souled." Having the same soul refers to having the same heartbeat. When a church is full of believers, all having a different idea as to what the church should be or do, that church can never exhibit unity of direction and purpose.

⁴ O'Brien, pp. 174-176.

4. One mind

Finally, a fourth mark of unity is of one mind. This refers to “being intent on one purpose.” One of the best ways to achieve unity in a group of believers is to find a common goal and direction, and head for it.

The Goal Of The Local Church

What is the goal for the local church. An examination of the New Testament reveals four major ones. First, a church is to be evangelistic. The main purpose for the church is that it is to serve as the means whereby the gospel is proclaimed. Where a church abandons the preaching of the gospel, that church has jettisoned the very basic purpose for its existence. Secondly, the church is to exalt God in worship. Many churches have omitted this essential point. Instead of exalting God, many churches are busy exalting the pastor, the church building, the latest social cause, or one of a multitude of ministries. Thirdly, the church is to exhort believers to Christlike lifestyles. This is done by the expository preaching of the word which is used by the Holy Spirit to mature believers and bring them closer to God. Fourthly, the church is to examine error and expose it. God has ordained the church to be the “pillar and support of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15).

Where a church is actively engaged in the above activities, evangelism, exaltation, exhortation, exposition, examination, and exposing of error, the people will have the same mind. Unity will be achieved not by external forces or pressure, but by the inward working of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the individuals in that church.

C. The Means of Unity - Philippians 2:3-4

Philippians 2:3-4 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Paul is very careful not to give the Philippians believers the motives for unity and the marks of unity, then leave them hanging regarding the means of unity. In these two verses we are given five means whereby unity can be achieved among believers.

1. Do not be selfishly ambitious

The word for “strife” is *eritheian*, and means “selfish ambition.” It is the driving force that causes someone to use others as a means to achieve one’s own ends. It is the motivation for the ladder-climbing executive, who sees all opportunities and relationships in light of how they can help him achieve his own selfish goals. This vice is mentioned by Paul in two other places:

2 Corinthians 12:20 For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults:

Galatians 5:20 Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies,

2. Do not be conceited

Closely related to selfish ambition is vainglory. The word used here, *kenodoxia*, is used only here in the New Testament. It is made up of the two words, *kenos*, devoid of truth, empty, and *doxa*, glory. Thus, this word refers to someone who desires empty glory, a glory based on nothing at all.

In every congregation of believers there are those who desire to be number one. They are the ones who want to be called on whenever some big decision is made. They are the ones that want to be a on first-name basis with the pastor. However, many times theirs is an empty conceit. They think of themselves as being something, when they are nothing at all.

3. Regard others above yourself

In contrast to the above two negatives, we are given a positive. Instead of being selfishly ambitious and conceited, we are to regard others above ourselves. The word "lowliness" is *taipenos*, and was used to refer to the mentality of a slave. Instead of seeking our own desires, we are to seek the desires of others.

A good example of this is Christ in the upper room. Instead of falling into the pattern exhibited by the disciples who would not lower themselves to minister to one another, Christ took up a towel and a basin of water and washed their feet. On the very night in which he would be betrayed by Judas, he took time to humble himself and do the task of a common slave. In the meantime, the disciples were busy with selfish ambition and empty conceit while jockeying for position in the kingdom they thought would soon be manifested.

By the way, if a church is full of people who all seek the welfare of others, there will be no one taken advantage of. Often the greatest block to humility is the fear of becoming a doormat to others.

4. Do not only consider your own interests

A fourth means of unity is to not consider one's own interests. Often the reasons there is disunity and splits in the church is that everyone is looking out for their own interest and desires. The thought of setting aside themselves, or their goals, for the good of the church is a foreign concept to them.

5. Consider the interests of others

Finally, instead of considering one's own interests all the time, one should look out for the interests of others. Whenever a person is consumed with themselves to the exclusion of others, unity will never be achieved.

How To Develop an Other-Centered Mindset

1. **Find out about the needs and concerns of others.**
2. **Attempt to be a positive influence on other people.**
Gordon MacDonald, in his book, Restoring Your Spiritual Passion, lists five kinds of people:
 - a. **VRP - Very Resourceful People who ignite our spiritual passion.**
 - b. **VIP - Very Important People who share our spiritual passion.**
 - c. **VTP - Very Trainable People who catch our spiritual passion.**
 - d. **VNP - Very Nice People who enjoy our spiritual passion.**
 - e. **VDP - Very Draining People who sap our spiritual passion.**
3. **Learn to pray for others more than you pray for yourself.**
4. **Ask yourself if getting your way will be best for the church.**
5. **Forfeit a goal of your own now and then for the sake of unity.**
6. **Deny yourself something for the sake of someone else.**
7. **Learn the joy of ministering to others.**
8. **Lose an argument now and then.**
9. **Don't always strive to have the last word.**

***Christ's Humiliation and Exaltation*⁵ - *Philippians 2:5-11*.**

⁵ Outline taken from John F. MacArthur, *Christ Humbled, Christ Exalted*, (Panorama City: Word of Grace Communications, 1990), pp. 7-18.

This is one of the greatest passages in the New Testament regarding the person and work of Christ. The truths to be found about Christ's divinity and humanity in these few verses has sparked endless debates in church history. For an in-depth treatment regarding the deity and humanity of Christ, refer to Appendix A. We will look at this passage in light of Christ's humiliation and exaltation.

A. The Humiliation of Christ

1. Christ was God - Philippians 2:6a

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in the form of God...

In verse 6 the word "form" is *morphe*. It refers to the intrinsic nature of something. This is in distinction to *schema*, which refers to outward characteristics. In other words, Christ was intrinsically God by His very nature. Refer to Appendix A on the deity of Christ for an extended discussion of this.

2. Christ did not cling to his equality with God - Philippians 2:6b

Philippians 2:6 b ...thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

The word "equal" is *isos*. It refers to something that is exactly equivalent to something else. Christ was not "a god", but "God."

Notice that Christ did not consider His glory and position in heaven prior to His incarnation something to be held onto at all costs. He willingly laid aside His glory and exalted position to become a man. Even though he did this willingly, he longed for the day when that glory would be restored (John 17:1-5).

3. Christ emptied himself - Philippians 2:7a

Philippians 2:7a But made himself of no reputation...

The word translated "made himself of no reputation" is *kenosis*. It refers to the self-emptying of Christ. He did not cease being God, but he did lay aside the independent use of his comparative attributes. Although he was omniscient, he did not use his omniscience apart from the prompting of the Holy Spirit. The same holds true for his omnipotence and omnipresence. Additionally, Christ veiled his *shekinah* glory. He pulled the veil of flesh back just a little on the Mount of Transfiguration, but other than that he appeared as every other man.

We cannot understand the humiliation Christ faced when he stepped off the throne of glory in heaven to be born as a child in a barn. It is something that we cannot even begin to understand until we get to heaven, and even then our understanding will be limited because we are not God.

4. Christ became a servant - Philippians 2:7b

Philippians 2:7b ...and took upon him the form of a servant...

The word "form" in verse 7 is again *morphe*. Christ was intrinsically a servant, He did not just appear to be a servant. The first time Christ came, he did not come as a ruler, but as a servant. We find him girding up his robe and washing the feet of the disciples in the upper room (John 13).

In his own words he said, "The son of man did not come to be ministered to, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28)

5. Christ identified with sinners - Philippians 2:7c-8a

Philippians 2:7c ...and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man...

These verses speak directly to the issue brought up by many cults and false systems that Christ was not fully man. Christ was fully human in every sense of the word. If he was not fully man, he could not fully identify with men.

However, although Christ was fully man, he was more than man as well. The word "fashion" in verse 8 is *schema*. Christ was a man, but appeared as a man in the sense he was also divine. This is a mystery and something that has been discussed throughout the centuries of the church. How could Christ be fully God, yet man at the same time? No one knows. We believe it because that is what the Bible says.

Note the following verses regarding the humanity of Christ as well as Appendix A for a further discussion of this issue.

Hebrews 2:14 Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

Hebrews 2:9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Hebrews 2:17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Galatians 4:4 But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

6. Christ humbled himself - Philippians 2:8b

Philippians 2:8 b ...he humbled himself..

Note that no one humbled Christ, He humbled Himself. This even includes the Father. One heresy states that Christ is inferior to the Father and hence in subjection to the Father. Not so! Christ voluntarily took the form of a servant and humbled himself.

We are most like Christ when we humble ourselves. No doubt, many of the problems faced by the Philippian church had to do with those who did not want to humble themselves. Much conflict in the church is caused by individuals who desire the place of prominence instead of the place of service. In this regard, Christ serves as a great model. Although he had the right as creator to be served, he served us instead. He had the right to avoid the cross since he had done nothing deserving of death, but he took our place instead. In every respect, Christ is the model servant, giving his life for the sheep.

7. Christ became obedient to the point of death - Philippians 2:8c

Philippians 2:8 c ...and became obedient unto death...

No one took Christ's life from Him. He laid it down voluntarily, He took it up voluntarily (John 10:18). Satan thought that he caused Christ's death, only to find that he was a pawn in God's plan. Pilate and the Romans thought they had the power of life and death over Christ, only to be told that they would have no power except it was given to them from above. The Jewish leaders mocked Christ on the cross thinking that he was powerless to save himself, only to find that he had twelve legions of angels waiting his command to come and save him from death. Christ's death was voluntary in that he willingly died to save man from their sins.

8. Christ died on the cross - Philippians 2:8d

Philippians 2:8 ...even the death of the cross.

The most humiliating death devised in the ancient world was crucifixion. The victim was scourged until the skin on his back was essentially torn away, then nailed to a cross and left totally exposed to the elements and the mocking crowds. Death was due to exposure and asphyxiation as one slowly died of suffocation. Christ allowed himself not only to die for the world, but to die in the most humiliating way. There are a lot of ways to die, but to choose crucifixion willingly is amazing indeed.

Christ's bloody death is a vivid picture of the consequences of sin. The death of the sacrificial animal in the Old Testament, with the pouring out of the blood, was a picture of the awful consequences of sin. When Christ died as the Lamb of God, he died as a lamb, in a bloody way.

This death is commemorated in the ordinance of communion. The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ, on the eve of his death, as a perpetual reminder of his body which was broken for us, and his blood which was spilled in our behalf. When we partake of communion, we remember his death.

There are those who would like to remove the blood from our minds. They would like to take the great hymns of the faith and replace the blood with something else, or remove the hymns that speak of the blood altogether. The blood of Christ is precious blood (1 Peter 1:18-19). It is a picture of his life which was given as payment for our sins. He took our place, exposing himself to the wrath of God so that we would never have to.

It is interesting to note in the Book of Revelation that John sees the glorified Christ as a "lamb as it had been slain." Even in heaven, we will be reminded throughout all of eternity, of the Lamb of God that took our place. We will sing praises to the one who gave his life so that we may spend eternity in heaven with him. Christ's death on the cross as our substitute was the greatest act of humiliation in all of human history.

- C. The Results of Christ's Humiliation

- a. God exalted Him - Philippians 2:9a.

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him...

The “wherefore” in this verse points back to the fact of Christ’s self-humiliation through death on the cross. Because of that, God has exalted Christ far above every other creature in the universe.

It is interesting to probe a very difficult question, that being, “Why did Christ need exaltation since he was already exalted as God anyway?” This question is difficult since we know that God, being self-existent and complete in and of himself, does not need a creation to complete or fulfill himself. Revelation 4:11 tells us that it is only for his pleasure that he created everything, so it is a fair question to ask what Christ’s exaltation means. After all, how could he be exalted above the position he already had as the second member of the Trinity?

Although this is a question that theologians argue over *ad infinitum*, *ad nauseum*, we can find a partial answer in the desire for God to glorify himself. From all of Scripture, we know that the chief end of creation, and specifically man, was to glorify God, that is, exhibit God’s character and attributes to the rest of the created order. That is one of the reasons God allowed sin, so that his attributes of grace, mercy, forgiveness, and wrath might be made known. Since it is God’s nature to glorify himself, then we can assume that somehow the cross contributed to that glory. In other words, God gained something through the cross, and specifically, Christ gained something through the cross. This is hard to reconcile in our minds, since we cannot fathom how Christ, being perfect, could have added anything to his character through the cross, but he did. In fact, Scripture lists a few of these:

1. He learned obedience as a Son - Hebrews 5:8

Hebrews 5:8 Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

2. He learned about the infirmities of the flesh - Hebrews 2:17-18

Hebrews 2:17-18 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

3. He learned about the temptations we all face - Hebrews 4:15-16

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

4. He became sin in our place thus experiencing the guilt and horror of sin - 2 Corinthians 5:21

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

5. He tasted of the reality of death - Hebrews 5:7

Hebrews 5:7 Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared;

Christ voluntarily gave up the prerogatives of deity in order to become a man. Because of this, he has been exalted by the Father above all of creation. His actions have exalted the name of God, and brought glory to God, by exhibiting God's grace, justice, wrath, and mercy to all of the created order. Because of this, God has received greater glory through the cross than he could have gained any other way.

- b. God has given Him a name that is above all other names - LORD - Philippians 2:9b.

Philippians 2:9 ...and given him a name which is above every name:

In the biblical sense of the word, a name refers to far more than the label given a person, it refers to their very character and being. Christ's humiliation has secured for him the name "LORD." This name refers to his absolute authority and power of all of the created order. It contains reverence and majesty, as he is the only one who will ever hold this name. Furthermore, it is a name assigned to him by God the Father, and as such can never be taken away or rescinded.

The Bible speaks of the exaltation of Christ in many places. Some of the more common ones are:

John 17:4-5 I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

Psalms 2:1-12 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

Acts 2:36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Ephesians 1:20-23 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

Hebrews 1:1-14 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son? And again, when he bringeth in the firstbegotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

1 Peter 1:10-11 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

- c. All creation will recognize Christ as Lord - Philippians 2:10-11a.

Philippians 2:10-11a That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord...

Christ's exaltation results in the fact that he will be recognized as Lord by all of creation. Many say that they will never bow their knee to Christ and recognize him as Lord, but this verse clearly states the opposite. All of creation, every sentient being that has ever lived, will someday acknowledge the Lordship of Christ. The question is not "if", but "when."

- d. God is glorified through the humiliation and exaltation of Christ - Philippians 2:11b.

Philippians 2:11b ...to the glory of God the Father.

Why has Christ been glorified, so that God may be glorified. God's character was manifested by Christ in a way that would have been impossible any other way. Because of Christ's self-humiliation we are exposed to God's justice, in that sin required a payment. We are exposed to God's love in that He did not let men perish but provided a way back to himself. We see his grace in that he reaches out to undeserving men in order to redeem them from the penalty of sin. We see his forgiveness, in that he wipes away our sin because of Christ's substitutionary death on

our behalf. Finally, we see God's wisdom in that Satan could not ultimately thwart the plans and purposes of God.

Working Out Salvation - Philippians 2:12-15

Before looking at these four verses in detail, it is necessary to see their parallel with Philippians 1:27-30. In fact, it is almost as if verses 2:1-11 are a parenthesis placed in the middle of Paul's exhortation to unity and godly living. Note the following parallels between 1:27 and 2:12-15:⁶

1:27 - Let your conduct be as it becomes the Gospel	2:12 Work out your own salvation
1:27 - whether I come and see you, or else be absent	2:12 not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence
1:27 - stand fast in one spirit, with one mind	2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings

A foundational question we need to ask ourselves before examining this text is "what is Paul referring to when he uses the word salvation?" Some say he is referring to the spiritual health and well-being of the Philippian church while others say he is referring to our own personal salvation as it is evidenced in sanctification. The pros and cons of these positions are as follows:⁷

⁶ William Hendricksen, p. 120.

⁷ O'Brien, pp. 277-280.

Salvation refers to community health and well-being

1. *Sotaria* (salvation) is often used extrabiblically to refer to health and well-being.
2. The wider context of the epistle would lend support to understanding *sotaria* in the corporate, rather than the individualistic sense.
3. It is inconsistent for Paul to tell the Philippians believers to work out their own salvation, especially after admonishing them to not consider their own interests.
4. To imply that one worked out their own salvation would also suggest that a person is ultimately responsible for that salvation.
5. Corporate health and well-being is consistent with Paul's exhortation to unity.
6. The word *katergazesthe* (work out) and the pronoun *eauton* (your own) are both in the plural tense, thus suggesting the church as a whole.
7. The phrase "with fear and trembling" fits a community context better than an individual context, that is, the fear and trembling refers to the Philippians believers attitudes towards one another.

Salvation refers to one's own, personal salvation:

1. The burden of proof is one those who want to make *sotaria* refer to community health and well-being. Paul's use of the word consistently refers to salvation which is a gift from God.
2. The plurals *katergazesthe* and *eauton* do not necessarily refer to corporate action. They can be best understood that all Philippians believers are to take part in the process of working out their own salvation.
3. The idea of working out one's salvation is not inconsistent with minding the things of others any more than a desire to keep oneself from sinning is to be self-centered and too introspective.
4. Working out one's salvation has in view the eschatological return of Christ at which time one must give an account of himself to God.
5. The phrase "with fear and trembling" refers to one's realization of the holiness and majesty of God, which is of itself a powerful motivator to godly living.
6. The idea expressed in this passage is that one works *out* their salvation, not *for* their salvation. We cannot earn salvation by working, however, we exhibit salvation by our works. This is the entire message of James 2. True salvation is exhibited by godly living.

Thus, in examining this passage, it is most likely that Paul is referring to one's own, personal salvation. This salvation is worked out in the process of sanctification, as one sees the holiness and majesty of God and is made aware of their sin. Even though one is admonished to work out their salvation, it is nevertheless God who is ultimately behind that process as he internally motivates and provides the power to overcome sin.

Paul's whole point in these verses is that salvation is not a static thing. It is not something that just happens without effecting some change in a person's life. The result of true salvation is a changed conduct, and a continual struggle towards sanctification. The idea that one can be born again with absolutely no change in behavior is a concept foreign to the New Testament.

What Is Sanctification?

What it is not

- 1. It is not the eradication of the sin nature - Philippians 3:12-14, 1 John 1:8-9**
- 2. It is not the second blessing - 2 Corinthians 1:15, 1 Corinthians 1:2**
- 3. It is not the baptism by the Holy Spirit - 1 Corinthians 12:13, 3:1-4**
- 4. It is not instantaneous**

What it is

- 1. Sanctification occurs in various forms some 300 times in the New Testament and 760 times in the Old. The basic meaning in all these cases is "to be set apart."**
- 2. It is progressive in nature**

Sanctification/Justification contrasted

- 1. Justification deals with standing, sanctification deals with our state**
- 2. Justification is what God does for us, sanctification is what God does in us**
- 3. Justification is an act, sanctification is a work**
- 4. Justification is the means, sanctification is the end**
- 5. Justification declares us righteous, sanctification makes us righteous**
- 6. Justification removes the guilt and penalty of sin, sanctification checks the growth and power of sin**

A. The Foundation - Obedience

Philippians 2:12a Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out ...

The foundation to working out one's salvation is obedience to the Word of God. No doubt Paul has in mind the Philippians obedience to his exhortation, but even so Paul's exhortation is for godly living.

Unfortunately, obedience is something we do not really want to discuss today. The idea of being obedience as a means of sanctification is rapidly being displaced by other notions. For example:

- The Charismatics say that one needs to have a mystical experience and be "zapped" by the Spirit.

- The Quietists say “let go and let God.”
- The Pietists say “roll up your sleeves and have at it.”
- The Therapists say “you need counseling before you can get on with sanctification.”
- The Pragmatists say “you need to find the right techniques and then it is easy.”

None of these are right. One cannot begin in the Spirit and then be perfected in the flesh (Galatians 3:3). Sanctification is a process wrought by God in the life of a believer who is obedient to God's commandments. It is God who is doing the changing, but we are the ones doing the obeying. It is a synergistic work. For every verse that speaks of God's work in our lives, there is another verse which commands us to obedience. We cannot split the two pieces apart. One of the marks of a real believer is obedience.

John 14:21 He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

1 John 2:3-4 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 Peter 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

B. The Product - Salvation

Philippians 2:12b ...own salvation...

What is the result of obedience in the life of the believer? It is eternal salvation. Contrary to what may first appear as one initially reads this verse, Paul is not teaching a works-salvation. Rather he is teaching that true faith works itself out in a changed life, a life marked by obedience. After all, the real message of the Gospel is obedience. We have been commanded by God to turn from sin to him. Those that refuse this commandment find themselves the subject of God's eternal wrath.

Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

Romans 1:5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

Romans 16:26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

1 Peter 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

C. The Attitude - Fear and Trembling

Philippians 2:12c ...with fear and trembling.

What attitude is required as one works out their salvation. It is fear and trembling. This fear and trembling is not the uncontrollable shaking of one who is under divine judgment, but one who recognizes the holiness and awesomeness of God. It is not the fear of judgment, but the fear of respect as one stands face to face with God.

This is the fear that God had on display in the Old Testament. At Mount Sinai God displayed himself in thunder and lightning with instructions that any man or beast that would touch the mountain be killed. God was indelibly imprinting the fact of his holiness on the minds of men so that they would not stoop to treating him with indifference.

Even though we as believers have been brought into an intimate relationship with God, we can never get to the point where God is our buddy and pal. He is our awesome Savior, and one whom we will fall down and worship in eternity as we stand around his throne.

Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Job 28:28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.

D. The Source of Desire - God

Philippians 2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will...

One of the major obstacles in the way of obedience is our flesh. When we became a child of God, our old nature which is our identification with the old Adam was broken. In its place we have been given a new nature, our identification with Christ. Although the old nature is gone, we still struggle with the flesh. Even though the power of sin has been broken, it is not extinct as it still resides very powerfully in our flesh. We do not have to sin, nevertheless we do sin when we allow ourselves to fall under the influence of the flesh. This was the cry of Paul in Romans 7. He had a real desire to obey God because of the principle of the spirit of life within his new nature. However, he still had the flesh that was totally corrupt. It is the conflict between the principle of the flesh and the principle of the spirit that we find in Romans 7. This conflict will persist in the life of the believer until we are glorified. Until then, the process of sanctification is a continual struggle between what we want to do, and what we find ourselves doing involuntarily.

Even though we have this struggle, we can rest assured in the fact that it is God who is at work in us to make us desire to do his will. One of the best ways to distinguish between a true child of God and an unbeliever is to see which one desires to obey God. Even though both may walk in disobedience, the true believer longs to obey God, even in the midst of abysmal failures. The unbeliever may want to live a better life, but they do not have that deep inward motivation to obedience that marks the life of a true believer.

Romans 7:14-25 For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

E. The Power - God

Philippians 2:13b ...to do of his good pleasure.

If it was left totally up to us, we would fail to obey God. It is not possible, in our flesh, to obey or to please God. It requires a power outside of ourselves, a power which comes from God himself. When we are born again, God gives us his Holy Spirit as our helper and comforter. The word for comforter, *parakaleo*, refers to someone who is called alongside as an aide and a support. The Holy Spirit aids us in our walk with God so that we may obey and please him. Without the aid of the Holy Spirit, we could never accomplish one single act of acceptable obedience to God.

Romans 8:4-8 That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

F. The Warning - Without murmurings and disputings

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

As we go about the process of working out our salvation, we need to be reminded that this is to be done with a proper attitude. It is easy to find ourselves embittered in the fight, despondent of defeats, and complaining against God who doesn't "zap" us to instant perfection.

The two terms Paul uses here deal with corporate life as a believer. In our dealings with other believers we are to be without murmurings and disputings. The word for murmurings in *gongusmon*. This refers to the complaints and gripes often expressed about others within a community. It is interesting to note that murmurings was one of the chief sins of the Israelites in the wilderness (Numbers 11:1-6, 14:1-4, 20:2, 21:4-5). No matter what God did, someone was not happy with it. It is easy to fall into the same trap in community life. We can reach the point with certain people that no matter what they do, they will not please us.

The second term, disputings, is *dialogismos*, from which we get dialog. It is a term used to refer to those who always have to say, "yeah, but..". People who

are guilty of disputings are those who are always contentious. They are the ones that always want their own way, and want things done according to their schedule. When a community has people in it who are full of murmurings and disputings, it is not possible to exhibit God's character to those who look in.

James 3:14-18 But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

G. The Personal Result - Blamelessness and Harmlessness⁸

Philippians 2:15a That ye may be blameless and harmless...

What is the result of a life lived without murmurings and disputings where one is working out their own salvation with fear and trembling? It is blamelessness and harmlessness. Blamelessness, *amemptoi*, refers to that character quality where there can be found no glaring fault. It is not perfection, but it comes close in the sense that one who is blameless has no glaring sin, no evident weakness in their life. As believers, we cannot be perfect, but we can be blameless.

Harmlessness, *akeraios*, means "purity, sincerity, and innocence." Paul, in coupling these two words together, refers to the idea that one be spotless in character because one is pure and sincere in heart. We are reminded of Christ's words in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

H. The Global Result - A Bright Testimony

Philippians 2:15b ...the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

The personal result of working out one's salvation is blamelessness and sincerity. The global result is a bright testimony to the world. When we live in obedience to God, we find that we become a rebuke to the world around us. We are reminded of what Christ told his disciples in John 15:22 "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." Christ's point was that his life was a constant rebuke to those around him who lived in sin. His very presence as a blameless and sincere man made the lives of the hypocritical and sinful Pharisees unbearable.

Paul contrasts the blamelessness and harmlessness of believers with the crookedness and perverseness of the world. The word for crooked, *skolia*, refers to something that is twisted and bent. When used in reference to one's character it refers to the attributes of deviousness, deceit, lying, and treachery. This is in distinction to the unblemished character of the true child of God who is walking in obedience.

The second contrast is between sincerity and perverseness. The word for perverse, *diestramenas*, means "perverted or depraved." It is the opposite of sincerity. Figuratively, sincerity referred to one who was "without wax", whose character was open and observable by all. On the other hand, one who is perverse must "cover up" their true character. They are like the Pharisees in

⁸ O'Brien, pp. 292-296.

Matthew 23 which had a good, external facade of righteousness, but were inside full of corruption and wickedness. In fact, Christ called them “whitewashed tombs.” On the outside they were beautiful and ornate, but on the inside they were like rotting corpses.

Those who are sincere and blameless shine as lights in the world. If a believer is truly working out his salvation with fear and trembling, it will not be an invisible process to those around him.

Matthew 5:15-16 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

1 Thessalonians 5:5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Colossians 1:12-13 Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:

1 John 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

I. A Somber Warning - Philippians 2:16

Philippians 2:16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

This practical section on working out one's salvation is closed with a somber warning. It is possible, if done in the flesh, to put out maximum effort only to fall short of the goal. Behind every action of Paul's there was the idea in his mind that he needed to put out maximum effort so as to accomplish the task that God gave him to do.

Sometimes we get fatalistic about our service to God. We get the idea that if we do OK, it is acceptable to God. Often we are shamed by the performance of athletes who strive to receive a corruptible crown. They expend maximum effort whereas we lolly-gag through our Christian life. It is important that we grasp the concept that even though it is God who works in us to produce the fruit we bear, we must expend our own energy as well in pursuing the prize. When we do that, then we can say with the Apostle Paul that we have not run in vain, neither labored in vain. Our rejoicing will be full in the day of Christ when we receive our rewards at his hand.

Models of Spiritual Service - Philippians 2:17-30

Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, now puts some flesh on the bones of the exhortation to work out one's own salvation. It is one thing to say what we need to do, it is something completely different to have an actual model in which that is worked out. Without a model, it is easy to become disillusioned in thinking that being a godly person is not possible. In order to show that it is possible to work out one's salvation, Paul now turns to three specific examples of spiritual service, himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

A. Paul

Philippians 2:17-18 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

If we were to examine all of the facets of Paul's spiritual service, it would be possible to write a book. Although much could be said, we will limit ourselves to this text only. In these two verses we are introduced to several points regarding Paul's service to others.

1. Paul was pouring out his life in service to God - Philippians 2:17

The word "if" is a first-class conditional, and should be translated "since." "Be offered" is in the present tense and means "currently being poured out." "Service" is *litourgea*, which is used to refer to spiritual service.

In those days, a drink offering was often associated with a sacrifice. The way this would work is that as the animal being sacrificed was burning on the altar, an offering of wine, honey, or some other liquid would be poured over the sacrifice. The resulting steam would symbolize the smell of the offering ascending to the particular god being worshipped. Paul is saying that his life is being poured out on a greater sacrifice, that of the Philippians believers.

How were the Philippian believers being offered to God? It was in their sufferings. Note verses 27-30 in Philippians 1. It is clear that the Philippian believers were being persecuted for their faith, and as a result their suffering was an act of sacrifice to God. We are reminded of Romans 12:1-2 that our lives are to be a living sacrifice to God. It is much easier at times to be a dead sacrifice as opposed to a living one.

2. Paul saw this sacrifice as something to rejoice about - Philippians 2:17b-18

Rather than see this service in behalf of the Philippians as something to be sorrowful about, Paul saw it as something to rejoice about. Paul's joy in this matter was not founded in the transient joy that is ours when things go our way, but the inner joy produced by the Holy Spirit in spite of the circumstances. Paul did not see his service to others as a source of grief or a burden to bear, but as a source of joy in that he can minister to others and serve Christ whom he loved.

Not only was Paul joyful, but the Philippian believers were joyful as well. In fact, they rejoiced together in their service to God as both were being offered to God, the Philippian believers as the sacrifice, Paul as the drink offering. The greatest joy is produced often by the greatest sacrifice.

2 Corinthians 7:4 Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation.

Colossians 1:24 Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church:

1 Thessalonians 3:7-9 Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith: For now we live, if ye

stand fast in the Lord. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

Where did Paul learn this key, that of joy being produced as a result of sacrifice? He learned it from Christ.

Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

Hebrews 12:1-2 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

B. Timothy

Of all the men we are introduced to in the New Testament, probably the one that is the least known but the most important is Timothy. In these six verses we find out a lot about Timothy's character and spiritual service.

Who Is Timothy?

1. **Timothy is mentioned more than any other of Paul's companions. Some representative passages are:**

Acts 16:2-3	lived in Lystra and Derbe area (Galatia)
Acts 17:14	in Thessalonica with Silas
Acts 18:5	in Corinth with Silas
Acts 19:22	sent to Macedonia (Thessalonica, Berea?)
Acts 20:4	sent to Macedonia
1 Corinthians 4:17	sent to Corinth by Paul
2 Corinthians 1:19	sent to Corinth
2 Corinthians 1:1	with Paul when writing 2 Corinthians
Philippians 1:1	with Paul when writing Philippians
Philippians 2:19	sent to Philippi by Paul
Colossians 1:1	with Paul when writing Colossians
1 Thessalonians 1:1	with Paul when writing 1 Thessalonians
1 Thessalonians 3:1	sent to Thessalonica
2 Thessalonians 1:1	with Paul when writing 2 Thessalonians
2. **Paul considered Timothy his son in the faith. In fact, Paul often used Timothy as a general trouble-shooter and messenger. Timothy was sent to Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), Macedonia (Acts 19:22), Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17), Philippi (Philippians 2:19), and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1).**
3. **Timothy was with Paul in the writing of at least five New Testament books: 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Thessalonians.**
4. **Timothy was Paul's hand-picked successor, the one who was to carry the baton of Paul to others (2 Timothy 2:1-5). Paul considered Timothy to be his "mirror image." (Philippians 2:19-23)**

1. Timothy was a willing servant to Paul - Philippians 2:19

Philippians 2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

The first trait to note about Timothy in this passage is that he was a willing servant to Paul. It is interesting to note that Timothy seemed to shadow Paul throughout the New Testament. Timothy was with Paul at the writing of at least five New Testament books. Timothy was also Paul's hand-picked successor. It seems that wherever Paul went, Timothy was not far behind.

As a result, Timothy was willing to do whatever needed to be done in ministry to others and to Paul. Whenever Paul had a need, or needed someone to check out some church, he would send Timothy who was willing to serve under the Apostle Paul as Paul's "gopher."

We can learn something from this. Today it is very difficult to find anyone willing to serve under the ministry of others. Many would like to have center-stage, and be in the spotlight. Very few have such a consuming

desire for ministry that they willingly place themselves at the disposal of others.

2. Timothy had the same mind of Paul - Philippians 2:20

Philippians 2:20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

In 2 Timothy 2 we read that one of the tasks of a spiritual leader is to reproduce themselves in others. We see this pattern in Christ's ministry, as for a period of three years Christ poured his life into the lives of the disciples. We also see this pattern in Paul as he poured his life into other godly men, two of which were Timothy and Titus.

Timothy was Paul's reproduction. Whenever Paul needed to be in two places at the same time, he would send Timothy, was his personal representative. Timothy was so like Paul, that if one were to meet Timothy, one would meet Paul. It must have been a great encouragement to Paul to have someone like Timothy whom he could trust to do whatever task needed to be done, and to do it right.

What was it that Paul needed to have done? It was to find out the condition of the Philippian believers. We are reminded that the bond between Paul and this church was greater than that between Paul and any other church. As a result, Paul was intimately concerned about the welfare and condition of the Philippian believers, and was so concerned that he wanted to know how they were doing. Since it was not possible for Paul to leave Rome in order to find out, he would send Timothy, who would be his own personal ambassador to the Philippian believers.

3. Timothy had a mind fixed on Christ - Philippians 2:21

Philippians 2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

The third character trait we see about Timothy is his single-minded devotion to Christ. Many people today are in the ministry for the wrong reasons. Most want the spotlight and the plaudits of others, few want to really serve. Many would like to be the great authors of the day, the ones who are looked up to as models of ministry, but very few really have a desire to minister to others. We have a lot of men seeking their own interests, and not the interests of Christ. Timothy was not like that. He had a single-minded devotion to Christ which superseded his personal interests in the ministry.

Examples of Personal Interest

- 1. Make a big name for yourself.**
- 2. Have a desire to be the expert in ministry.**
- 3. Have a desire to be the one called upon to speak at all the big conferences.**
- 4. Have a desire to be the one respected as a spokesman for the church.**

5. **Have a desire to be the one whose books are in great demand.**
6. **Have a desire to be the one who is the leader of a mega-church.**
7. **Have a desire to be the one who is called upon when any important decision is being made.**
8. **Have a desire to be the one looked up to as the standard in ministry.**

4. Timothy had a proven record - Philippians 2:22

Philippians 2:22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

One of the primary qualities of the elder in 1 Timothy 3 is that the elder must be a man of proven character. We read that he must be someone who rules well his own home, has a good reputation towards those without the church, and not a new believer lest he fall into pride and become disqualified from ministry. The same qualifications hold for deacons. Why? Because it is critical that those that are held up as spiritual leaders be men of proven character. Spiritual leaders are to be models for others, and as a result they are held to a higher standard of conduct and character. Timothy passed these qualifications with flying colors as he was the personal assistant to the Apostle Paul.

Timothy's reputation was that of sacrificial service with Paul. This is something to consider when we look at the ministry of Paul. Most of the time, Paul was being hounded by the Judaizers as well as being persecuted by unbelievers. He spent more time in jail and in distress than he did in comfort. To travel with Paul was to not stay at the best accommodations, eat the best food, or be the center of positive attention. In short, it was risky to be associated with Paul, as one could quickly find themselves the object of ridicule, persecution, and even the threat of death.

Did this bother Timothy? Not at all. Paul's statement in this verse leads us to believe that Timothy was not ashamed to be with Paul, and in fact probably faced the same distresses and persecutions that Paul faced. We can see this clearly in 2 Corinthians. In verse 1:1 we note that Timothy was with Paul when Paul wrote this letter. In verses 4:7-18 we read the following statements Paul wrote about his and Timothy's ministry:

4:7	we have this treasure in earthen vessels
4:8	we are troubled (hard-pressed) on every side, but not distressed (crushed)
4:8	we are perplexed, but not in despair
4:9	we are persecuted, but not forsaken
4:9	we are cast (struck) down, but not destroyed
4:10	we bear the marks of Christ in our bodies
4:11	we are always delivered unto death
4:12	death worketh in us
4:16	we faint not
4:16	our outward man is perishing
4:17	our light affliction

We can rest assured that Timothy knew exactly what it meant to be associated with the Apostle Paul and to be a partaker of Paul's afflictions.

5. Timothy was Paul's personal emissary and trouble-shooter -
Philippians 2:23-24

Philippians 2:23-24 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

As we have noted above already, Timothy was so much like Paul that to meet Timothy was to meet Paul. Timothy was willing and able to do whatever was required in the ministry to the church, and was ready to be sent to the Philippian church as soon as Paul was able to send him.

In the introduction to this book, we noted that many believe this book to have been written towards the end of Paul's first imprisonment in Rome. This is one of the verses that seems to indicate that, as we see it is Paul's conviction that very soon he would be able to visit the Philippian believers himself. In any case, whether Paul visited personally, or Timothy visited as Paul's emissary, the Philippian church had the privilege of being very high on Paul's list of beloved churches, and one that deserved his personal attention.

- C. Epaphroditus - Philippians 2:25-30

Whereas there may be very few Pauls, somewhat more Timothy's, there are a lot of Epaphrodituses. Paul is, and was, an exceptional man. Single-handedly God used Paul to pen at least thirteen books of the New Testament as well as take the Gospel to most of the Gentile world of his day. Not many men in history have had the impact of a Paul.

For every Paul, there may be two Timothy's. These are men who have great influence, usually as a result of being nurtured by someone else, like a Paul. Timothy filled Paul's shoes in the second generation, being used by God to continue the influence of Paul well into the second century A.D.

However, for every Timothy, there are many Epaphrodituses. These are the ones who pour out their lives in ministry to a local congregation or other group of believers. Every believer, if they cannot find a model in Paul and Timothy, can certainly find a model in Epaphroditus.

Who Is Epaphroditus?

- 1. We know little about him except for this passage. A shortened version of his name, Epaphrus, is mentioned in Colossians 4:12. It is possible that this is the same man, but we really cannot know this for certain.**
- 2. He was obviously a godly man. It would be very unlikely for the Philippian church to send a twink to minister to Paul. If anything, they would have sent the most godly and spiritual man they could find.**
- 3. He was most likely a deacon in the Philippian church, although it is possible that he could have been an elder. In any respect, he was greatly esteemed by the Philippian church.**

4. He willingly left his church and family in order to travel to Rome and minister to Paul's needs.

1. The character of Epaphroditus - Philippians 2:25a

Philippians 2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

a. In relation to Paul.

1). My brother - his personal relationship to Paul

Epaphroditus and Paul both shared a common family tie because of their common faith in Christ. One of the common terms for believers throughout the New Testament is that of brothers and sisters. This emphasizes the family connection, as all believers are part of God's family. This familial bond extends also a common love towards one another.

2). My companion in labour - his relationship to Paul's ministry

Out of the thirteen times this phrase is used in the New Testament, 12 of them are used by Paul, all referring to those who labored with him in ministry (Romans 16, 1 Corinthians 1, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, etc.). Epaphroditus is not only Paul's brother in family relationship, but a fellowlaborer in Paul's ministry.

3). My fellowsoldier - his relationship to Paul's enemies

The word "fellowsoldier" is often used to honor a soldier whose conduct was such that he was equated with the commanding officer or King. Epaphroditus ranked alongside of Paul in the ministry, not as an inferior, but as an equal. By the way, this term implies that there was conflict in the common ministry of both Epaphroditus and Paul.

b. In relation to the Philippian believers

1). Your messenger

Epaphroditus is named as a messenger, or apostle, of the Philippian believers. It seems that the Philippian church was concerned about Paul, and wanted to aid him in some manner. As a result, they chose Epaphroditus to be a messenger sent to Paul from them for the purpose of assisting Paul in his need, encouraging Paul in the ministry, as well as taking a gift to Paul from the church.

2). Your minister to my wants

Epaphroditus is also named as a minister (*litourgon*) to Paul. The use of this word indicates that Epaphroditus ministry was that of a spiritual minister to Paul. The word used, *litourgon*, comes from Greek history. In the time of the Greek city-states, a person who used their own personal wealth to benefit the city-state was named to be of the *litourgoi*. This was a title

conferred on those who sacrificially gave of their own material wealth in order to benefit others.

2. The concern of Epaphroditus - Philippians 2:26-27

Philippians 2:26-27 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

If Epaphroditus had just showed up back in Philippi with the letter to the Philippians, the question of the church would have been, “why are you back here?” Epaphroditus was sent to minister to Paul, and would have been considered to be shirking his duty to return so suddenly.

The reason for his return is seen in these two verses. It appears as though he became very sick. Whether that sickness was the result of some disease, or as a result of persecution, it was of such a nature that he could have lost his life. When the Philippian church heard that he had been sick to death, he became very concerned about the church in that they were distressed on his behalf. He was so concerned about others, that he became distressed when others were distressed about him. In other words, Epaphroditus was not concerned about his brush with death as much as he was concerned about the distress felt by the Philippian church.

3. The commendation of Epaphroditus - Philippians 2:28-30

Philippians 2:28-30 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Because of the great concern of Epaphroditus for the Philippian church, and the distress felt by the Philippian church on account of Epaphroditus, Paul sent Epaphroditus back to the church. We see from this that Paul was more concerned about both the Philippian church and Epaphroditus than he was about himself. It was better to send Epaphroditus back to the church than it was to have Epaphroditus stay and minister. Everyone was concerned about everyone else. Instead of minding their own things, every person here minded the things of others.

Epaphroditus is not only sent back, but sent back with commendation. Epaphroditus did not fail in his mission to Paul, but fulfilled it above and beyond the call of duty. As a result, Paul tells the Philippians church to receive him back with joy, and to receive him back with a great deal of respect and reputation because of his work on Paul's behalf.

Why was he to be held in such high regard? It is because of his service to Paul and because he was willing to gamble with his life in the service of Christ. Many think that the term “sick” refers not to a disease that Epaphroditus contracted, but weakness as a result of persecution. The death being referred to here by Paul was the death of a martyr. The term translated “not regarding” refers to “rolling the dice.” It was a gambling term used to refer to someone rolling the dice in a game of chance. It should come as little surprise that anyone showing up in Rome who wanted to visit and minister to Paul would immediately be suspect as

another loony-toon and one who should be locked up along with Paul.⁹ The very fact that Epaphroditus would associate himself with Paul would put him at the same risk as Paul.

⁹ In the early church, a group of people arose up who called themselves “the Paraboloni”, the gamblers. Their mission was to visit those in prison, sick with various infectious diseases, and anyone else with whom contact would consist of some sort of risk. Also, it was common for gamblers of those days to say, “Epaphroditus” when rolling the dice as the patron god of luck was Aphrodite, from which the name Epaphroditus is derived.