

PHILIPPIANS

2:1-11

Introduction

The believers in Philippi were not getting along with one another. There are hints of their interpersonal conflict throughout the letter:

=They were split:

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

=They were selfish:

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

=They were squabbling:

Philippians 2:14 Do all things without complaining and disputing...

Philippians 4:2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.

Split, selfish, and squabbling with one another... What was the answer? What *is* the answer?

You probably noticed that the word "mind" occurs in one form or another several times in this passage: "like-minded" in verse 2, "mind" in verses 2, 3, and 5. Altogether, "mind" occurs eight times in the letter, "like-minded" two times. Another word prominent in our passage is "others," occurring in verses 3 and 4. *Mind others* would be a quick way of summarizing Paul's exhortation to these split, selfish, squabbling saints. Taking everything Paul says into consideration, you might say these two things:

#1 Make Up Your Mind To Serve Others
Because Of What Jesus Has Done *In* You
(v1-4)

#2 Make Up Your Mind To Serve Others
Because Of What Jesus Has Done *For* You
(v5-11)

#1 Make Up Your Mind To Serve Others

Because Of What Jesus Has Done *In You*

(v1-4)

"Mind" is a key word in Philippians. When Paul says, in verse 5, "let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus," he means that you should think just as Jesus did when He became incarnate. Your thinking, your attitude, your opinion, your evaluation of any situation facing you should be the same as Jesus' would be. Last week I mentioned the bracelets everyone is wearing with the initials "WWJD?," for "What Would Jesus Do?" Modify that to "What Would Jesus Think?" and you've got the idea behind Paul's use of the word *mind*.

Can you really affect your thinking, attitudes, opinions, and evaluations? Yes, you can, because of what Jesus has done *in you*.

Philippians 2:1 Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy,

The word "if," in the Greek language, means *because*. *Because you* have consolation, or encouragement, in Christ... *Because you* are comforted by His love... *Because you* have experienced the fellowship of the indwelling Holy Spirit... *Because you* have known affection and mercy... **You can** make up your mind - change your thinking, attitudes, opinions, and evaluations.

Christian, you can change. And since *outlook* determines *outcome*, it is in your mind, or thinking, that change must occur.

In verses 2, 3, and 4 Paul describes the kind of changes that can take place in you mind because of what Jesus has done in you. You can be *like-minded*; you can be *low-minded*; and you can be *look-minded*.

=You can be like-minded:

Philippians 2:2 fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

The Philippians were a source of joy to Paul, even in the midst of their failings. We are failing each other in many areas, but can still rejoice with and for one another.

"Like-minded" is understood by the words which follow: "having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." Have the "same love" for others that God has for you. "Being of one accord" can be translated *one-souled*; it's a reminder of the fact that you are a member of a body, the body of Jesus Christ, and are to function as a unit - not as an individual. You are to be "of one mind," or as I see it, directed by one mind, as you submit in obedience to Jesus, the head of the body.

An illustration might help. If you were part of a symphony orchestra, you would have your own instrument to play, and your own notes in the score. As you and each of the other musicians followed the conductor, a beautiful harmony would emerge. You would be like-minded.

=You can be low-minded:

Philippians 2:3 Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

This word for "lowliness of mind" never occurs in Greek literature until the writing of the New Testament.¹ It is a distinctly Christian virtue. It is the opposite of the words which precede it: "selfish ambition or conceit." It is the supernatural enabling Jesus gives you to "esteem others better" than yourself. We commonly call this *humility*.

Humility is simply concern for the advancement and preferential treatment of others. It is seeking the welfare of others.

=You can be look-minded:

Philippians 2:4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

"Look out" for others. This is the active part of what we've been discussing. Put your like-mindedness, and your low-mindedness, into action. Do something that promotes or prefers someone else. Make up your mind to serve others.

+These are not natural attitudes, opinions, or evaluations; as we saw, there wasn't even a word in the language for one of them! But because of what Jesus has done *in* you, you can make up your mind.

#2 Make Up Your Mind To Serve Others Because Of What Jesus Has Done *For* You (v5-11)

It always helps to have an example. The supreme example of serving others is Jesus in His becoming man to die on the cross for your sins. Chapter two closes with three additional examples - Paul himself, Timothy, and Epaphroditus - but Christ's example is the pattern for all Christian service toward others. Jesus is the greatest example of one completely unselfish and entirely devoted to others.

While this chapter is primarily an exhortation to serve others, it contains the greatest statement theologically of what Jesus did when He became man, died, and rose again. While affirming His humanity, it presents Him in His deity.

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

¹Walvoord, *Philippians*, p. 51.

Think like Christ did. In spite of His divine attributes, His eternal glory, and His rightful claim to worship and obedience, Jesus willingly put aside the outward appearance of divinity and put on the robes of humanity! A series of descriptive phrases describes just what He did:

Philippians 2:6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,
Philippians 2:7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

The word "form" means the *outward expression of the inward nature*. There is no clearer way of saying that Jesus was and is God! He was, and is, by nature God and expressed His nature for all eternity.

He, however, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." That is, He did not selfishly hold onto the outer manifestation of His deity. In His incarnation Jesus divested Himself of the outward appearance of deity while remaining God. Instead, He "made Himself of no reputation." Three Greek words describe what this means:

First, He took "the form of a bondservant." Form is *morphe*, referring to external manifestation. Jesus laid aside the independent use of His divine attributes, willingly submitting Himself to God the Father; He permanently became a human, in a sinless body; He used that body to serve the human race. Jesus was like the king who temporarily puts on the garments of a peasant. He remains king, but it is not outwardly apparent. His external manifestation was that of a servant.

Second, Jesus "was made in the likeness of man." "Likeness" is *homoiomati* and means that He was like other men, had their essential human attributes, and manifested these attributes in living among men as a man. Jesus was human, but without a sin nature.

Third, Jesus was "found in fashion as a man." "Fashion" is from *schemati* which refers to outer manifestation of transient qualities. We use the word fashion to describe the various changing trends of style in outward apparel and appearance. Jesus wore the clothes and acted like the men of His generation.

Bible scholar John Walvoord says of these words,

"The three Greek words... state on the one hand that Christ was still all that God is after He became incarnate; but that, on the other hand, He had a genuine humanity, manifested in being in form as a servant, like other men except that He was not a sinner, and in outer appearance or fashion looked like a man and acted like a man... While on earth He was God and looked like a man; in glory, while He will retain His humanity, He will resume the appearance of God and His prerogatives of deity."²

What did Jesus do for you as a man? Look again at the end of verse 8:

²*Ibid.*, p. 56.

Philippians 2:8 ...He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

How little, then, do your sacrifices and acts of unselfishness and suffering compare in the shadow of the cross! Since Jesus did this for you, what stands in the way of you serving others - being like-minded, low-minded, and look-minded toward others? That is essentially Paul's point.

The cross was not the *end* but the *entrance* into glory!

Philippians 2:9 Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,

Philippians 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,

Philippians 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

There are at least two reasons for these verses. First, they finish the story! We should never leave Jesus on the cross! The cross is empty; the tomb is empty; that is our hope as believers, and the hope of all mankind. "It is finished," and Christ has risen from the grave!!

Secondly, Paul is encouraging you that the crown follows the cross! If you humble yourself, you will be exalted in due time. "...Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). It is in your own spiritual best interest to have the mind of Christ.

All men, whether saved or unsaved, and all the angels, whether holy or fallen, and all of creation will some day confess and bow before Jesus Christ as Lord. The sad fact is, however, that reluctant confession will be too late. Men have their opportunity to receive Jesus today. After death and in the consummation of human history when Jesus judges the world, it will be too late to choose. The shout of triumph of the archangel and the adoration of ten thousand times ten thousand saints will be sadly echoed by the cry of despair of those who have neglected the day of their salvation.

+Everything that Paul is saying here is perfectly illustrated in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel of John. Jesus was sharing the last supper with His disciples when He got up to wash their feet.

"[Jesus] seated at the table, the Master and Lord of the disciples, [illustrates] Him in His preincarnate glory... [Jesus,] girded with a towel, and washing the feet of the disciples, [illustrates] His taking the outward appearance of a servant in His incarnation. His outer garments laid aside for the time being, point to His setting aside the outward expression of His preincarnate glory while He expressed Himself as a bondsman. The fact that He was still their Master and Lord while kneeling on the floor doing the work of... a slave, speaks of the fact that our Lord's assumption of humanity did not mean that He relinquished His deity. He was just as much God while on earth... as He was before He came and He is now. His act of taking His outer garments again, tells of the resumption of the expression of His glory after the resurrection."³

³Wuest, *Word Studies In The Greek New Testament*, Volume 2, p. 68.

Conclusion

Like-minded... low-minded... look-minded...

You can make up your mind to serve others. Jesus did; and He lives in you by His Spirit to enable you to do what He did.