

A Small Group Study and Discussion in the Book of Philippians

02 - THE HUMBLER, THE HOLY SERVANT

PHILIPPIANS, CHAPTER 2

I. LOWLINESS OF MIND

(Philippians 2:1-4 NKJV) “Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, {2} fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. {3} Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. {4} Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

At the end Chapter 1, the Apostle Paul encouraged the Philippians. Because they had been granted the experience of suffering for Jesus, they were to *“stand fast in one spirit and with one mind, striving together for the faith in the Gospel”* (1:27). He continues his thoughts in Chapter 2, writing of consolation, comfort, and their shared Christian experience. He gives them instructions based on the list of “ifs” he has just put forth (2:1). Because of what they have experience, unselfishness and consideration for others are to be the guideposts and boundaries of their lives. This principle stands for us today. *“Lowliness of mind”* is synonymous with humility. Humility allows us to see our brothers and sisters in Christ just as Paul did in his time. Accordingly, we esteem them and watch for them, even as we do so for ourselves.

II. THE FORM OF A SERVANT

(Philippians 2:5-8 NKJV) “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [6.] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7.] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. [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.”

A. Obedience – It was not above Christ to become obedient!

Christ was obedience to the will of the Father. His obedience in suffering knew no limits. He was the Suffering Servant who brought us salvation. He paid a debt He did not owe so we would no longer owe a debt we could not pay. His servanthood was the supreme act of love and holiness. If we put all this together, we get a picture of love that should encourage us to be like Him as much as we can.

 **What could you be doing in obedience to God that you have resisted?**

B. Jesus modeled the role of a Bondservant!


(John 13:3-5 NKJV) “Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, [4.] rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. [5.] After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.”

...and indicated that His disciples should also be servants. 

(John 13:12-16 NKJV) “So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? [13.] You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. [14.] If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15.] For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. [16.] Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.”

The Apostle Paul referred to himself as a slave or servant of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Philippians 1:1), as did James (James 1:1), Peter (2 Peter 1:1), and Jude. In our society today, everything goes against the idea of serving others. Even in church, we can easily fall into the trap of making Jesus into a Santa Clause.

We hear much more about our inheritance as children of God than we do about our responsibilities as servants of God.

 **Do you look at your Christianity as service to Christ? What is there that you could you do this week to serve, that you would not normally do?**

(Suggested end of your First Session of Chapter 2)

III. THE STRENGTH OF THE LORD

A. Strength for All Things

(Philippians 2:9-11 NKJV) “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, [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, [11.] and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

(Isaiah 45:23-24 NKJV) “ I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, And shall not return, That to Me every knee shall bow, Every tongue shall take an oath. [24.] He shall say, 'Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength...’”

Jesus is highly exalted, above everything and everybody. This is reassuring to us. Sometimes, when things are difficult, we have to remind ourselves who it is we serve and what position He holds. He is Lord above all. In Christ, we have strength, His strength. Even when we do not feel the strength, we can gather it from Him and put it to work for us.

(Philippians 4:13 NKJV) “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

✂ **What have you considered a weakness in your life that you now know you can do in His strength?**

B. Work it out!

(Philippians 2:12, 13 NKJV) “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; [13.] for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”

God will turn our weakness into His strength and set it to work within us. Then, God asks us to do our part – to work out (in His strength) the gift He has given us.

✂ **What does it mean to “work out our salvation?”**

✂ **What gets it going, turns it on and starts it flowing?**

Philippians 2:12 Living Bible Paraphrase) “obeying God with deep reverence, shrinking back from all that might displease him. And ...charging forward with all that pleases Him.”

God’s strength becomes real in you when you bow the knee and give Him Lordship over everything. Giving up trying to succeed on our own strength is not easy, but is always worth the effort. Our strength can never replace His. As strong as it may seem, our strength is only a measure of human weakness.

Our strength, without His strength, is only a measure of weakness.

✂ **What is it that could release the strength of God in you that is contained because you have not given Lordship of it to Christ?**

Study the following Scriptures as you have time: *Romans 7:15-25 - Romans 8:1-6*. Meditate on these twice every day - once in the morning and once in the evening. Pick out the verses that speak to you and write down what they are saying. You may learn some things about how to “work out your salvation” and how to “bow the knee.” Be prepared to share what has touched your heart in the next session.

(Suggested end of your Second Session)

- 🗨️ **Is there anything you would like to share regarding what you have discovered about how to “work out your salvation” and how to “bow the knee?”**

IV. THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST, THE HOLY SERVANT

(Philippians 2:14-16 NKJV) “Do all things without complaining and disputing, [15.] that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, [16.] holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.”

KJV... “Do all things without murmurings and disputings;”

NIV... “without complaining or arguing”

A. Submit to His Leading

Philippians, Chapter 2 illustrates Jesus as the Humbled Christ, the Holy Servant... as our example. Paul encourages us to be like Him, to refuse to permit murmuring, grumbling, complaining and arguing in our lives. We are to try to give no place to these things! Paul knew that we would not always succeed, but he also knew that we could grow more and more like Christ, and submit more and more to His leading. Consequently, he encourages us to refuse these “*crooked and perverse*” attitudes at every occasion. We are always to try to reject murmuring, disputing and arguing. These things do not please God and can only hurt us.

B. Your Personal Rights (The Sacrifice of Self)

- 🗨️ **Which do you consider most important? Check one of the two boxes!**

1. Expressing your preference, position, opinion and personal rights

2. Expressing your love at the expense of personal position, etc.

Why?

- 🗨️ **What do you lose when you insist on the right to express yourself?**

(Acts 15:36-40 NKJV) “Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing.” {37} Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. {38} But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. {39} Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; {40} but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.”

At times even Paul chose the expression of his preference, position, opinion or rights over the expression of love. Paul rejected John Mark and, even though he believed he was right (and very well may have been!). It caused a permanent split with Barnabas - a permanent loss of fellowship with a friend.

- Expression of your preference, position, opinion or rights may not be sin, but doing so without love may cost you a relationship. Paul may have written Philippians 2:14-16 with this experience in mind.
- If you choose to express your love by giving up your rights, it may cost you a chance to state your preference, position or opinion, but will gain you a relationship. According to the earlier verses of Philippians 2, Jesus did this when He humbled Himself.

🔗 **What is the proper way to express your position, preference, opinion or rights without losing a personal relationship in the process?**

We will begin the next session endeavoring to answer to this question. However, it is important to know that sometimes you cannot express your position or rights without losing something in the relationship, or the relationship itself. Most of the time, you can protect the relationship if you are aware of a couple basic principles of Christian communication. Study [Ephesians 4:1-15](#). Write down anything that helps you answer this last question.

(Suggested end of your Third Session)

🔗 **What have you discovered regarding from Ephesians 4:1-15 about expressing your position, preference, opinion or rights without losing a personal relationship in the process?**

(Ephesians 4:15 NKJV) "but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ;"

C. The Power of Truth, Spoken in Love

Speak only words flavored with "agape" love. These are "Life words."

Ephesians 4:15a in its original Greek: "*aletheuo aletheuo agape*"

"agape" may be defined as: Your active, living and deliberate effort to deliver the grace of God to somebody... at whatever the cost may be to you.

The greater love Jesus talked about: Your deliberate expression of selflessness toward others, as you willingly and deliberately become a vessel that God chooses and uses to pour out His grace.

"aletheuo" is pronounced al-ayth-yoo'-o;

"agape" is pronounced ag-ah'-pay

🔗 **What do you think the word "grace" means?**

If you flavor every one of your words with love, others must choose whether to respond to your agape love... or to reject it.

- If everyone chooses to disagree, but agape love is maintained in the discussion, the relationship stays intact.
- Love always maintains a gentle spirit throughout the discussion. Do not allow feelings to harden you. Hearts are so easily hardened and so seldom softened.

(Philippians 4:5 NKJV) “Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.”

(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a NKJV) “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; [5.] does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; [6.] does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; [7.] bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. [8.] Love never fails...”

Result of Ephesians 4:15: Softened Hearts and Relationships that Edify!

Always have an attitude that places love into your words, even in those times when you have to disagree. An attitude of love will keep you pure before God and man. You will increase in the things of God. You will be what Jesus wants you to be. Your light will shine so brightly that others will see how you work out your salvation and glorify your Father in heaven.

Study of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

Find the seven positive statements in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. They describe a gentle, Now find the eight negative statements (include the word “not”). They describe what we need to constantly avoid in our relationships if they are to be successful... and if our hearts are to remain soft. Meditate on these for next session.

(Suggested end of your Fourth Session)

V. POURED OUT AS A DRINK OFFERING

Let's begin with 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Find the seven positive statements in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. They describe a gentle, healing and relationship-building love. Now find the eight negative statements (include the word “not”). They describe what we need constantly to avoid if our relationships are to be successful... and if our hearts are to remain soft.

(Philippians 2:17-18 NKJV) “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. [18.] For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

 **What do you think Paul means when he describes himself as a “drink offering?” How was a drink offering given to God?**

Paraphrase – Verse 17: Yes, and if, at my coming trial, they sentence me to die, then my blood will be spilled as an offering to God, poured out in the spirit over your faithful sacrifice and service to the Lord.

A. Timothy: a Reputation of Proven, Caring character

*(Philippians 2:19-24 NKJV) “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. [20.] For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. [21.] For all seek their own, **not** the things which are of Christ Jesus. [22.] But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel. [23] Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. [24.] But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.”*

Paul says Timothy *“sincerely cared.”* This word *“sincerely”* means genuinely or really. It was not an act, or pretense. Timothy’s heart was full of concern for people. He felt a responsibility to be Christ-like and serve. God puts us together is to care for each other.

How much do you care about other people? Grade yourself on a scale of 1-5.

1 = “I do not care much.”

5 = “I care so much I will always put others first.”

Check one: 1 1½ 2 2½ 3 3½ 4 4½ 5

Now grade yourself on whether you are self-centered (always looking to others to give to you) or other-centered (serving others).

1 = “I am strongly focused on getting my needs met.”

5 = “I care so much I will always try to meet the needs of others, even if it costs me.”

Check one: 1 1½ 2 2½ 3 3½ 4 4½ 5

 **What more could you do to care for others? (Meditate on this.)**

 **What more could we do to care for each other?**

Paul speaks of Timothy's *“proven character.”* Timothy's character was to be judged by how he served as part of the team and by his willingness to behave as a son (He was to be submitted to being disciplined by a leader. He was to be a learner under submission and discipline. Notice his relationship with Paul was a loving father-son covenant relationship, not a master-servant or boss-hireling relationship.

B. The Ways of a Disciple

(James 1:19-25 ICB) “My dear brothers, always be willing to listen and slow to speak. Do not become angry easily. {20} Anger will not help you live a good life as God wants. {21} So put out of your life every evil thing and every kind of

wrong you do. Don't be proud but accept God's teaching that is planted in your hearts. This teaching can save your souls. {22} Do what God's teaching says; do not just listen and do nothing. When you only sit and listen, you are fooling yourselves. {23} A person who hears God's teaching and does nothing is like a man looking in a mirror. {24} He sees his face, then goes away and quickly forgets what he looked like. {25} But the truly happy person is the one who carefully studies God's perfect law that makes people free. He continues to study it. He listens to God's teaching and does not forget what he heard. Then he obeys what God's teaching says. When he does this, it makes him happy."

The Ways of a Disciple

1. Disciples should always be willing to listen and learn - as a matter of willing sacrifice.
2. Disciples should always be humble and make a habit of accepting God's teachings into their hearts.
3. Disciples should guard what God's teaching has planted in their hearts. They should allow those things to speak to them and then, obey without regard to personal cost or inconvenience. They should do what the Word requires.

Epaphroditus and Timothy

(Philippians 2:25-30 NKJV) "Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; [26.] since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. [27.] For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. [28.] Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. [29.] Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; [30.] because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me."

4. Disciples should be quick to see a fellow worker's need and move to meet it.
5. Disciples are faithful to the one who poured into them.

In writing to the Philippian church (above), Paul describes Epaphroditus as, "*brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier.*" Timothy and Epaphroditus enjoyed the brotherhood of work and warfare. They teamed up to serve Paul in the fight of faith. Paul says we are to hold such people in esteem or high regard - to respect them. They were humble servants, willing to give their lives. They did not back down from serving, working or fighting a good spiritual fight, whenever necessary. They were faithful to another man without looking for personal recognition, attention or gain. There was no covetousness or jealousy in them.

- ✎ **Have you served another person's need but had wrong feelings while doing so? Was it OK to have those feelings as long as you were acting according to the need... or, was your deed unacceptable to God because you had the wrong feelings?**
- ✎ **Have you felt resentment because people did not appreciate or recognize the unselfish deeds of service you had performed?**
- ✎ **Are your feelings the controller and indicator of your character?**

It is important to remind ourselves that people of character are people who find their rewards in God and love to see His blessings fall on others.

(Romans 8:5-8 NKJV) "For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. {7} Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. {8} So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

- ✎ **How does Romans 8:5 relate to Philippians, Chapter 2?**

(This is the end of 02 - The Humbled, Holy Servant. Please go on to Chapter 3.)