



PHILIPPIANS 2

EVERYTHING WITHOUT GRUMBLING

In this chapter Paul calls the church in Philippi (the first Christian church in Europe) to unity and humility, looking to Christ's life as the ultimate example. He reminds them to "do everything without grumbling" in order to shine "like stars in the sky" in a warped and crooked generation. -JT

1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, **2** then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. **3** Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, **4** not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; **7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

14 Do everything without grumbling or arguing, **15** so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky **16** as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. **17** But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. **18** So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. **20** I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. **21** For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. **22** But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his

father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. **23** I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. **24** And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. **26** For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. **28** Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. **29** So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, **30** because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

STUDY NOTES

BlueLetterBible.org Commentary

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition: This is the first step to this kind of unity. In the flesh, we are often motivated by **selfish ambition** or **conceit**. Much of what we do is not done out of love for others, but out of our own desire for “advancement” or “promotion” (**selfish ambition**). Paul found it important to say **selfish ambition**. Not all ambition is **selfish** ambition, and there is a good **ambition** to glorify God and serve Him with everything we have.

Let nothing be done through ... conceit: This is the second step to this kind of unity. **Conceit** is thinking too highly of one's self, of having an excessive self-interest and self-preoccupation. It could be more literally translated “empty glory.” A dictionary definition of **conceit** is “An excessively favorable opinion of one's own

ability, importance, wit," and so forth. When we do things feeling we are so important, or so able, or so talented, we are out of God's will. We are working against the unity Paul is pleading with them to have.

In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself: This third step to the kind of unity described in Philippians 2:2 is completely contradictory to the attitude of the world, because **lowliness of mind** is about the least attractive thing to the thinking of this world.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others: Here the thought is completed. As we put away our selfish ambitions, our conceit, and our tendencies to be high-minded and self-absorbed, we will naturally have a greater concern for the interests and needs of others. Paul doesn't tell us that it is wrong to look out for our own interests, but that we should not *only* look out for our own interests.

Many regard **Philippians 2:5-11** as a hymn of the early church that Paul incorporated into his letter. Some commentators go so far as to suggest stanza and verse arrangements for the "hymn." This is possible, but not a necessary conclusion; Paul was capable of such inspired, poetic writing himself (example: 1 Corinthians 13). For reasons which we will examine later, this passage is often known as the kenosis passage.

In the form of God: This describes Jesus' pre-incarnate existence. We must remind ourselves that Jesus did not begin His existence in the manger at Bethlehem, but is eternal God.

He humbled Himself and became obedient: Jesus humbled Himself when He became obedient. This was something that Jesus could only experience by coming down from the throne of heaven and becoming a man. When God sits enthroned in heaven's glory, there is no one He obeys. Jesus had to leave heaven's

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glory and be **found in appearance as a man** in order to become **obedient**.

To the point of death, even the death of the cross: This states the extent of Jesus' humility and obedience. Robertson called the death of the cross "The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross."

"The lower he stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and when he reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet." (Spurgeon)

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow: Not only is Jesus exalted by the Father, but the whole world is brought into submission to the Son. "Paul does not imply by this a universal salvation, but means that every personal being will ultimately confess Christ's lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair." (Kent)

Jesus Christ is Lord: We should not miss the significance that at a later time in the Roman Empire, all residents of the Empire were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Emperor, declaring that Caesar is Lord, and burning a pinch of incense to an image of the emperor. Though the Roman state saw this only as a display of political allegiance, Christians rightly interpreted it as idolatry - and refused to participate, often paying with their lives.

Everything without grumbling: Because Paul specifically used terms that were used to describe Israel's complaining towards God during the Exodus, it is probably best to see the **grumbling** as including the Philippians' attitude towards God.

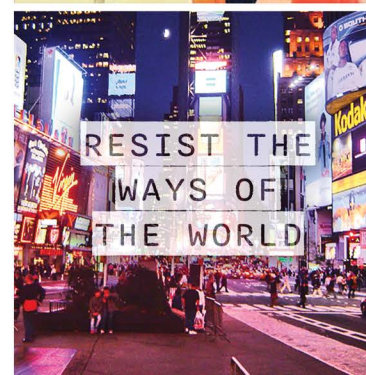
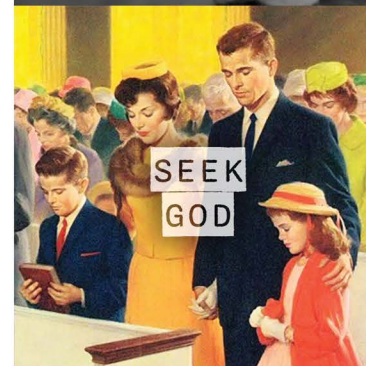
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