

Philippians 1.27-2.11

Context:

Paul has been speaking about his imprisonment:

- Its 'advantages' - to Imperial Guard; emboldening others to preach
 - Gospel preached – sincerely or insincerely, no matter
- ⇒ Joy in present

But joy in future too:

- His trial will glorify Christ – whether by acquittal or martyrdom
- to live is Christ, to die is gain

Firm conviction that will return to Philippi – “for their progress and joy in the faith”.

1st EXHORTATION: One concern uppermost (27-30):

“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ”

Lit. Gk “only behave as citizens worthy of...”

Philippi – Roman colony (42BC Octavian), pensioned Roman soldiers = proud Roman citizens.

BUT Christians = citizens of God’s kingdom (3.20 “our citizenship is in heaven”)

⇒ Paul saying “Live lives worthy of citizens of Christ’s kingdom”

Meaning: UNITED

A. In their own actions:

- ⇒ Standing firm in one spirit (Spirit)
- ⇒ With one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel (Word)
- ⇒ Not frightened in anything by your opponents

Battlefield imagery. *Sword and Scimitar*: Muslim’s tactic at Battle of Tours (732) = cavalry charges. Aim: to create a breach/cause panic. Great strength of Franks = tight battle formation – no break in ranks – pp. 81-83

B. By their fate as Christians.

United with Christ and Paul in suffering (for the Gospel) – as much a blessing as faith itself.

Alec Motyer: “the life worthy of the Gospel is like a **jewel in a double setting**:

- Encased in the **opposition** of a hostile world, it must stand firm
- Set in the **unity** of the church, which enables that to happen

Steadfastness is grounded in unity:

- **in God (confession and worship** – Phil 2.10-11) and
- **with one another.**

Unity in body and suffering = sign of salvation & enemies’ destruction.

2nd exhortation: “Complete my joy by being of the same mind...” (2.1-4)

Motyer:

What a man the apostle was! If we were in prison, chained, guarded, unjustly accused, vilified by those who ought to be our friends (vv. 15-17), with no comforts and no guaranteed future, what would our joy be? Paul's was first spiritual, secondly occupied with the welfare of others, thirdly engrossed in the topic of unity. 'I will need no further happiness,' he says, 'if only I can hear that you are a united church.'

Rhetorical appeal:

- If any encouragement in Christ
- Any comfort from love
- Any participation in the Spirit
- Any affection and sympathy (feelings -> actions)

Moises Silva: These clauses are deliberately compressed and vague, since the appeal is primarily emotional... an impassioned pleading.”

Complete my joy

- Being of the same mind (same attitude: to glorify Christ and care for one another)
- Having the same love (sacrificial – Jn 3.16; Eph 5.25)
- Being in full accord and of one mind

Opposite:

- Rivalry
- Conceit

Key: “In humility count others more significant (rather than ‘better’) than yourselves... looking not only to own interests but to the interests of others”

Moises Silva: The true obstacle to unity is not the presence of legitimate differences of opinion but self-centredness.

3rd exhortation: “Have this mind among yourselves which is in Christ Jesus.”

Describes that mind:

1. Though in the form of God (i.e. equal with God) did not count equality with God as something to be grasped.

Cf. Adam – in the image of God, but not equal with God, but grasped for divinity, “to be like God, knowing good and evil”

2. Made himself nothing i.e. emptied himself (of his glory/“all but love”)
3. Taking the form of a servant/slave.

Fee: a person without advantages, with no rights or privileges, but in servanthood to all.

Antithesis of worldly values, esp. Rome, where humility not a virtue but a folly.

Alexander the Great (356-323), Caesar Augustus (63BC-114AD), strived to be like gods, and indeed were recognised/worshipped as such.

Aspired to unite peoples - not by being of one mind, but by military and political might. This = world's ideal of heroic leadership.

⇒ Christ's model of self-emptying/abasement = folly, and offensive (that God should do this.)

4. But worse still = extent of humbling himself: "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

How could God die? Wesley: "'tis mystery all! The immortal dies!"

Cicero (106-43BC): To bind a Roman citizen is a crime; to flog him is an abomination; to slay him is almost an act of murder; to crucify him is – what? There is no fitting word that can possibly describe so horrible a deed." Cf. Heb 12.2 "Who endured the cross, scorning its shame".

Remaining 3 verses describe the Father's response to the Son's obedience:

1. Exalted him

2. Bestowed on him the name that is above every name (Lord) – see **Isa 45.18-25** – only God alone bears that name

So that every knee should bow... every tongue confess...

(worship and confession) – Christ self-emptying = vindicated.

Point: only the true God can do this.

NB. Exaltation is NOT a logical consequence of humiliation/humbling self, but a deliberate act on God's part. Cf. Matt. 23.12 "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

We won't be exalted to the level Christ is, but "When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory" (Col 3.4); and, we are heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ, "Provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him." (Rom 8.17).

Paul exhorting Philippians though to have the mind of Christ Jesus – which is actually theirs once in Christ Jesus.

⇒ Selfless

⇒ Putting God and others before self

Paul has just modelled this (vv. 18, 23-24)

Is only way citizens of Kingdom can live in way worthy of the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

“Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.” 1 John 2.6

Summary

Situation in Philippi calls for steadfastness

Steadfastness demands unity

Unity demands humility

Jesus = the definition of humility, and his Spirit the source of humility (as renews our hearts and minds)

Suggested Discussion Questions

1. What do you think Paul meant by “with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”?
2. In what practical ways might being a citizen of heaven put you in conflict with being a citizen of NZ?
3. If “being of the same mind” doesn’t mean agreeing about absolutely everything, what does it mean?
4. How what ways might rivalry and vain conceit manifest themselves in the church and cause division?
5. In practical terms, what does it mean to “count others more significant than yourself”?
6. What do you (personally) find to be the biggest challenges to being humble?