

3. Philippians 2:1-30

During his salutation and prayers in chapter one, Paul had commended the Philippians on the fellowship (partnership) that they had with him in providing support for his living and preaching. In Phil 1:5, he wrote: “5 . . . because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now. In Phil 1:7, he repeated the theme: “. . . all of you **share** in God's grace with me.” In Phil 4:15, Paul also used the word share—older version read fellowship, and in chapter 2, he will use **fellowship**:

Therefore, the theme of fellowship will continue in chapter 2, extending it to include fellowship with the Spirit of God. As we continue through the book, the theme of sharing, fellowship, partnership, and participation—useful synonyms for the some concept—will reoccur.

Paul writes some of the most poetic verses in the Bible in chapter 2, departing from his more common didactic style. The beauty of what follows cannot be denied, yet at the same time the language offers in the nature incite into and understanding of the nature of Jesus Christ.

United with Christ

Phil 2:1-4

2 If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with 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 purpose. 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. 4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Perhaps, the most interesting aspect of this passage, is Paul departure from his usual logic based on the Greek models of logic to this *if (not) then* form of reasoning, not unlike out modern bi-polar logic, used in computers and other artificial forms of intelligence:

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ,

If any comfort from his love,

If any fellowship with the Spirit,

If any tenderness and compassion,

Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.

The oneness of the objectives in this passage, unlocks the secret of unity in the church among fellow Christians: like-minded, the same love, one spirit, and one purpose.

Fellowship with the Spirit extends our sharing upward toward God, including intercourse with the Spirit that is spiritual and also social. The social nature of fellowship is inherent in the word used. Rom 8:13-17:

13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a

slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

This is exactly the harmony that Christ prayed for in John 17:20-23:

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The Attitude of Christ

Phil 2:5-7

5 *Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:*

6 *Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.*

To understand the depth of Christ's sorrow and human death, one must first consider the height from which he came. That he was in very nature, God, defines that height. Three passages explain this divine nature that was his. John 1:1-2 stated plainly the Word was God:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning.

Heb 1:3 states that the Son is the exact representation of God's being:

3 The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

Col 1:15-18 tells us that his nature is unlimited, infinite, and without restraint in heaven and on earth:

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. 16 For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. 17 He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Finally Rev 1:12-16 offers a figurative glimpse of his glory, beauty, and might.

12 I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, 13 and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. 14 His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. 16 In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

Phil 2:8

8 *And being found in appearance as a man,*

*he humbled himself
and became obedient to death –
even death on a cross!*

From the sublime height of all that heaven can offer, he appeared as a man—a humble man and an obedient man. His obedience include our worst fear, death! A death of pain, desertion, and suffering left him crying out in Matt 27:46

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"-which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Phil 2:9-11

*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 confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Once again the scriptures exalt and glorify Jesus to the highest place, above name that can be named. Premillennialists and latter day revelators take notice. The day of glory and the victory in Jesus passed at the cross and the resurrection. When he comes, **every knee** will bow and **every tongue** will confess him.

Work out Your Salvation with Fear and Trembling

Phil 2:12-13

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 according to his good purpose.

The Christian walk begins with obedience to the teaching of Jesus. Paul wrote in Rom 6:17-18 of the beginning:

17 But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. 18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.

Jesus told of the in Rev 2:10: "Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life."

To work out our salvation requires faithful obedience for our entire lives. God works in us so that we must will and act according to his good purpose. Paul wrote also in Eph 2:10:

10 For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Shine like the Stars of Heaven

Phil 2: 14-18

14 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe 16 as you hold out the word of life – in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did

not run or labor for nothing. 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.

A church of one mind will not complain and argue; rather they are to be blameless and pure, without fault. Paul describes the world as crooked and depraved, a description that he describes in detail in Rom 1:28-31

28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a **depraved** mind, to do what ought not to be done. 29 They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; 31 they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

In contrast, Paul describes Christians with a beautiful metaphor: "You shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life."

Paul returns to their mutual participation; for by their gift from sacrifice and service, they enable Paul to be, figuratively, a drink offering, poured out through his hardships as he preached the gospel. Therefore, he is able to rejoice in them; and they, in him.

Paul to Send Timothy and Epaphroditus

Phil 3:19-24

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 takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for his 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.

The chapter closes on a personal note about his co-workers, Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul's intent is to send Timothy, desiring to hear back. Paul testifies that Timothy, as a son with his father, has served him in the work of the gospel. Paul also would like to visit the church soon.

Phil 2:25-30

25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow 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 Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, 30 because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.

Epaphroditus was their messengers, whom they sent to see after Paul's needs and whom Paul now wants to return. Apparently, he was homesick and distressed, for he was ill and almost died. In fact, "he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to help Paul.