

Coronavirus Online Bible Study

Week Four- Christlike- Philippians 2

Introduction:

Obstacles get in our way, even when we're trying to do the right thing! That was certainly true of the apostle Paul. As he oversaw fruitful ministry all over Europe, he suddenly found himself sidelined from pastoral ministry, imprisoned for preaching the Gospel. Yet as we saw last week, Paul's troubles didn't get him down. In fact, we sense in Paul a joy and passion for the church in Philippi that expressed itself through prayer, thanksgiving, and appreciation for the ministry the church had accomplished alongside Paul. Today, we will look at chapter 2, where Paul offers some of the most challenging practical teaching anywhere in the New Testament.

Read Philippians 2:1-4. If you remember the old TV show "Schoolhouse Rock", you might remember the "Conjunction Junction" song. Paul uses a lot of conjunctions in this passage! One of the most prevalent is the word "if", used four times in verse 1. Why do you think Paul begins this passage by listing these "ifs"? Do you think he assumes whether or not the statements are true? What is Paul's purpose here?

Notice what follows the conjunction "then" in verse 2. Do you see a pattern between the clauses in verse 1 and verse 2?

We can use a table to compare these clauses.

If...(verse 1)	Then make my joy complete by...(verse 2)
You have any encouragement from being united with Christ...	Being likeminded
Any comfort from his love...	Having the same love
Any fellowship with the Spirit...	Being one in spirit
Any tenderness and compassion [from the Spirit]...	Being one in purpose

Based on what we see, what should be our motivation for behaving as Paul instructs us in verse 2? How might this help us when people are difficult to get along with?

Why are verses 3-4 so difficult to live up to? How do we train ourselves to behave this way? How does God help us in this?

Read Philippians 2:5-11. What kind of attitude does Paul want us to display according to this passage? How did Christ display this attitude?

Thank God for grace! If we were saved by our good actions, how would verse 5 serve as our death sentence? How does God's grace soften the blow?

Verse 6- If Christ is God, why didn't He "grasp" equality with God?

The Greek word "harpagmos" is what is used for the word "grasp". It means "to seize", as in a robbery, and is used only here in the New Testament. How does that illuminate the verse? What English word does "harpagmos" sound like? (Clue: Moby Dick)

What other examples from Christ's life can you think of where he "took the very nature of a servant"?

What does it mean to humble yourself as Christ did? How does Paul's description in verses 7-8 relate to verse 3?

What was Christ's reward for His obedience according to verses 9-11? What does this teach us about those who reject Christ in this world?

Read Philippians 2:12-13. What does it mean to "work out your salvation"? Does this imply we are saved by our actions? If not, why not?

According to verse 13, do our good actions begin with us or with God? How does Ephesians 2:10 help clarify this?

Read Philippians 2:14-18. What are some examples of the "works" of our salvation?

If we are stars, why should we not complain about the darkness around us? Why is Paul's analogy of stars in the night sky a powerful one?

What is Paul referring to in verse 17?

Read Philippians 2:19-30. What do you think it would have been like to work with Paul? What kind of teacher do you think he was?

What sticks out to you in this passage?

In verses 25-30, Paul describes Epaphroditus, with whom the Philippians sent a gift of money to help Paul in his ministry. Epaphroditus, we presume, also worked alongside Paul for awhile. Apparently this fellow servant became seriously ill while with Paul. Paul sent Epaphroditus back to the Philippians along with this letter.

Closing Thoughts:

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.” Talk about a high mark! If not for God’s grace, we would be in a lot of trouble if God actually expected us to “perform” at this level. Thankfully, we aren’t held to perfection, and the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. But as Paul reminds us, we should strive to imitate Christ’s humility, putting others ahead of ourselves, serving rather than demanding to be served. In so doing we become more like Christ. As we embark on this mission, we will find that it is actually God doing the work in us, so that our character shines as a light in a dark world.

In closing, if you have not committed Philippians 2:6-11 to memory, I highly recommend you do so. I believe it is one of the most important passages relating to our Christian character and how we live in relationship to others. Remember that in his description of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet in John 13, he described this act as “showing them the full extent of his love.” And there may no better way to imitate Christ in this world than through displaying true, Christlike humility. How many of our conflicts would be solved if we all consistently practiced genuine humility?