

Philippians 2
The Mind of Christ

Descending and Ascending in Glory

Sentence 17 (2:1-2) Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfil my joy by being like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Paul is listing our resources in Christ. The experience of Jesus Christ is the experience of encouragement, consolation out of genuine love, deep fellowship in the Holy Spirit, genuine affection and merciful attitude. Paul's joy is completed by the unity of the saints with him in similar expressions of love, thought and agreement in the spirit.

Sentence 18 (2:3-4) Let nothing be done through rivalry or empty conceit but in humility esteeming one another above themselves, each person looking not to their own things but also the things of others.

The Christian fellowship should not be motivated by the rivalry of party or factional disputes and disagreements. Nor should they be driven by empty conceit or vain glory. These behaviours have no spirit substance or eternal content. The right Christian attitude is one of humility or lowliness which is about seeing (and granting) the advantage to the other person. (This really upsets the natural man and confronts our lust for survival.) We are to have a genuine concern for the situation of each other. We can have either a godly (God-honouring) or an ungodly (God-dishonouring) interest in each other's affairs.

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Sentence 19 (2:5-8) Let this thinking be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider being equal with God a thing to be hung onto (maintained at all costs) but emptied (poured out) Himself, taking the form of a slave, being found in the likeness of men; and having been found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

This is the great Descent from heaven which is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. Orthodox Christian doctrine maintains that Jesus was fully God. This is the pre-existent Christ; He is not a creature. But Jesus Christ chose to become a human being to fulfil the purposes of God. As the Son, Jesus separates Himself from the Father to fulfil the divine requirements for the redemption of the whole creation. (This requirement is the shedding of sacrificial blood. God provides His own sacrifice: Himself.) On the one hand this shows the power of evil to corrupt the creation and intention of God. On the other hand it shows the extent to which God will go to conquer sin (evil) and redeem His creation.

The Mind of Christ (which is to be our example) is revealed in this descent from heaven. This occurs in 9 steps:

1. Jesus Christ is in the form of God. This is the full deity of Jesus Christ. He is fully divine.
2. Jesus does not hang onto (grasp at) this equality with God. His ability to release His divinity shows His real capacity for it. He is naturally divine. Like His life, His divinity is something that He can lay down and take up again (Jn 10:18). Yet all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Jesus Christ bodily (Col 2:9). All that can be said/ understood about God can be said in Jesus Christ.
3. Jesus Christ empties Himself. The Greek word for 'empty' is 'kenos'. This is the kenotic theory of Christ's Incarnation. Jesus empties Himself of all signs of divinity and deity. Charles Wesley

These are the two forms (extremes, designs of being) that Jesus chooses. In either form He does and completes the will of the Father. Jesus places Himself under the authority of the Father. Jesus creates this experience for us to walk in. This is part of the expanded awareness of the Christian. It is part of the new existence of the New Creation that we are in, in Christ (2Cor 5:17). This is a new dimension of reality: the will of God.

Sentence 20 (2:9-11) Therefore God has highly exalted Him and given Him the name above every name that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Associated with the Descent of Christ is the Ascent of Christ. This sentence commences with 'therefore'. There is logical force to this argument. The ascent is the consequence of the descent. Humility is the path to glory. The glory of the Christian lies in the experience of the humility of Christ. This is to be our mindset. God provides the glory as a consequence of our submitting to His purposes in our life. This glorification also occurs in 9 steps:

1. God has highly exalted Christ. The source of our exaltation is God not the world. Jesus Christ has created the Way and the experience for us to walk in. Peter quotes Proverbs 3:34 which says that 'God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble' (1Pet 5:5; James 4:6). Christ does not exalt Himself. He trusts His life to His Father (1Pet 4:19) who exalts Him.
2. God gives Christ the name that is above every name. There is power in the name of Jesus. 'I lift up the name of Jesus because the name of Jesus lifted me' (song). In the name of Jesus we pray (Jn 14:13), perform miracles (Acts 3:6), baptise (Mtt 28:19), preach (Lk 24:47), become children of God (Jn 1:12), receive remission of sins (1Jn 2:12), obtain life (Jn 20:31) and salvation (Acts 4:12; 10:43).
3. At the name of Jesus every knee should bow (see hymn attached). This is the sign of divine authority. It is the basic posture of the believer and ultimately of all humanity. The glorified Christ will receive the worship of men which was denied Him in this present life and world system.
4. The true nature and position of Christ will be recognised by those in the heavenlies (good and evil alike).
5. Christ will be recognised and given glory by those on earth. This will be done by the spirit force of His name.
6. Christ will be glorified by those under the earth. Any conceivable realm left will give honour to Christ. Scripture refers to beings under the earth or in darkness: 1Sam 28:7-25, Eph 4:9-10, 2Pet 2:4, Jude 6,13.
7. Every tongue will confess. To confess is to glorify with our mouth and express in language the truths of Christ.
8. Jesus is Lord. This is the confession. This is the message. This is the fact. This is the assertion of the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ who fills all in all.
9. This is to the glory of God the Father. The lordship of Christ is part of and given by the Lordship of God. Whatever Jesus did glorified the Father. Glorifying God is the ultimate goal of the creation and of our Christian lives.

Sentence 21 (2:12-13) 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 for God is the one working in you both to will and to work for (His) good pleasure.

Armed with this humble attitude of mind (revealed in Christ) we are to work out our own salvation. There is a difference between salvation and redemption. Redemption is complete and final, having been obtained by Jesus Christ at Calvary. There is nothing that we can add or earn by our efforts. Salvation is the process whereby the effects of redemption are realised in our lives. We cooperate with the redemptive processes for our salvation. This does require our effort. Once we are in that redemption place in our spirit, our soul and body need to express what redemption is in our lives, in our choices, thoughts, emotions and our circumstances. We set up redemptive goals to which we apply all our abilities in proper fear and trembling before God. As we do this we discover that, in fact, God is at work in us: our initiative becomes God's working. God uses our willing and working for results that are well-pleasing to Him and to us.

Sentence 22 (2:14-16) Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may be blameless and sincere (artless), children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life so that, in the Day of Christ, a boast of mine may be that I did not run or labour in vain.

The nature of the Christian walk is to not be stained or polluted by the world. The Christian is to be sincere, artless, blameless and not giving offence. Therefore the Christian is a light showing what is good and evil.

Sentence 23 (2:17) But if I am poured out (as a drink offering [libation]) on the sacrifice and priestly service of your faith, I rejoice and I rejoice with you all.

A libation is a drink offering poured out on the sacrifice. Paul sees himself as being poured out on the sacrifice of their faith.

Sentence 24 (2:18) For the same reason you also rejoice and rejoice with me.

As Paul rejoices in them, they are to rejoice in him.

Sentence 25 (2:19) But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly so that I also may be encouraged when I know your affairs.

Timothy is the main line of communication.

Sentence 26 (2:20) For I have no one likeminded who will genuinely be concerned for your state.

Timothy has the mind of Paul in caring for the flock.

Sentence 27 (2:21) For all seek the things of themselves and not the things of Jesus Christ.

How many of us are really ready for ministry, not being primarily preoccupied with our selves?

Sentence 28 (2:22) But you know his proven character, that he served with me in the gospel as a son with a father.

Timothy has proven his character in his gospel service with Paul.

Sentence 29 (2:23) Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me.

Timothy is useful to both Paul and the Philippian.

Sentence 30 (2:24) But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

This is Paul's expectation for his own release.

Sentence 31 (2:25-26) Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, your messenger and minister to my need, since he was longing for you all and distressed because you had heard that he was ill.

This is a glimpse into the dynamics of the ministry group. Paul has helpers and there are ups and downs in various needs.

Sentence 32 (2:27) For indeed he was sick coming near death; but God had mercy on him and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Life and ministry are precarious. But God intervened which avoided a deeper grief.

Sentence 33 (2:28) Therefore I sent him the more eagerly that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less sorrowful.

There seems to be much bonding in the company of believers. This is because they are under the covering and the anointing of Paul's ministry. The authority of Paul's ministry creates a spirit space under which others function.

Sentence 34 (2:29-30) Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in esteem, because he came close to death for the work of Christ that he may fill up whatever was lacking in your ministry to me.

The service or ministry mentioned in verses 17, 25 and 30 use the word 'leitourgia' (from which we get the word 'liturgy') which implies the fulfilling of a priestly function in service. The usual NT word for ministry is 'diakonos'. So Paul's team are not only ministering to each other in the usual Christian sense, they are serving one another in a priestly sense. This is tapping into the authority of the priestly function as originally set out in the tabernacle worship and service. There is a level in which they serve each other and the church that is part of the spirit kingdom. People are held in esteem because of their spirit authority and the spirit function they perform.

AHB 170 **At the name of Jesus**

At the name of Jesus
every knee shall bow,
every tongue confess Him
King of Glory now:
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call Him Lord
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

Humbled for a season
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto to whom He came,
faithfully He bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death He passed.

Name Him, brothers, name Him
with love strong as death,
but with awe and wonder
and with bated breath:
He is God the Saviour,
He is Christ the Lord,
ever to be worshipped,
trusted and adored.

In your hearts enthrone Him,
there let Him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;

crown Him as your Captain
in temptation's hour,
let His will enfold you
in its light and power.

Brothers, this Lord Jesus
shall return again
with His Father's glory,
with His angel train:
for all wreaths of empire
meet upon His brow,
and our hearts confess Him
King of Glory now.

Caroline Maria Noel (1817-77)