

Exegetical Notes – Philippians 2:1-4

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Philippians 2:1-4

Verses 1-2

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.

- The text opens with the word “therefore.” As we have learned, that word connects this passage with what precedes it. What follows is “because of” what was just said. Paul concludes the previous passage with these words, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.” So, we understand that the Philippians are suffering for Christ as is Paul himself. He was under arrest for preaching the Gospel (see Acts 16:16-29 - this happened in Philippi). Christians in every age will suffer because they believe in Jesus Christ. It is a given that Christians will suffer for their faith.
- But, even in their sufferings, Christians receive “encouragement from being united with Christ.” They know that they have been saved from eternal death by the sacrifice of Jesus on their behalf (see Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Galatians 2:20-24). This knowledge is deeply personal. Christ died for each individual Christian. No matter what happens to them they know that they are in Him.
- Even in their suffering, Christians take comfort from Christ’s love for them (see Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, Galatians 2:20).
- When they suffer, Christians take comfort from being united with Christ (see John 3:16, Romans 5:8 and 8:37-39, 1 John 3:16, 4:9-21).
- In times of suffering, Christians take comfort from being in Christ because they are in fellowship with God and each other through the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 13:14).

- In times of suffering, Christians are comforted by the tenderness and compassion that comes from other Christians (see Philippians 1:8, Colossians 3:12-14).
- Paul says, “IF you have.” The “IF” is not a question of the realities. It would be better read “SINCE.” Christians do experience this encouragement from being in Christ. It is certain. And SINCE they do experience these blessings, Paul asks them to “make my joy complete” by being united. He already takes joy in the Philippians (see 1:26). But his joy over them will be completed in their unity.
- Christians will suffer for their faith, but they are not alone in their suffering. They are encouraged by their faith in Jesus and their relationship to each other.

Verses 3-4

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.

- Selfish ambition and vain conceit are motivations for advancing oneself. Their goal is personal gain. Christians must never act in self-interest. Christians must act out of humility putting the interest of others above all else. The goal of a Christian is to honor Christ and to follow His example, not to serve their own interests.

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