

Exegetical Notes – Philippians 2:5-18

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Philippians 2:5-18

Verse 5

⁵ ***In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:***

- In verses 3 & 4 (see the exegetical notes for Philippians 2:1-4.), Paul told his readers that they must do nothing out of selfishness or vanity. He told them that they must consider other Christians better than they. He told them that they must look not only to their own interests but also to the interests of others. In this verse he lifts things higher. He says that Christians should have the same attitude about things as did Jesus Christ. In all their dealings with other Christians, and with non-Christians, they should be like Jesus.

Verses 6-11

⁶ ***Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own
advantage;***

⁷ ***rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.***

⁸ ***And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!***

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

- At this point, Paul's style of writing changes. He becomes lyrical and poetic. The following verses (5-11) are highly polished. Scholars believe that Paul is

quoting some source that was used in the early church. It may be a hymn, but it is more likely an ancient confession of the Church. It is a “this is what we believe” statement. It paints a picture of what the early Christians believed about Jesus.

- Jesus is “the very nature of God!” As Jesus Himself said, “he who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9; see also John 1:1-5). Jesus and the Father are one.
- But even though Jesus is equal with the Father, He did not consider His rank to be of any importance. He gave it up to become human. And, as a human He submitted to death. And because He was entirely obedient to the Father’s will, the Father exalted Him and gave Him the place of highest honor. Every knee will bow at the sound of His name in heaven and on earth and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.
- This does not bring glory to Jesus, but to the Father! All that Jesus did He did in obedience to the Father!

Verses 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 in order to fulfill his good purpose.

- “Therefore,” because Jesus has set the example, Christians must obey God as did Jesus.
- Christians are saved by the grace of God. However, they must “continue to work out their salvation.” The tense of the Greek words mean that salvation is both punctiliar and continuing. It happened and yet its meaning is continuing to unfold. In each situation a Christian faces, he/she must always be asking, “what would Jesus do” in this situation. And then, he/she must resolve to do as Jesus would do.
- This “working out of salvation” must be done in “fear and trembling,” because discerning the will of God is not always easy and doing it may require the Christian to put others and their needs above his/her own.
- “For” is the Greek word “because.” This is done in order that each Christian may live his/her life as did Jesus, to bring glory to God.

Verses 14-16

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.

- Paul specifically forbids “grumbling and arguing.” These actions are in contradiction to “rejoicing.” They are the behaviors that mark the people of the world who do NOT know Jesus. Christians should be like Him, NOT like the people of the world. Christians should be like Jesus.
- If Christians act like Jesus, they will be so different from the people of the world that they will shine out like the stars in the sky shine out at night. They will hold firmly to God’s word and live it.
- If the Philippians live like Christ in the world, it will bring Paul joy. He will “boast” that his ministry was not in vain.

Verses 17-18

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.

- Even if Paul’s life is taken from him, he will be glad and rejoice, because he will have followed the example of Christ who laid down his life that we might be saved. He will rejoice!
- And those who love him should rejoice with him, because he has followed Christ and put the interests of others above his own.

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