

Paul's Joyful Letter to the *Philippians*

CHAPTER 2: THE SUBMISSIVE MIND

Setting the Stage (2:1-4)

The (Ultimate) Example of Christ (2:5-11)

Jesus Thinks of Others, not Himself (2:5-6) Jesus Serves (2:7)

Jesus Sacrifices (2:8) Jesus Glorifies God the Father (and Jesus is Glorified) (2:9-11)

The Example of Paul (2:12-18)

A Purpose to Achieve (2:12, 14-15) and A Power to Receive (2:13)

2:12 Therefore, my (dear friends) ¹², 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, ... [¹²*agapetos*: beloved] Obedience is a sign (a powerful witness) of genuine belief ^{James 2:18, 2 John 1:6}. A Biblical example of working out salvation with “fear and trembling” involved the Corinthians when Paul sent Titus to them ^{2 Corinthians 7:15}.

Paul was always clear that salvation is not earned by works, but is a gift of grace ^{Romans 3:21-24, Ephesians 2:8-9}. The phrase “work out” refers to the believer's responsibility to actively pursue obedience within the process of sanctification ^{Romans 6:19, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Ephesians 4:1, Colossians 3:1-17, Hebrews 6:10-11, 2 Peter 1:5-11}.

2:13 ...for it is God who works in you to will ¹³ and (to act) ¹⁴ according to his good purpose. [¹³*thelo*: press on to action; ¹⁴*energeo*: to be energetic] God works in the lives of believers ^{Ezra 1:5, 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, Hebrews 13:20-21} according to His “pleasure” ^{Ephesians 1:5}, to complete His “plan” ^{Ephesians 1:11} through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit ^{John 16:5-15, 1 Corinthians 6:19-20}. Divine power works to overcome the world ^{John 16:33, 1 John 5:1-5}, the flesh ^{Romans 7:4-6} & Satan ^{Ephesians 6:10-18}. His work plus obedience produces His planned works ^{Ephesians 2:10}.

These two verses illustrate the clearly-defined, Biblical concepts of man's free will and God's sovereignty.

There is no doubt both of the principles exist, but how they coexist is beyond human understanding.

2:14-15 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 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...

“Grumbling” is a worldly, not a Godly, characteristic ^{1 Corinthians 10:10, 1 Peter 4:9}. Paul exhorted Christians to be much better ^{Matthew 5:14-16, 1 Peter 2:11-12} than the “corrupt” world ^{Deuteronomy 32:5, Luke 9:41, Acts 2:40}.

A Promise to Believe (2:16-18)

2:16 ...as you hold out the word ¹⁵ of life ¹⁶ – in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. [¹⁵*logos*: word as an expression of intelligence; ¹⁶*zoe*: life in the soul and spirit]

Paul pictured the life of a saint as one of effort ^{1 Corinthians 9:24-27} in service to God, but the LORD will always be there to carry believers through ^{1 Corinthians 1:8-9} to the prize awaiting them ^{Philippians 3:12-14, 1 Thessalonians 2:19}.

2:17-18 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. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. Paul was willing to expend all his energy (by being a “drink offering” ^{2 Corinthians 12:15, 2 Timothy 4:6-8}) to support the Philippian congregation in becoming a “sacrifice” to God ^{Romans 15:15-16}, resulting in great joy ^{Matthew 5:12, Philippians 4:4}.

The phrase “drink offering” refers to the end process in ancient animal sacrifices, when a glass of wine was poured over the burning animal and the wine would be vaporized. The wine steam symbolized the rising of the offering to the deity for whom the sacrifice was made. ^{Exodus 29:38-41, Jeremiah 7:18}

The Examples of Timothy & Epaphroditus (2:19-30)**Timothy had a Servant’s Mind (2:19-21)**

2:19-20 I hope ¹⁷ in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else (like him) ¹⁸, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.

[¹⁷*elpizo*: expect with desire; ¹⁸*isopsuchos*: equal soul or mind (lit); kindred-spirit/like-minded]

Paul met Timothy on his second missionary journey ^{Acts 16:1-3}. Paul was Timothy’s mentor and considered Timothy a son ^{1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2}, as well as a fellow laborer for the Lord ^{Acts 16:4-5}. Timothy earnestly loved and cared for people – the primary characteristics in a disciple of and an evangelist for Jesus.

2:21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Human condition: It’s all about Me!

Timothy had a Servant’s Training (2:22)

2:22 But you know that Timothy has proved ¹⁹ himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel ²⁰. [¹⁹*dokime*: evidence of genuineness; ²⁰*euaggelion*: good news] In his letters to Timothy, Paul emphasized the importance of Christians gaining experience and purity before they can be in a leadership position in the church ^{1 Timothy 3:1-10}. Timothy was trained by Paul, commissioned by the church ^{1 Timothy 4:14} and had proved his ability/willingness to serve the Lord ^{1 Corinthians 16:10, 1 Thessalonians 3:2}.

Timothy had a Servant’s Reward (2:23-24)

2:23-24 I hope ¹⁷, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. Paul wanted to continue to help the Philippian church ^{Philippians 1:8,25}, but if he was not able to return, he would send Timothy in his place ^{1 Corinthians 4:17}. In his personal instructions to Timothy, Paul hinted that Timothy might be his replacement in ministry after his death ^{2 Timothy 4:1-8}.

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Note: Paul described Jesus (God incarnate ^{John 1:1,14}), himself (Hebrew of Hebrews ^{Philippians 3:5}), Timothy (half Jew and half Gentile ^{Acts 16:1}) and now Epaphroditus (possibly a Gentile) as Godly examples.

Epaphroditus was a Balanced Christian (2:25)

2:25 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. Paul referred to Epaphroditus as a “brother”, a “fellow worker” ^{Romans 16:3,9,21, 2 Corinthians 8:23, Colossians 4:11} and a “fellow soldier” ^{Philemon 1:1-2}. Epaphroditus had delivered to Paul gifts of support from the church at Phillppi ^{Philippians 4:18}.

Epaphroditus was a Burdened (2:26-27, 30) and a Blessed Christian (2:28-30)

2:26-27 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. 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. Epaphroditus had the same longing for the Philippians as Paul had ^{Philippians 1:8} and distress as Jesus had at Gethsemane ^{Matthew 26:37}. In spite of a serious illness, he was a support and a joy to Paul.

2:28 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. Because of his great concern for the churches he started ^{1 Corinthians 11:28}, Paul wanted to send Epaphroditus to the Philippian church in order to encourage them ^{Ephesians 6:21-22}.

2:29 Welcome ²¹ him in the Lord with great joy, and honor men like him, ... [²¹*prosdechomai*: to receive (lit)] As a result of their sacrifice and service to Christ, Paul earnestly urged the Philippian church to give honor and recognition to Epaphroditus and others like him ^{1 Corinthians 16:15-18, 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, 1 Timothy 5:17}.

2:30 ...because he almost died for the work ²² of Christ, risking his life ²³ to (make up) ²⁴ for the help you could not give me. [²²*ergon*: the object of employment; ²³*psuche*: the soul, immaterial part of man; ²⁴*anapleroo*: to fill up (lit), complete] The grave illness Epaphroditus contracted was related to his service/sacrifice for Christ (perhaps a result of the condition of the prison they were in).

In order to accomplish Christ-likeness, God has blessed Christians with the Holy Spirit and 3 main tools:

- † The Word of God ^{1 Thessalonians 2:13, 2 Timothy 3:16}
- † Prayer ^{Matthew 7:7-8, John 9:31, James 5:16b, 1 John 5:14-15}
- † Suffering ^{Romans 5:1-5, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 4:12-19}