

# Harmony

Philippians 2:1-5

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## A. From the Inside Out (vs. 1 — 2):

1. If there is any encouragement in Christ – In the midst of the conflict the church was experiencing, which includes Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:1-3), Paul says it is time to step aside and remember that our help comes from the Lord who provides us strength through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. This must remain the center of their attention just like it is for Paul who is suffering at the same time (Phil. 1:12-18, 21-26).

a) The immediate context indicates that some of the proud citizens were seeking a significant place for themselves in the church from "selfishness and empty conceit" (2:3).

b) This unity is possible because of the reality of the four qualities mentioned in 2:1. The "if" clauses, being translations of first-class conditions in Greek, speak of certainties. So in this passage "if" may be translated "since." Paul wrote here about realities, not questionable things. Paul appealed on the basis of (a) encouragement from being united with Christ ... (b) comfort from His love ... (c) fellowship with the Spirit ... (d) tenderness and compassion. "Encouragement" is from a Greek word related to the one Christ used in referring to the Holy Spirit as "the Counselor" (John 14:16; "Comforter," KJV). It may also be translated "exhortation" in the sense of either rebuke or comfort. Since each believer had received this work of the Spirit, Paul used it as a basis to appeal for their spiritual unity.<sup>[1]</sup>

2. Any consolation of love - Paul reaches for the possibility, since he charges these believers to conduct themselves 'worthy of the gospel of Christ' (1:27), that these believers should submit to the direction of the Word of God so that they yield their hearts to obeying the Lord in response to the needs of the believers around them.

a) He would persuade and influence them by the lofty motives of the Lord's own will for His Church that it should be one in Him because He is one with the Father; of the constraining power of love which finds its origin in God's love for mankind (1 Jn. 4:7-12,19); of the Philippians' joint-participation in one Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life; and of the qualities of human kindness and tender sympathy which Christians ought to feel for their brothers in Christ. (Matt. 22:36-30).

3. Any consolation of love - If we choose, in the midst of conflict, to surrender to the Word of God, the love we express towards others would be directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:7-21). This is a love that is not based on how we feel. It is a willful decision to submit to obeying God as it relates to one another. Following Christ can mean we have to bear a cross (Luke 14:25-33).

a) A common command from Christ (Jn. 17:22; "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one; I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.")

4. Fellowship of the Spirit - When the Holy Spirit's movement in our lives is as a result of a friendship (our communion) with the Lord, our ability to walk by faith is empowered so that the nature of Christ reigns in our hearts. This is why loving others requires dying to oneself. This is what Christ modeled on the cross.

a) "Fellowship with the Spirit" is a result of the Spirit's permanent indwelling ministry (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19). This may refer, however, to fellowship that comes *from* the Holy Spirit, just as encouragement comes *from* Christ and comfort comes *from* love. Paul also spoke of "tenderness (*splanchna*; cf. Phile. 7, 20) and compassion." One of

the Spirit's ministries is to produce within each believer a concern and love for other members of God's family. This may be received or rejected by a believer, but the Spirit's work is a reality and is a basis for spiritual unity.<sup>[2]</sup>

5. If any affection or compassion - All that is taking place spiritually should lead to an intense emotional response of inward desires to express mercy towards the needs that the sufferings of other believers has created. This attitude of mercy was displayed by Christ at the worst time in His life, which was on the cross when He promised the thief he would be in heaven; those who once mocked Him and those who crucified Him He asked for God's forgiveness. God's love was not in reflection of their horrible attitude, but His inner power.

a) The word "bowels" we treated in 1:8. It means here "tenderheartedness." "Mercies" could also be rendered "compassionate yearnings and actions." These graces present in the lives of the Philippian saints would move them to live at peace with one another. Little differences would be patched up. Estrangements would be healed. Bickerings would cease.<sup>[3]</sup>

6. Make my joy complete – By responding to what Paul said in verse one, these believers would make Paul's heart become full with gladness causing him to become so controlled by happiness he could dance.

7. Same mind – Because the Word of God is in control and the Spirit is directing our lives we should have the same attitude and heart for each other.

a) Paul appeals to the Philippians to be like minded in view of the fact that each of them participates with the Holy Spirit in a common interest and activity, and therefore, if each saint is interested in the things of the Spirit, and thus in the same things, there should naturally follow a unity among the Philippians. The Holy Spirit by thus controlling each saint, produces this unity and accord amongst them.<sup>[4]</sup>

b) This is defined and shown in its three constituent elements, "having the same love," unity of affection, "being of one accord," literally, "soul with soul," unity of sentiment, and "of one mind," literally, "thinking the one thing," the last expression

being repetition in stronger terms. Here we have what is called “the tautology of earnestness.” These exhortations refer to the same point of view in common interests. Minute distinctions must not be forced.<sup>[5]</sup>

8. Same love – Serving the needs of others should be the same for everyone because love is an obedience to the Word of God and God’s love in and through us can only be empowered by the Spirit of God and both Christ and the Holy Spirit have the same nature (1 John 4:7-9).

9. Intent one purpose – When everyone’s life is directed by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, the community of believers would be directed by one purpose because they would be in one accord with the nature of God (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:1-4).

a) Unity is essential for spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:13); this is why Christ would pray for this (John 17:20-23).

## **B. Be Intentional (vs. 3 – 4):**

1. Selfish ambition – Paul’s challenge to believers is that they do not join in with those who are creating rivalry in the church, like politicians vying to take an office at all cost, because this can cause believers to become resentful towards one another.

a) Selfish ambition is earthly and naturally demonic – selfish ambition leads to disorder and every evil thing (James 3:13-15).

2. Selfish ambition – Selfish ambition is viewed as demonic (James 3:13-15) and a believer would eventually lose themselves (John 12:23-26).

a) Vain conceit, meaning “empty glory,” was probably the root cause of their selfish ambition.<sup>[6]</sup>

b) Pride is the most naked form of selfishness, which is the essence of sin (*Müller*). He does not put forward himself (see note, v. 4; ch. 1:24) as an example, but Christ, the one pre-eminently who sought not His own, but “humbled Himself” (v. 8), first, in taking on Him our nature; secondly, in humbling himself further in that nature (Rom. 15:3).<sup>[7]</sup>

2. Empty conceit - They must not seek to function in a state of pride because it leads to vainglory, which is destructive to the church.

a) “Vainglory” is the translation of a word made up of two words, one word meaning “empty,” or “vain,” used in the sense of “to no purpose, futile,” and the other meaning “opinion.” Thus the total meaning is “empty pride.”<sup>[8]</sup>

3. Humility of mind – In contrast the attitude (mind) that a believer must demonstrate is where they maintain how God sees them in relation to Himself. These believers are not self-seeking. These believers live for God’s glory, as explained in verse one through two, and therefore seek opportunities to serve others. “The word refers to the quality of esteeming ourselves as small, but at the same time recognizing the power and ability of God.”

a) Humility (“be humble”) might be defined as a proper evaluation of oneself in the sight of God and others (2:3; cf. Rom. 12:3; 1 Pet. 3:8; 5:6).<sup>[9]</sup>

b) Christ’s humility is the standard for evaluating the worth of others and actions toward them. This does not mean that personal concerns should be overlooked. Elsewhere Paul clearly stated that Christians must take care of their own affairs as an act of love for the congregation (1 Thess 4:9–12). The next verse implies the same truth. Humility begins with a realistic appraisal of oneself and others as being in the image of God. This relates intimately to the next characteristic, where the topic is continued.<sup>[10]</sup>

4. Regard or consider one another – We must allow the attitude of humility to rule and continuously work against selfish ambition and empty conceit.

a) "Esteem" is from a word referring to a belief that rests, not on one's inner feelings or sentiment, but on the due consideration of external grounds, on the weighing and comparing of facts. "Better" is the translation of a word which means literally "having above," thus "to excel or surpass."<sup>[11]</sup>

5. As more important – We must continuously not seek to control others in an effort to satisfy our own needs.

6. Look out for your own personal interest – We must continuously fix our attention to disciplining our lives to not become like a selfish emperor who views himself as semi-divine expecting everyone to view his needs as superior. Paul is under house arrest in Rome for this very reason.

a) "Look" is from a Greek word which means "to fix the attention upon with desire for and interest in." Lightfoot renders it, "to consult one's own interest." *Expositor's Greek Testament* translates, "No party having an eye for its own interests alone but also for the rest."<sup>[12]</sup>

7. Look out for your own personal interest – We must make it a habit to "spy out" the needs of others as directed by the Word of God while being guided by the Spirit of God for the purposes of the Lord.

8. Paul then instructs us to what we should NOT DO and SHOULD DO:

- a) Nothing from selfishness or empty conceit – not to do.
- b) With HUMILITY OF MIND – should do
- c) Let each of you regard one another as more important than himself – should do.
- d) Do not look out for your own personal interest – not to do.
- e) Look out for the interest of others – should do.
- f) We must have the SAME MIND or attitude of Christ – should BE.

## C. Aim High (v. 5):

1. Attitude; Mind of Christ Jesus – We are commanded to be devoted to the mindset that Christ manifested while on earth to willfully submit to standards of God in how we related to everyone. Even though He was fully God He was also fully human so He felt what we feel through all the conflicts and the pain He experienced while on earth (vs. 5-9).
2. Attitude; Mind of Christ Jesus – What Paul requested in verse 1-2 to be the mindset that controls us he now commands us to make this our lifestyle as modeled by Christ. Despite what it cost Him He put God's will above His (vs. 5-9) rather than look out for His own purpose while being King of Kings.

The sum total of the thought in the exhortation seems to be that of urging the Philippians to emulate in their own lives, the distinctive virtues of the Lord Jesus spoken of in 2:2–4. It is the habitual direction of our Lord's mind with reference to self that is in the apostle's thinking, an attitude of humility and self-abnegation for the benefit of others, which should be true also of the Philippians. <sup>[13]</sup>

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<sup>[1]</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). [Philippians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 653). Victor Books.

<sup>[2]</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). [Philippians](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 653). Victor Books.

- <sup>[3]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, p. 58). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[4]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, pp. 57–58). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[5]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, p. 59). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[6]</sup> Lightner, R. P. (1985). [\*Philippians\*](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 653). Victor Books.
- <sup>[7]</sup> Brown, D., Fausset, A. R., & Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [\*A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Acts–Revelation: Vol. VI\*](#) (pp. 428–429). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.
- <sup>[8]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, pp. 59–60). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[9]</sup> Hughes, R. B., & Laney, J. C. (2001). [\*Tyndale concise Bible commentary\*](#) (p. 604). Tyndale House Publishers.
- <sup>[10]</sup> Melick, R. R. (1991). [\*Philippians, Colossians, Philemon\*](#) (Vol. 32, pp. 94–95). Broadman & Holman Publishers.
- <sup>[11]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, pp. 59–60). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[12]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, p. 60). Eerdmans.
- <sup>[13]</sup> Wuest, K. S. (1997). [\*Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament: for the English reader\*](#) (Vol. 5, pp. 61–62). Eerdmans.