

Philippians 2:1-13

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I. Outline

- A. Paul's challenge to make his joy complete (1-4)
 - 1. The indicators of the gospel of Christ (1)
 - 2. The completion of Paul's joy (2)
 - i. The method – striving for unity in thought and love
 - ii. The mindset – avoiding a self-centered way of thinking (3-4)
- B. Christ Jesus – The example (5-11)
 - 1. Paul's exhortation to think the same as Christ Jesus (5)
 - 2. Christ Jesus' obedience and humility (6-8)
 - i. His mindset – equality with God was not considered robbery (6)
 - ii. His initiation - emptying of himself
 - iii. His obedience - submission to the extent of death
 - 3. Christ Jesus and God the Father receive (9-11)
 - i. The result-Christ Jesus given the name above every name: *διο* (9)
 - ii. The response of all – bending of every knee and professing of every tongue (10-11)
 - iii. The ultimate result – God the Father receives glory (11)
- C. Paul's command for living out salvation (12-13)
 - 1. Consistent working out of salvation in response: *Ωστε, αγαπητοι* (12)
 - 2. God's working for his good will (13)

II. Exegetical Issues

A. Boundaries, Placement, Function of the Passage in its Context

1. This passage is introduced by an invitation and challenge by Paul based on a series of conditional statements (*ει*). The chain of conditional statements marks a change in the discussion from the previous section. The passage's close is the beginning of a series of instructions indicated by a conclusive therefore (*δινα*). The ending of this specific passage is marked by God's work in the subject matter covered in the passage.
2. This passage is a continuation from the previous section of Paul's challenge to conduct oneself in a manner worthy of the gospel in all circumstances. The goal of the previous section's challenge is unity in the midst of opposition. The theme of unity continues in this section. This passage shifts from the focus of struggles and suffering to a discussion of guidelines for living a selfless life with the goal still being unity. He prepares the reader for what is to come by stressing God's working in the lives of believers, which leads toward unity. The passage is linked to the subsequent section by means of the word *δινα* (12). Paul begins a series of responses that continues beyond the final verse in this passage (13).
3. Philippians 2:1-13 functions both as a step in Paul's persuasive argument for unity and an intentional description of the significance of Jesus' obedience and humility in bringing honor to God the Father and enabling the unity for which Paul argues. The passage opens with challenge, based on the benefits of believing on Christ, to make his joy complete by thinking, loving and being the same (2:1-2). He provides commands to be selfless and then provides a description of Christ Jesus as the ultimate example of

obedience and humility (2:3-11). Paul concludes with a challenge to work out your salvation with fear and trembling in the context of God being the one who works. He prepares the reader for what is to come by stressing the God's working in the lives of believers, which leads toward unity. The result is they will become children of God who hold fast to the word of life and shine like stars in the world. Overall, the partnership in the gospel between Paul and the Philippians is leading to God's glory. The gift received through Epaphroditus is continuing Paul's ministry. Paul's ministry, in turn, is leading to the spread of the gospel. Lastly, the spread of gospel is leading to the worship of Christ Jesus and honor for God the Father.

B. Textual Problems

1. 2:5: Some mss include the addition γαρ at the beginning (P⁴⁶ ² D F G 075. 0278. 1739. 1881. ^h lat sy^h). Another ms includes ουν at the beginning (2492 pc). The text does not include any connective such as γαρ or ουν or και at the beginning (² A B C Ψ 33. 81. 1241^s. 2464. 2495 pc t vg^{mss} co; or Aug). The τουτο on its own seems to call for a connective but the main text does not include one. The suggestion that this verse begins a lection may account for the removal of γαρ. There is debate as to what role this plays on non-lectionary manuscripts (Metzger, 613). Does the use of a connective such, as γαρ, mark a lection? How is the meaning of verse 5 and the following verses impacted by a non-lectionary view of the text? What is the significance of the use of a lection in this particular text?

2. 2:7 There is a potential difficulty with the substitution of the plural form ανθρωπων instead of the singular form ανθρωπου. Several early witnesses used ανθρωπου (P⁴⁶ t vg^{mss}; Mcion^T Cyp). A singular form may account for an Adam-Christ typology implicit in the passage accounts. The singular number, however, is more likely a non-doctrinal conformation to the singular δουλου and the following ανθρωπος. Assuming that the singular form is potentially valid, what is the significance of the Adam-Christ typology in this specific text? Are there any parallels with the creation of Adam and the incarnation of Christ in terms of an emptying and humbling?

C. Issues of Interpretation

1. 2:1 The word κοινωνια is used multiple times in the epistle (1:5, 3:10). The close association involving mutual interests and sharing takes different forms. For example, Phil 1:5 refers to a close relationship in the gospel which applies to the financial partnership between Paul/Timothy and the church in Philippi. This is evidenced by the gift sent via Epaphroditus (2:25) from the Philippians (4:14-18). Phil 3:10 refers to a participation or sharing in Christ's sufferings. How does the fellowship of the Spirit mentioned in 1:5 relate to these other two uses? What is the significance of this close relationship in completing Paul's joy? What specific role does the communion with the Spirit contribute to the unity that Paul is exhorting?

2. 2:5 Τουτο φρονειτε εν υμιν ο και εν Χριστω `Ιησου: What does it mean to "think this in you" of something else, namely, that which is in Christ Jesus? What is in Christ Jesus that should be thought in a person? How does a person think in this manner? Is there a relationship between thinking and acting? If so, then is this why Paul uses the next six verses to describe the actions of Christ Jesus?

3. 2:7 The verse starts with ἀλλὰ as a transition from 2:6. Does this signify an intentional choice by Christ Jesus? What is the significance of the contrast between 2:6 and 2:7?
4. 2:7 Paul refers to himself and Timothy as δούλοι in Phil 1:1. Christ Jesus is described as μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν. What is the significance of Christ Jesus taking the form of a servant? What is the difference between taking the form and being? How do the two references to a servant relate? What role does this humility play in contributing to the unity of the church and the subsequent gospel witness?
5. 2:9 διὸ marks a conclusion based on the previous statements regarding Christ Jesus. What is the relationship between Christ Jesus' emptying of himself (ἐαυτὸν ἐκενώσεν), taking the form of a servant (μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν), humbling himself (ἐταπείνωσεν ἐαυτὸν), and being obedient to the extent of death (γενόμενος ὑπηκούος μέχρι θανάτου) to being raised to the highest position and given the name that is above every name?
6. 2:9 The actor in the description changes from Christ Jesus to God. What is the significance of this shift? What does this reveal about the roles of Christ Jesus and God?
7. 2:9 Christ Jesus is given (εὐχαρίσατο) the name that is above every name (τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ὑπὲρ πάντων ὀνομάτων). What does a name signify? What, in particular, is the significance of this new name? Why is it necessary for God to give Christ Jesus a new name? How does this relate to the other names given by God as record in the Hebrew Bible as well as the New Testament? Jesus of Nazareth gave nicknames to some of his disciples. Note John 1:42 (συ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς, ὁ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος) where Jesus renames Simon as Cephas. Is there a deeper significance to a name other than as a title or point of reference? If so, what theological implication does this carry?
8. 2:11 The reference to a tongue (γλῶσσα) refers to a body of words and systems that makes up a distinctive language. The description includes every (πάσα) tongue and the profession of Jesus Christ is Lord (κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός). Is this the specific name given to Christ Jesus by God (cf. II.C.7)? If so, is this also the name of the God of Israel? How does this relate to the sharing of the gospel with all of humanity (Jews and Gentiles)? Is there a connection with the languages described in Acts 2:4 (γλῶσσαις) and the proclaiming of the gospel?

D. Use of Other Texts/Traditions

1. The reference to a death on a cross is close to the reference in 1 Peter 2:24 of bearing our sins in his body on the tree (ἐν τῷ σώματι αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τὸ ξύλον). The tree reference in 1 Peter 2:24 describes a wooden structure used for crucifixion. The tree illustration points to multiple examples in the Hebrew Bible. One example is the wood for the offering of Isaac may be linked typologically with the cross of Christ. Another example is the pole that Moses used to raise up the brass serpent. Jesus himself refers to this Moses example in John 3:14 (καὶ καθὼς Μωϋσῆς ὑψώσεν τὸν ὄφιν ἐν τῇ ἐρημῳ, οὕτως ὑψωθῆναι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) "and just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up". What is the significance of Jesus being obedient to death, even death on a cross? What would the outcome be of a different type of death? How do these other references shape the understanding of the readers of the Philippian epistle?

E. Relation to Other NT Texts

1. Paul challenges the Philippians to finish his joy (πληρώσατε μου τὴν χαράν). The notion of a person's joy being completed or finished is also present in Johannine writings.

The write of 1 John states in 1:4 “we write this in order that our joy may be full” (καὶ ταῦτα γραφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ἡ πεπληρωμένη). A similar reference is found in 2 John 1:12. The notion of love being made complete is include in the Johannine writings as well. For example, 1 John 2:5 describes a relationship between obedience and God’s love being truly made complete in a person. In a similar manner, 1 John 4:12 details a connection between loving one another and love being made complete. What is the relationship between unity and Paul’s joy being finished? How is this similar to the connections between obedience, love and love being completed in the Johannine writings? What are the similar goals of the writers? What comparable challenges are the audiences of these writings facing?

F. Historical Issues

1. In 2:2 Paul challenges the Philippians to finish his joy in order that they may think the same thing and have the same love. What were the divisions among the believers at Philippi? What impact did these divisions have on their partnership in the gospel? Were the disagreements similar to other churches?

III. Significance for Theology and Preaching

1. Paul describes himself and Timothy as servants of Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus is described as taking the form of a servant. How can an individual believer and the community follow this example of humility? How will this directly impact the level of unity of a community? Christ Jesus combined obedience with humility? How does obedience interact with humility in terms of unity of the community of believers?
2. The result of Christ Jesus being given the name that is above every name is that all will profess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Earlier in the epistle, Paul states that an outcome of unity is that believers will strive side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel. These two descriptions imply that the unity of believers leads to a stronger witness of the gospel, which in turn leads more people to profess Jesus Christ as Lord and, subsequently, give God glory. How does the unity of believers impact the level of glory given to God? Furthermore, how does the sharing of the gospel play a role in increasing glory given to God? How should this impact the community of faith today?
3. Paul provides an exhortation to work out a salvation with fear and trembling. What are implications of the notion of working out a salvation? Is this a concept that is largely ignored by a Reformed mindset of salvation through grace by faith alone?

IV. Discussion Questions

1. How does this passage help build Paul’s argument for unity? How does Paul use the example of Christ Jesus’ combination of humility and obedience to challenge the community of faith?
2. What is the highest position given to Christ Jesus and how does that relate to God the Father? In addition, how can God give a name to Christ Jesus? What was his name before? What is the significance of this new name? How is this similar and different to other name giving examples recorded in the Hebrew Bible and other New Testament writings?
3. How can a person practically regard another person as better than himself or herself? What impact will that have on an individual, community, and other communities?