

The Mind of Christ

Introduction:

Our minds are often cluttered with things of this world. We lay in bed at night thinking of the day's events, how we can make a better living, conversations had during the day, and so on. We may preoccupy ourselves with thoughts of all sorts due to anxiety. These thoughts of worldly events often crowd out our time spent with God in prayer. Sometimes, our minds come in conflict with our faith. Some contemplate the destruction of brethren based on beliefs that oppose truth. What should the Christian mind be like? This lesson shall examine Philippians 2:1-10 in relation to having the mind of Christ.

Prelude to Study

The apostle Paul had warned the Philippians that their faith would be assaulted by those of conflict at the end of Philippians chapter 1 (cf. 1:27-30). That which would strengthen their faith was numbers in unity (being of one mind in the doctrine of Christ and supporting each other). Each individual was to have the "*mind of Christ*" (Phil. 2:5).

I. The Grounds for Christian Unity and Strength against those who would seek to bring us unto bondage of sin through a different teaching (Phil. 2:1-

A. *"If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind;"* (2:1-2).

1. The word "*therefore*" connects us back to chapter one. If the Philippians were going to survive the conflict that would certainly assault their faith they were going to need to be united in the faith. A church divided is a church that does not stand united in truth and is subject to loss of souls.
2. Paul makes a passionate plea to the brethren to muster up all that they have and know of Christ to hold them together.
 - a. "*Exhortation*" in Christ (*paraklesis*) = "to call, invoke, encourage, comfort, console" (LS 597).
 - b. "*Consolation*" of love (incentive)
 - c. "*Fellowship of the Spirit*" (sharing with the Spirit of truth).
 - d. "*Tender mercies and compassion*" (Paul calls upon their compassion and affection for one another)
3. If the Philippians were going to wage effective warfare against those who would assault their faith they were going to have to band together. The grounds of banding together were to be threefold. First they were to unite together based upon their common comfort and love that they each had in Christ. Secondly, they were to consider their common love for the truth that was revealed by the Holy Spirit. Thirdly, their compassion and affection for each other, as those who share a common faith, was to hold them together. The glue for Christian unity then is love of Christ, truth, and brethren.

B. *"Doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself;"* (2:3).

1. The mind of unity is and strength in Christ consists of love of Christ, truth, and brethren of like precious faith. The mind of division consists of "*factions*" and "*vainglory*."

- a. “*Faction*” (*eritheia*) = “to serve for hire, to serve a party, the service of a party, party spirit; feud, faction” (Moulton 166).
 - b. “*Vainglory*” (*kenodoxia*) = “desirous of vainglory (boastful and unwarranted pride in one’s accomplishments or qualities) (Moulton 228).
 - c. The party spirit (people who group together on the basis of their own ideas as opposed to truth and form clicks within the church) and those who seek an audience to boast of their accomplishments and qualities are traits that militate against unity in the body of Christ. The acid that dissolves Christian unity is faction and pride.
2. Another part of the equation of unity is given in relation to others, “*in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself.*”
- a. Rather than trying to gain a following of people who admire your accomplishments and qualities of life let us look to others as “*better than our own self.*”
 - b. To look to brethren in such a way is to exercise a spirit of “*lowliness*” as opposed to pride and the “look at me” syndrome. Paul goes on to say, “*not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others*” (2:4). Rather than longing for attention from brethren why not give attention? Why not asks a brother what is going on in their life. Note: When we show interest in others lives others will show interest in ours. If we only look to ourselves we are being selfish. The author of Hebrews said that we are to “*consider one another*” (Heb. 10:25ff).
 - c. Here is what Paul has said to this point then: To wage effective warfare against false teachers and in order for Christians to endure the sufferings that come with the conflicts of faith we need to be of the same mind and share the same love. The Christian is to gain comfort in their love of Christ, truth and brethren. We should each count each other as more important and so be willing to give each other an ear (a spirit of “*lowliness*”). That which opposes this unity is selfishness (vainglory) and the party spirit (the mind that separates brethren based on human reason) (cf. I Cor. 11:17-22).

II. A call to emulate the mind of Christ (2:5-10):

- A. “*Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men;*” (2:5-7).
 - 1. The word of God commands that the Christian emulate the life of Christ (cf. I Pet. 2:21).
 - a. Jesus had a love of truth, brethren, and he was certainly one of a lowly mind.
 - b. Let us emulate the life of Christ!
 - 2. What was the mind of Christ like? Did Jesus ever seek a party based upon His vainglory? What area was it that Jesus boasted and considered himself better than others?
 - a. Jesus could have used His being deity in the flesh to gain a self oriented following, He could have called 12 legions of angels to deliver Him from the cross using his deity (Matt. 26:53), and He could have had rule of the world having everything that He ever wanted (Matt. 4:1ff). Yes, Jesus had much to boast about as the Son of God yet He did not come to this earth to be a popular figure for the sake of worldly ends.
 - b. Quite to the contrary, Christ came and became a lowly servant. John states, “*And the word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth*” (Jn. 1:14). Jesus gave up much to take on the “*form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.*”

- B.** *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross”* (2:8).
1. Jesus displayed the ultimate selfless act of humility when He bore our sins upon the cross. He cared for us! Redemption of mankind was dependant upon this sacrifice (cf. Gal. 3:13-14).
 2. Note the emphases Paul places on the phrase: *“yea, the death of the cross.”* Dying on a cross was reserved for the vilest criminals in the days of the Roman Empire. People would walk by, see the body of those crucified, and rail at them for their shameful conduct in this life. Jesus bore our shame for the sin we have committed.
 3. How humble was Jesus? Consider the Lord’s own words, *“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls”* (Matt. 11:29). Again, Jesus said, *“For the Son of man also came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Mk. 10:45).
- C.** *“Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (2:9-10).
1. Though Jesus did not seek the glory of man while on earth, the Heavenly Father has now given Him this status.
 2. Jesus is the focal point of man’s unity. We should exalt Christ rather than ourselves.

III. Conclusion:

- A.** First, know assuredly that conflict will come in relation to my faith. The early church was assaulted by false teachers who challenged the saint’s faith and so will we (cf. Acts 15:5).
- B.** Secondly, know that if we are to survive the onslaught of false teachers we must be of one mind in truth. To accomplish this we must:
1. Unite in our common love and comfort found in Christ, truth, and each other as brethren.
 2. Count each other better than ourselves and be willing to hear each other rather than only wanting to be heard.
 3. Exercise a spirit of humility that Christ exhibited and thereby be willing to serve others rather than be served.
- C.** Thirdly, the Christian must understand how conflicts grow from within a body of Christ. Individuals seek the glory of other Christians. Some Christians give them glory by following their self seeking (vainglorious) ways. A faction (party) is formed within the church existing among disgruntled individuals who share a common gripe. Note: The party always has leaders and leaders gain followers.
- D.** What is the mind of Christ? The mind of Christ is humility, servitude, love of truth and brethren. Such an attitude will certainly make strong binds within the minds of all true disciples of Christ.