

Exodus 17:1-7
 Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16
 Philippians 2:1-13
 Matthew 21:23-32



HAVE THIS MIND

Phil 2:1-4. *So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.¹*

• *Complete my joy by being of the same mind ... (v.2).* God wishes the church, that is, the body of Christ, to be *of the same mind* and not have different ideas about what it means to live as a Christian.

Paul began by giving the church at Philippi three incentives for this kind of unity: (1) There is *encouragement in Christ* – your desire to be like the One in whom you believe; (2) there is the *incentive of love* – your response to God, who first loved you (compare 1 John 4:18-21); and (3) there is *affection and sympathy* – the naturally good feelings we have for others.

It is no secret that this “joy” resulting from *being of the same mind* is (1) what God wishes for us all, and yet (2) lacking today in the church. But our efforts and prayers should always be directed toward this end, and the rest of today’s lesson helps us see ways to get there.

• *Do nothing from selfishness or conceit ... (v.3-4).* When we obey this, we are off to a good start. Selfishness and conceit have always been natural attributes in the world of men, beginning with Cain and his descendant Lamech (Gen 4:23-24), and if the world is all there is and “survival of the fittest” is the name of the game, then “selfishness and conceit” are entirely justifiable.

But the Bible insists that the world is not all there is, so that *humility* and *counting others better than yourself*, and *looking after the interests of others* are necessary attributes we find in any true believer.

Why? Because, the Bible says, “*We are God’s children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*” (1 John 3:2-3).

In other words, your Heavenly Father intends, with your cooperation, to conform you to the image of his Son, whom he calls “*the first-born among many brethren*” (Rom 8:29). (The LB version of Romans 8:29 is, “*For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him—and all along he knew who would – should become like his Son, so that his Son would be the First, with many brothers.*”) And you can’t be selfish, or conceited, or both, and be like Jesus, because he never was, and never is.

The next verses describe, in eloquent terms, what Jesus is like, and more. They are the gospel in a nutshell, from God’s viewpoint. They describe who Jesus is, what he did to save the world from sin, and where he lives today.

Phil 2:5-11. *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

• *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus ... (v.5).* Recall v.2, which says the church, that is, the body of Christ, should be *of the same mind*. This state of mind always has existed, and

¹ Bible quotations are from the RSV unless otherwise noted.

always will exist. It is the mind of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. When we in the church finally come to have this “same mind,” God’s wish for unity and “*full accord*” in the church (v.2) will once again become true. When you surrender your life to Christ, v.5 says this mind is “*yours in Christ Jesus.*” You are being conformed to the image of God’s Son. This is the greatest opportunity you will ever have.

- ... *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped ...* (v.6). Verses 6-8 reveal who Jesus is and what he did to free the world from its bondage to sin and death. They also present the antithesis of a person who acts out of “selfishness or conceit” (v.3). Our Lord’s coming into the world of men was the epitome of unselfish love – never in his own interest – entirely in yours. You cannot succeed on your own in having this kind of mind, but it will come to you by faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus *was in the form of God* (v.6). The Nicene Creed says Jesus was “of one being with the Father.” The Bible says, “... *for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell*” (Col 1:19), and Jesus himself said, “*I and the Father are one*” (John 10:30).

Yet, he *did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself*. What really happened in the incarnation? Did Jesus quit being God and become a man, and then go back to being God again? Not according to Heb 13:8, “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*”

People say Jesus was “fully God and fully man.” This is true because, as a man, Jesus did things only God can do. He forgave sins on behalf of God. He drove out demons, healed people, raised some from death, and claimed to be the way, the truth, and the life. And also because, as God, and he did things only a man can do. He was Mary’s son. He grew up in Nazareth, learned carpentry, and became a rabbi. He suffered and died on the cross. This is why Jesus is “fully God and fully man.”

- ... *taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men* (v.7). Jesus is the Son of God, but he *took the form of a servant*. The lesson today teaches us, as members of his body, to have this same kind of mind; that is, to seek always to serve rather than to be served. “*For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*” (Mark 10:45).

- *He humbled himself and became obedient unto death* (v.8). This, the Bible says, was God’s plan from the beginning to redeem his lost world to himself. Jesus said to his disciples, “*I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me*” (John 6:38). He was like us in having his own free will. He proved it is humanly possible to lead a sinless life, even when death on a cross was the outcome.

God is urging us to *have this mind among ourselves*, a mind free of selfishness and conceit and concerned with the interests of others as well as our own – a mind like that of Jesus, who emptied himself of his own power and majesty, took the form of a servant, and gave up his life for you and me – the kind of mind that gladly accepts the will of God in all things, and experiences a lasting kind of peace and joy as the outcome. The next verses explain why such a mind cannot be entirely of your own making.

Phil 2:12-13. *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

- *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed ...* (v.12). Paul had the kind of mind he wrote about in this passage. As pastor of the church at Philippi, he could provide the encouragement and unselfish love he spoke of at the beginning of Chapter 2. You can sense his passionate concern that the Philippian church would continue in this way in his absence, while he visited the other churches.

- ... *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure* (v.12-13). You must work every day God gives you to please him with your words and actions, knowing all along that the whole effort is useless without Christ. Which is more important?

C. S. Lewis wrote, “Christians have often disputed as to whether what leads the Christian home is good actions, or Faith in Christ. I have no right really to speak on such a difficult question, but it does seem to me like asking which blade in a pair of scissors is most necessary.”²

In other words, with a will to serve God, and with God at work in you, you can cut it.