



PHILIPPIANS

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Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.
Philippians 2:4

These words here continue to explain Paul's plea of verse 2. He has asked them to be "like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." In order to fulfill this request, he now adds in, "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests." The word is an exhortation to not be self-consumed, to be a braggart, to be selfish, or to be conceited. The verb translated as "look out" here is described by Thayer's Greek Lexicon as –

"When the physical sense recedes, equivalent to to fix one's (mind's) eye on, direct one's attention to, a thing in order to get it, or owing to interest in it, or a duty toward it. Hence, often equivalent to aim at, care for, etc."

In other words, don't direct your attention to yourself as if you are the center of the universe. Instead, we are to also look out "for the interests of others." The verb is used just once in the Greek, but it is implied in both clauses none-the-less. We are to carefully look out and direct our attention to the needs of others, aiming for them and then tending to them. Further, the Pulpit Commentary notes that, "The participles esteeming and looking are used with the force of imperatives." This means these are things we are to actively do, taking Paul's words as obligations.

However, there is a note to consider here. The word "also" is specifically stated by Paul to show that care of oneself is something we are to actually tend to. We are not to neglect ourselves, and the idea of complete self-denial is not taught in Scripture. Asceticism which is taught by some is wholly unbiblical.

Life application: Paul's words of this verse, as noted above, are imperatives. We are not to neglect careful attention of others. Instead, we are to actively look out for others and place their needs and interests on a high priority. At the same time, we are not to neglect the care of ourselves, loving our bodies and spirits and thus feeding them properly.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, Philippians 2:5

Paul just said to his audience (and thus to us!) "Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." With that as a springboard for one of the most profound statements to be penned in the entire Bible, he now says, "Let this mind be in you..." In other words, what he will say follows naturally after the previous verse which dealt with "the interest of others," and so it will explain what that means in a particular way.

The word translated as "let mind be" is *phronéō*. It literally means, "the midriff or diaphragm; the parts around the heart." From that it indicates to "regulate (moderate) from within, as inner-perspective (insight) shows itself in corresponding, outward behavior... [it] "essentially equates to personal opinion fleshing itself out in action..." (HELPS Word Studies).

Paul is asking us to think on what he will say, and then to have that thought turn into actual behavior which is in line with that thought. Understanding this, he then explains what "mind" we are to have in us. It is one "which was also in Christ Jesus." The mind of Christ Jesus, and which then was reflected in His outward behavior, is what we are to have in us. If we can contemplate and then act on what we will be told, we will be truly faithful and obedient followers of Jesus Christ.

The words ahead, and which include this introduction, are known as the kenotic hymn. They are marvelous words which reveal the very glory of what God has done through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. It is this which Paul now implores us to consider and emulate.

Life application: We cannot emulate that which we don't know about. But God has revealed to us His will in Scripture. Let us never tire of coming to this fount of wisdom, and let us apply its truths to our lives.

...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, Philippians 2:6

When considered, the words of this verse are as important to handle properly as any found in Scripture. And yet, unless a complete denial already exists of who Jesus really is, the main view of what is being said is still perfectly obvious, even despite lesser disputes concerning the verse's wording. The word "who" is speaking of Christ Jesus of verse 5 –

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...”

Thus, the next words are essential to understanding the true nature of Christ Jesus. He, “being in the form of God” is a phrase which is critical to grasp. The word “form” is one found only in Mark 16:12 and here in verses 2:6 & 2:7. It is morphé, and it means “form (outward expression) that embodies essential (inner) substance so that the form is in complete harmony with the inner essence” (HELPS Word Studies).

Thus, without any other words before or after to assist us, we can see that Christ Jesus is, in fact, in the “form” of God. It doesn’t say that He is in the form of angels, or man, or any other created thing. His true nature is that of God. Further, the word “being” in the Greek carries the more emphatic position. There is a “stress on the reality of existence. Hence it calls attention to the essential being of Christ, corresponding to the idea embodied in the name Jehovah” (Charles Ellicott).

In other words, Paul is carefully constructing the Greek to demonstrate that I AM THAT I AM of Exodus 3:14, is the same “being” that is revealed in Jesus Christ. He is the incarnation of the Lord Jehovah of the Old Testament; something made obvious in hundreds of other ways in Scripture.

Thus, “being in the form of God” means that His essence is that of Jehovah God; His eternal and essential being is being spoken of. He possessed this before His incarnation, and He then took upon the form of Man, Jesus, upon His incarnation. To understand this, we can go to the other use of morphé in Mark 16 –

“After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country.” Mark 16:12

In Mark, He was in one form, and then He appeared in another form. For what Paul is saying, Christ Jesus was in the form of Jehovah God, and then He appeared as a Man. But this is not unheard of, even in Scripture itself. The Old Testament reveals quite a few times where the LORD Jehovah was seen in the morphé, or form, of a Man. It is seen when He appeared to Abraham, to Joshua, to Gideon, to the parents of Samson, and elsewhere. Therefore, this is neither a stretch, nor are Paul’s words without abundant textual support.

The “form” that He possessed was all of the glory of God, radiant, resplendent, and refulgent. This is the true essence, or “form,” of Christ Jesus. And yet, He “did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.” The word translated as “robbery” is harpagmos. It is only found here in the Bible, and it indicates either the act of seizing a thing, or the thing seized. In the case of

Paul's words, it is certainly speaking of the thing seized. Vincent's Word Studies explains the meaning of what Paul is conveying to us –

“...we understand Paul to say that Christ, being, before His incarnation, in the form of God, did not regard His divine equality as a prize which was to be grasped at and retained at all hazards, but, on the contrary, laid aside the form of God, and took upon Himself the nature of man.”

The emphasis in the passage is upon Christ's humiliation. The fact of His equality with God is stated as a background, in order to throw the circumstances of His incarnation into stronger relief. Hence the peculiar form of Paul's statement Christ's great object was to identify Himself with humanity; not to appear to men as divine but as human. Had He come into the world emphasizing His equality with God, the world would have been amazed, but not saved He did not grasp at this. The rather He counted humanity His prize, and so laid aside the conditions of His preexistent state, and became man.”

This verse does not argue against His Deity; rather, it argues for it in the very strongest sense of all. It is an explanation of the marvel of the Incarnation. Christ Jesus set aside His Deity, precious as it is, in order to reveal God to us in a manner which we could understand and relate to. It is the highest expression of God's love for mankind that could possibly be conceived of.

Life application: Jesus Christ is fully God. Jesus Christ is fully Man. Think on the magnitude of that today.

...but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. Philippians 2:7

Paul continues with his astonishing description of what Christ did in the Incarnation, beginning with “but.” He is making a contrast to the words of the previous verse –

“...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God...”

In contrast to that, He “made Himself of no reputation.” Scholars generally agree that this translation is lacking. The word is *kenóō*, and it means “properly, to empty out, render void; (passive) be emptied – hence, without recognition, perceived as valueless” (HELPS Word Studies).

Christ emptied Himself of His divine glory by taking on a different outward appearance. Being God, He never stopped being God, but the divine nature was obscured in order for us to be able to perceive Him as only a Man. When the sun is obscured by the clouds, it does not stop

being the sun. If a laser beam is hidden within a chamber, the laser beam doesn't cease to exist. In like manner, the presentation of Christ's glory was cloaked away, or emptied from view, so that we could only see a different form. As Vincent's Word Studies states it, "He was not unable to assert equality with God. He was able not to assert it."

In this state, He took on a different form by "taking on the form of a bondservant." These words are set in contrast to "being in the form of God" of the previous verse. Christ, who bore all of the divine glory of God for all of eternity, stripped Himself of this glory in order to take "the form of a bondservant."

The idea here is that He became the lowliest of all humanity, performing the functions of one who is below all others in the social strata. This is not, as some scholars state, that He became a servant of God. A servant of God can be any position in any realm. The high priest of Israel could be called a servant of God. The Archangel Michael is a servant of God. And so on.

However, Christ took on the form of a bondservant of men. He humbled himself to the point that-

"...certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities—Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,³ and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance" -Luke 8:2-3

In other words, He made Himself dependent on even the females of Israel to support Him. He, who knew the infinite glory of God, revealed that glory to us in the most humble and lowly manner of all, and He pursued this state throughout His earthly ministry. He didn't start at the bottom and work His way to the top. If He had done this, His example would have been that we should do what it takes to succeed in business. He didn't start as a private and work up to being a general, showing us that we should take on military challenges. Rather, He came as a Servant, He lived out this life as a Servant, and He continued this way to the end, dying on a cross for us; serving us with the very blood of His earthly existence.

Paul finishes this verse with, "...and coming in the likeness of men." Care needs to be used when considering these words. In Romans 8:3, it says that Christ was sent "in the likeness of sinful flesh." There was a likeness to us, but it is clear that He was without sin, as is seen in Hebrews 4:15. Thus, to be "in the likeness of men" shows a similarity, but yet a contrast. Though He was in the likeness of men, He never stopped being fully God. Thus, the magnitude of the Incarnation is seen and understood. God – infinitely glorious and majestic, united with human flesh, obscuring His glory. He came in the likeness of men and took on the form of a servant in this state.

Again, Vincent's Word Studies, carefully explains this state –

“Humanly He was like men, but regarded with reference to His whole self, He was not identical with man, because there was an element of His personality which did not dwell in them - equality with God. Hence the statement of His human manifestation is necessarily limited by this fact, and is confined to likeness and does not extend to identity. ‘To affirm likeness is at once to assert similarity and to deny sameness’ (Dickson).”

John personally beheld this marvel and he wrote about it for us to consider –

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— 2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you.” 1 John 1:1-3

Life application: In considering this verse, we can then know what it means to be “Christ-like.” Regardless of our earthly station – whether we are born into nobility or into poverty, whether we are wealthy or we are poor, we are to be servants of others. We are to set aside ourselves and become like those around us in order to serve them. The “pope” from time to time has a foot-washing ceremony for migrants or other lowly groups of people. It is a time of photos and applause. But the “pope” doesn’t obscure his “popiness.” He comes out in full pomp in order to impress the masses. This is the polar opposite of what Christ did. He so obscured His glory, that it was completely unknown and unseen to those around Him. This is how we are to be to those around us. Let our servanthood be true servanthood, so that when others find out who we truly are, they are all the more grateful for our Christ-like attitude.