

## **“Therefore”**

**By Paul R. Blake**

*“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1-2)*

Therefore always draws a conclusion. Paul tells the Philippians that he chooses to see his unselfish suffering for Christ as a victory; he tells them that they can see their burdens in the same light. In Jesus Christ whether one is in prosperity or pain, he enjoys the comfort, joy, and peace that belong only to the faithful. The apostle tells them that if they have enjoyed these things in and from Christ, then they should cultivate the same spirit of Christ and confer these same blessings on one another. The unselfish servant's heart, upon becoming the beneficiary of the blessings of Christ, instinctively desires that others share these blessings as well. Each of these five blessings is intimately linked with unity in and with Christ.

“Consolation in Christ.” Consolation is *paraklesis* which is defined as “imploration, solace, comfort, consolation, exhortation, entreaty” (Strongs - 3874). In this context it appears that consolation is used to connote exhortation. If anything is to be taught and learned in Christ, then...

“Comfort of love.” Comfort is *paramuthion* which is defined as “consolation, comfort” (Strongs - 3890). Comfort of love is the mate to exhortation in Christ. Truth is to be taught in love (Eph. 4:15); anything less than this makes one like the contentious brethren of chapter one who preached Christ with wrong motives. If there is any comfort from love in Christ, then...

“Fellowship of the Spirit.” Fellowship is *koinonia* which is defined partnership, participation, benefaction; to communicate, communion, contribution, distribution, fellowship” (Strongs - 2842). Fellowship is the condition in which brethren find themselves when they preach Christ with love. Fellowship based on truth without love is sectarian; fellowship based on love without truth is ecumenical. Neither state is true fellowship in Christ through the Spirit. With truth and love fellowship can exist. Therefore, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, then...

“Any affection.” Affection is *splagchnon* which is defined as “an intestine; figuratively pity or sympathy; bowels, inward affection, tender mercy” (Strongs - 4698). Affection between disciples of the Lord is always liberally dosed with empathy. Christians feel for one another. Paul commanded the Romans to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15). Brethren who are sensitive to the needs, sorrows, tears, and joys of each other will be alert and ready to “bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). If in Christ, you have enjoyed affection, then...

“And mercy.” Mercy is *oiktirmos* which means “pity or mercy” (Strongs - 3628). Mercy is the higher form of affection as it requires more than just identifying with another's condition and feeling for him. It is when one cannot identify with some one else's problem and yet still feels for him. God the Father never experienced life as a man in the flesh, and yet he feels compassion and pity for men which he expresses in the form of mercy. If in Christ, you Philippians have experienced pity, then...

...Please the Lord and make Paul happy by sharing those blessings with others! You need to have the same mind as Christ who unselfishly conferred those blessings on you, and you need to feel compelled to share them with others. You enjoyed the love of Christ; now you must love others as Christ loved you. Work together, act together, love together, suffer together, and rejoice together!

### **“Let”**

*“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:3-4)*

Nothing is an absolute word; it is complete absence, non-existence, lack of trace of any part. This is the word that Paul uses to measure the amount of strife and vainglory that is permitted to permeate a Christian's motives. No part of a Christian's conversation (manner of life) is to be driven by selfish ambition (strife, eritheia, "intrigue, faction, contention" Strongs - 2052). Christians do not engage in the politics of division for personal gain or advantage, nor do they become involved in a division for any other reason than in defense of sound doctrine. Sin divides professed Christians into factions; error splits them into parties. Sometimes it is necessary that division occur, but woe to the one whose sin or error created the division (1Cor. 11:19, 3:3).

Christians must not be motivated by vainglory (kenodoxia, "empty glorying, self-conceit, vain-glory" Strongs - 2754). Self-promotion is the opposite of humility, a virtue commanded in scripture (1Peter 5:5). Any glory that one seeks for himself instead of offering to God is pointless and harmful. When he acts upon his desire to draw attention to himself, he is selfish and self-destructive. However, his damage is not confined to himself; others suffer from his hungry pride. Such a man will divide a church in order gain or maintain his control over it; he will publish materials that are designed to draw away disciples to follow him; and, he will malign and vilify sound, faithful brethren to keep controversy stirred. Wherever one finds prolonged controversy and persistent error and factionalism, he will find a vainglorious man (or men) at the epicenter.

By way of contrast, unselfish Christians humbly labor to please their neighbors for the purpose of edifying them (Rom. 15:2). They concentrate on the needs of others and are motivated by concern for the well-being of others. Their focus is so intense and so unselfish that they will often overlook their own needs to care for the welfare of the weak, vulnerable, and suffering. In fact, the servant's heart moves unselfish Christians to consider their own personal comfort and security as forfeit to the needs of fellowmen. Clearly this is the mind of Christ who left the bliss, comfort, and safety of heaven to dwell as a man in this uncertain, unsafe, sin-laden world in order to unselfishly offer up his sinless life for the sins of others that they might be saved. One who enjoys the state of being saved should most certainly do all he can to share this state with others.

### **Selfish or Selfless?**

Outside of Christ, men are all too often self-indulgent (James 1:13-15; 2Tim. 3:1-4; Phil. 3:19), self-inflated (Prov. 16:18; Gal. 6:3), self-willed (1Peter 5:3; Rom. 12:16; 3John 10), and self-centered (Haggai 1:2-5). If one would adopt the servant's heart and be in Christ, he must be unselfish, a servant of the Lord and to all men (Matt. 16:24; Gal. 2:20; Rom. 12:1). Jesus said, "I am in the midst of you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27).

"The event of falling in love is of such a nature that we are right to reject as intolerable the idea that it should be transitory. In one high bound it has overleaped the massive of our selfhood; it has made appetite itself altruistic, tossed personal happiness aside as a triviality and planted the interests of another in the centre of our being. Spontaneously and without effort we have fulfilled the law (towards one person) by loving our neighbour as ourselves. It is an image, a foretaste, of what we must become to all if Love Himself rules in us without a rival. It is even a preparation for that." (C.S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*)