

## Lesson 9      4 April, 2021

### Possessing the Mind of Christ

#### **Lesson Scope:** [Philippians 2](#)

*References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise*

**Lesson Focus:** In chapter 1, Paul writes about the good work Christ had begun in the believers at Philippi. He expresses his desire that the believers would continue to grow, and that their lives would express the fruits of their relationship with Christ. After touching on some of the involvements of his imprisonment, Paul expresses a willingness to continue in Christ's service so he can aid in the furtherance of the Philippians' faith. In chapter 2, Paul tells the believers that they can be an encouragement to him if they experience unity. In contrast to the independence and individuality so valued by the world, the church prospers most when members value "being of one accord, of one mind." This can only become a reality as we each seek to have the mind of Christ and conform to His image. Christ Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself to be "made in the likeness of men," and He "became obedient unto . . . the death of the cross." Those who bow the knee and confess Christ as Lord can live blamelessly because they have the mind of Christ.

Possessing the mind of Christ is a lifelong journey. It is something the new Christian desires to enable him to experience the blessings of the Christian life. It is also something the mature Christian will continue to grow in as he walks with God. The joy which transcends our earthly circumstances, clearly portrayed in this chapter, is only experienced by those willing to practice the self-denial and cross bearing that go with possessing the mind of Christ.

#### **Lesson Aim:**

To convey the involvements of possessing the mind of Christ.

#### **Theme Verse:**

[Philippians 2:5](#). Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

## Lesson Text:

### Lowly in Mind

**Philippians 2:1-11**<sup>(KJV)</sup> If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, <sup>2</sup>Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. <sup>3</sup>Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. <sup>4</sup>Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. <sup>5</sup>Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: <sup>7</sup>But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: <sup>8</sup>And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. <sup>9</sup>Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: <sup>10</sup>That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth; <sup>11</sup>And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### Blameless in Character

**Philippians 2:12-16**<sup>(KJV)</sup> Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. <sup>13</sup>For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure. <sup>14</sup>Do all things without murmurings and disputings: <sup>15</sup>That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; <sup>16</sup>Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

### Sacrificial in Service

**Philippians 2:17-30**<sup>(KJV)</sup> Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. <sup>18</sup>For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me. <sup>19</sup>But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. <sup>20</sup>For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. <sup>21</sup>For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. <sup>22</sup>But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel. <sup>23</sup>Him therefore I hope to send

presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. <sup>24</sup> But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly. <sup>25</sup> Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. <sup>26</sup> For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. <sup>27</sup> For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup> I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. <sup>29</sup> Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: <sup>30</sup> Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

## **Questions for Study**

### **Lowly in Mind**

1. How do the qualities mentioned in verse 1 contribute to the like-mindedness in verse 2?
2. What effect should Christ's example of emptying Himself of so much glory have on us?
3. In what areas do strife and vainglory tempt us today?

### **Blameless in Character**

4. What place does "fear and trembling" have in our salvation (2:12)?
5. Since we are human and prone to failure, how can we attain the "blameless" condition needed to "shine as lights" in the world?
6. How can we have the confidence expressed in verse 16?

### **Sacrificial in Service**

7. What are some distractions that could side-track us from our service to Christ?
8. What is a proper way to show honour and respect to God's servants?

## **Analysing the Passage:**

The four "if" statements in verse 1 remind the believers of the resources we share in Christ. They form the basis on which Paul appeals for unity in verse 2. Paul's joy was not hindered by physical circumstances, but it could be hindered by disunity and strife among those whom he desired to see grow. "Thought it not robbery" (2:6) means that Christ did not

view His place in the Godhead as a reason to avoid becoming man and experiencing death. Not only did He taste death, but he was willing to undergo a cruel, shameful death. Timotheus and Epaphroditus show us that it is possible to possess the mind of Christ, even though we are in the flesh and contend with our human weaknesses and failures.

## **Principles and Applications:**

### **Lowly in Mind**

1. Those who have the mind of Christ share a common experience and oneness of expression (2:1-4). Shared experiences draw people together. The Christian who experiences the softening work of God in his heart and observes the same work in his brethren will be drawn to his brethren. A spirit of competitiveness or a manner of dress or lifestyle that sets us apart from our brethren should cause us to examine our hearts to see if we are being directed by the mind of Christ.

2. Those who possess the mind of Christ are characterized by self-denial and the promotion of others (2:3-4). Self-denial is a personal responsibility and an inner work, but the results can be seen. If we indulge the desires of our self-life, we will find the mind of Christ to be unattractive and foreign to our way of thinking. The self-assertion and the image of being competent and capable projected by successful men of the world can rub off on us. The mind of Christ allows us to see our brother succeed and to rejoice with him because of the benefit that it brings to God's kingdom.

3. The mind of Christ is an attitude of humility (2:6-10). It is an indication of the strength of humility that Christ could undergo the shame that He did prior to His death and still maintain His courage and commitment to do His Father's will. The mind of Christ will enable us to dress in a way the world considers odd, to exercise restraint in our use of technology even if we seem backward, to maintain values and a way of life that appear simple-minded, and to do it all with joy.

### **Blameless in Character**

4. Possessing the mind of Christ is a lifetime of careful Christian living (2:12). The way we live—our actions and attitudes—is a product of how we think. If we possess the mind of Christ, this will affect all of life. One who possesses the mind of Christ should not need a mature Christian nearby in order to live like a Christian. Our everyday life and our Sunday profession should be consistent.

5. Willing surrender to God and to one another marks one who has the mind of Christ (2:14-15). Murmuring and disputing grow out of a restless, dissatisfied heart. To be able to accept the disappointing circumstances of life and to work with patience with the faults of our brethren is part of surrendering to God. Experiencing joy and contentment in the varying scenes of life will make us a light to a dissatisfied world.

6. Those who possess the mind of Christ hold forth His Word to others (2:15-16). Possessing the mind of Christ will cause us to stand out in this world. This brings opportunities to hold forth the Word of life. To bring the message of salvation to people through street meetings, visiting in homes, or by leaving a godly, consistent testimony that others can follow helps bring meaning to life and is part of following in the footsteps of our Master.

### **Sacrificial in Service**

7. Having the mind of Christ causes one to yield himself unconditionally to the service of Christ (2:16-18). Christ came to do the will of His Father without any reservation concerning what it would cost Him. The service of Christ will sometimes take us outside our comfort zone. It may require more time and money than we expected. It may at times be lonelier than we would like, but if we have the mind of Christ, we will let God determine our path of service.

8. Possessing the mind of Christ produces deep concern for others (2:26). Christ was concerned for the welfare of His fellow men. The Christian is concerned about the physical welfare of those around him and will go out of his way to help the needy. The Christian is also concerned about spiritual needs he meets, whether in an unbeliever or in his brethren. Like Epaphroditus, he will be concerned that his own circumstances do not weigh others down and will be eager to share the blessings he has received from God.

9. Having the mind of Christ causes one to hold the servants of Christ in due honour (2:29-30). Christ's sacrifice and service to His Father were rewarded by exaltation and honour. Those who follow His footsteps and are willing to give their all deserve our respect. As we learn to know our brethren well, we learn to know their failures and shortcomings, and often the greater their service, the more opportunity to see their shortcomings. The mind of Christ is willing to extend honour to our fellow laborers and to respect and appreciate them for their contributions.

## **Important Teachings**

1. Those who have the mind of Christ share a common experience and oneness of expression (2:1-4).
2. Those who possess the mind of Christ are characterized by self-denial and the promotion of others (2:3-4).
3. The mind of Christ is an attitude of humility (2:6-10).
4. Possessing the mind of Christ is a lifetime of careful Christian living (2:12).
5. Willing surrender to God and to one another marks one who has the mind of Christ (2:14-15).
6. Those who possess the mind of Christ hold forth His Word to others (2:15-16).
7. Having the mind of Christ causes one to yield himself unconditionally to the service of Christ (2:16-18).
8. Possessing the mind of Christ produces deep concern for others (2:26).
9. Having the mind of Christ causes one to hold the servants of Christ in due honour (2:29-30).
10. A commitment to Christlike living is enabled by God's power working in us (2:13).

## **Answers to Questions:**

1. How do the qualities mentioned in verse 1 contribute to the like-mindedness in verse 2?

Consolation, comfort, fellowship, and mercy have all been made available to us in Christ. Since we have been recipients of these blessings, we have the resources available to experience like-mindedness and unity.

2. What effect should Christ's example of emptying Himself of so much glory have on us?

It should put our sacrifice and self-denial in perspective. Whatever we may need to give up for the sake of unity and fellowship will be small in comparison to what Christ gave up for us.

3. In what areas do strife and vainglory tempt us today? We are tempted to be very biased to our ideas and perspective and defend them at the expense of our relationship with our brethren. Vainglory can be anything that brings us glory and prestige. A plush lifestyle, flaunting our abilities, or desiring prominence and position can all be a means of bringing glory

to ourselves and pampering our pride, which can also produce strife (Proverbs 13:10).

4. What place does “fear and trembling” have in our salvation (2:12)? This is not a paralysing fear that incapacitates the Christian, but rather a self-distrust that acknowledges the reality that we could fall away (Hebrews 4:1). This fear produces a watchfulness and seriousness in our Christian walk that enables us to reach eternal rest.

5. Since we are human and prone to failure, how can we attain the “blameless” condition needed to “shine as lights” in the world?

For the Christian, much of the blamelessness is in our motives and desires. When we are willing to acknowledge our failures and do not become defensive, God is able to use us. As a result, our fellow men usually maintain a view of us as consistent people of integrity for whom failure is not the norm.

6. How can we have the confidence expressed in verse 16? When we expend ourselves in the work of the Lord, we can have confidence that it will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). Lack of confidence is inevitable if we are living for self and give God the left-over time in a busy life.

7. What are some distractions that could side-track us from our service to Christ? Human Weariness (physical and emotional), discouragement when others disappoint us, making a living, and other responsibilities of life are some distractions.

8. What is a proper way to show honour and respect to God’s servants? Honour and respect do not defend failure. It does not take their example without comparing it to the Word of God. Honour and respect will take seriously any concerns shared. It will respect a life that holds a high standard. It will be shown by actions that support those who so selflessly serve the kingdom of God.

### **Summarizing the Lesson:**

Unity and like-mindedness are not natural to the human spirit. But we have the example of Christ. If we each seek to draw near to Him and have the mind of Christ, the result will be a like-mindedness that brings joy and encouragement to all.

### **Research Guide:**

1. Read the chapter titled “Self-denial” in Doctrines of the Bible.

2. In the Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, look up Christ's Example, and read the verses listed that show the mind of Christ.