



1/22/26

This week's passage has been really enlightening to me. I knew that the love of Christ needs to be my motivation... It's in my life verse, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 where it says, "For the love of Christ controls us." But in the scriptures we've studied, I feel like God has helped me to bring things more into focus. He wants me to put an end to motivation by self-sufficiency, and to embrace motivation by God's love. Everything stems from the love of God. Wow. That really opens my eyes up to how much more I need to grow. I hope and pray that you and I will never think God expects us to be strong in ourselves, but He wants us to find all our strength in Him as He holds us up with His loving arms.

*Blessings,
Jonna*

Philippians 2:1-13

In the Greek, this passage starts with the word "IF." It's followed by 4 "IF" statements, all designed to offer us motivation for what comes next. Verse 1 of the ESV starts with the word "So." That word is actually the same word as "therefore," and in the Greek it comes after the word "IF." Why does that matter? I think Paul was trying to make an emphatic statement about our motivation for obedience to the Lord. So he put the IF first. Truly IF the IF statements are not realities, obedience to the Lord will be done for the wrong reasons... whether it be legalism or fear or the opposite... refusal to obey because God is seen as someone He's not.

This is where the "therefore" is so important. Looking back at his opening chapter, I see that Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter to the Philippians. And he told them to expect the same kinds of suffering for themselves as they follow Jesus. He said something that most people like me would love to have removed from the Bible... except for the fact that the statement is true... and there's something to be learned and celebrated in its truth. Paul said in Philippians 1:29-30, "For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also SUFFER for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have." WHAT? Paul called suffering a PRIVILEGE!!! ALL kinds of suffering. Any suffering I experience, whether it be health issues, financial issues, relational

issues, persecution, or my own sin... is all a privilege for the sake of growing in Christ. Suffering becomes a privilege when it is not wasted... and suffering with Jesus is never wasted.

Vs. 1-4 ~ Now I come to vs. 1, therefore, with the 4 IF statements.

1. *IF there is encouragement, comfort, consolation in Christ... If I find hope in "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3), or if I find encouragement in knowing that Jesus "sympathizes with my weaknesses" (Hebrews 4:15-16)... then let the commands that come next be my calling.*
2. *IF there is any comfort from love... If the fact that God's loyal, faithful, undying, sacrificial love for me is my comfort and consolation... then let the commands that come next be my calling.*
3. *IF there is any fellowship with the Spirit... If the Holy Spirit has sealed me for the day of redemption and guaranteed my inheritance in Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30, and if the Holy Spirit is my freedom and the One who transforms me to be like Jesus as I turn to Him and behold His glory (2 Corinthians 3:16-18)... then let the commands that come next be my calling.*
4. *IF there are ANY affections and sympathies (compassion)... If God is affectionate toward me as Philippians 1:8 tells me He is, and if He is compassionate toward me as Psalm 103:13 and so many other scriptures say He is... then let the commands that come next be my calling.*

IF I don't believe these things about the Lord, I need to camp there and learn the truth. My lack of faith does not change the truth. My messed up feelings do not have authority or the power to change who He is. I need to step closer, to study Him more. I wonder if one of the reasons it can be hard to embrace these IF statements is BECAUSE I don't want to have to do what comes next. But the thing is... doing what comes next is an outpouring of standing firm in these truths. Jesus IS my encouragement IF I let His word dwell in me richly. I AM comforted by His love IF I open the door and let Him be my comfort. I absolutely HAVE fellowship with the Spirit WHEN I let Him fill me, and when I don't quench His flow of love pouring into my heart by refusing to walk in His strength. I EXPERIENCE His affection and compassion WHEN I cry out to Him for help in my distress, and WHEN I stay in constant communication with Him. Then He changes my heart, the control center of my feelings, desires, and decisions so that I don't try to muscle my outward actions to look obedient, but I willingly and joyfully become obedient.

So... with God's encouragement, love, fellowship, affection, and compassion filling my heart... this is what completes Paul's joy, and I'm sure, it brings my Lord joy...

- *Being of the same mind... the same mind as Jesus... encouraging, comforting, being in fellowship, having the affection and compassion of Jesus.*

- Having the same love as Jesus... sacrificial, authentic, faithful, loyal, unending.
- Being united in soul... as Romans 15:5-6 says, "May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." This kind of unity only comes as we all live with Jesus as our example and the same goal as our pursuit... to glorify the Father through Jesus.

The unity and love God wants for His kids cannot be accomplished without setting down selfish ambition... seeking my own interests... and vain arrogance... treating others as though I'm superior to them, or on the flip side, acting as though they're superior to me. The only one who is superior to all of us is Jesus... and He set that down for our salvation. Who am I to think I deserve better treatment than my Savior?

Unity can only be accomplished in the presence of humility. Humility is not thinking too much of myself, and it's also not thinking too little of myself. Humility is NOT THINKING OF MYSELF. If Jesus had only thought of Himself, I would be headed for eternal destruction. Who am I to think more of myself than Jesus thought of Himself?

True humility is not only humble before the Lord, but also before others. Though I am not superior to anyone, and though no human being is superior to me, God calls me to humbly consider their needs before I consider my own... just like Jesus did for me.

Vs. 5-11 ~ This is the mind of Christ. This is the mind I have in Him when I humble myself before Him... I have His example. A great leader leads by example. What is Jesus' example?

Though He was the embodiment of God, He didn't storm the earth in royal force. But instead, He didn't regard His Godness. Rather, He emptied Himself of His beauty and majesty (Isaiah 53), and of His glory (John 17), and He took the form of a bondservant. He was a "Doulos", a voluntary, fully devoted servant.

Instead of resembling His Godness, Jesus made Himself responsible His created image bearers... man. If that wasn't humbling enough... to give up His glorious royalty and become like a lowly man, He also humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death on a cross, all by choice. This is the mind that He wants me to have? To be so humble and obedient that instead of fighting for my rights when I'm treated like a nothing, I am willing to accept whatever cost comes so that the truth of God's light can shine more brightly? If Jesus thought I was worth that kind of sacrifice, shouldn't I think He's worth that kind of sacrifice?

David Jeremiah says, "You will know how much you truly embrace being a voluntary, fully devoted servant by how you respond when you're treated like one." I don't know if I'll ever reach the point where I'm not convicted by that statement.

Therefore... since Jesus was so sacrificial and humble, God the Father has highly exalted Him and given Him the name above every name. God fulfilled for Jesus what He promises for me... "Humble yourself before the Lord and He will exalt you" (James 4:10). Jesus humbled Himself more than any other man ever could. (Jesus is the only one it could be said of, "He was fully man and fully God".) And so God exalted Him higher than any other man would ever experience.

Jesus is so highly exalted that at His name, EVERY knee will bow and EVERY tongue will confess, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father. It glorifies the Father to see His Son exalted. It glorifies the Father to lift me up when I humble myself before Him according to the name of Jesus.

Everything with God is what I most desire... His encouragement, His love, fellowship with Him, His affection and compassion, His humble generosity and sacrifice. He is most glorified when I am most satisfied in Him... and I am most satisfied in Him when He is most glorified in me. O Lord, please make it so in me!

Vs. 12-13 ~ So what do I do with all this information? I remember that it all starts with the motivation of God's generous, faithful love toward me expressed in encouragement, comfort, relationship, affection, and compassion. So... work out my salvation with fear and trembling... awe and respect. Remember who it is that's at work in me! God Himself is at work in me, not to shame me or condemn me... but to help my desires and actions to align with what pleases Him. It brings Him pleasure to do this great work in me. The fear and trembling I experience is not a fear that drives me from God, but it drives me closer to Him... experiencing more and more encouragement, more comfort, more fellowship, more affection, and more compassion. When He is my motivation, His commands are not a burden, but a joy.

O Lord, here I am. Please do this work in me. And help me to model after You in pursuing unity with humility, laying my self interests down... whether it be in ministry to my husband, to my family, to the women I counsel, or to whoever You place in my path. Help me to value them as You do... and let it complete MY joy to glorify You.