

Philippians Chapter 2
Part 1
The Submissive Mind
'Joy in spite of people'

Introduction:

Here we are then at the start of chapter 2. We are beginning to see that the Christian walk is not a playground, but a battleground and Paul speaks very seriously about our involvement. We may not all be evangelists as was Paul in chapter 1, but we may all be servants, if we choose. In chapter 2 Paul majors on humility and service, giving the example of Jesus and some of his colleagues.

I do hope you have looked at the appendix to Philippians 1 where I gave you some of the 'one another' scriptures, because Paul will be speaking about that in this study, if you haven't might I suggest you go back now and have a look before you go any further, because you will very soon see why you need to have studied them.

If you are ready, then let's go...

Thomas Merton said *'Perfect humility implies perfect confidence in the power of God before Whom no other power has any meaning, and for Whom there is no such thing as an obstacle. Humility is the surest sign of strength'*.

Philippians 2: 1 – 11 NIV

Imitating Christ's Humility

'¹If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ²then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. ⁴Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, ⁷but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that 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.'

This is probably one of the most well-known passages of scripture, the 'hymn' of Philippians 2. It gives us a paradigm, an example, of what God wants to bring forth in us, the nature of His Son.

One of the biggest obstacles to the Christ life we might say is other people. We could all be 'good' Christians if we were on our own, but it seems that other people prevent us.

Someone once said *'I love mankind; it is people I cannot stand!'*

In Philippians Chapter 1 we saw Paul's **single** mind in the face of adverse circumstances, now in chapter 2 we will see his **submissive** mind in regard to people. He loves them and cares about them with all his heart and he points again to our example in attitude and behaviour – the Man Christ Jesus.

At the end of the previous chapter, I gave you some of the 'one another' scriptures to study. Here in chapter two, we find the first thing Paul speaks about is loving and forbearing with one another as Christ loves and forbears with us. *'Let **this** mind'*, he says, emphasis added, *'be in you'*. Easier said than done, Paul!

He does not see people either as an enemy or an obstacle. His submission to that One Master, means that he understands the mind of Christ and so he writes from his place of confinement about the nature and love of the Lord Jesus Christ which he wants us to display to each other. *'Let **this** mind'* be in you, he says.

He understands that the enemy is there to grow us spiritually whilst people are there to grow us in the character and likeness of Jesus. They are our 'grace growers' if you like.

So to start this part of the study, having read this scripture, stop now and ask the Holy Spirit who your current 'grace growers' are.

Make three columns, head the first with the name of the person who is currently grating on you, the second column with the thing that irritates you about them, and the final column, what God is doing **in** you through them. What grace is He currently growing - love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, kindness, longsuffering, goodness, self-control? It's another word for the fruit of the Spirit being produced in you through your life's circumstances, which are sometimes engineered by, and always allowed, by God. Remember, He *allows* in his infinite wisdom what He could easily prevent by His power.

Paul was facing problems with people at Rome.

Romans 1:13-18

You will remember in Philippians 1 he spoke of those who preached the gospel with strife and dissention in Rome, but he didn't care so long as the gospel was preached.

Philippians 1:15 NIV

'It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill.'

But he also had his problems with the people back at Philippi.

When Epaphroditus brought Paul a generous gift from the church at Philippi and good news from the church as well, he also brought some bad news about a possible split in the family there. There was a double threat to the church at Philippi.

Philippians 3:1-3

False teaching coming into the church, and -

Philippians 4:1-3

members disagreeing with one another.

What Odious (Euodia) and So Touchy (Syntyche) were debating about we are not told, it could have been how they saw their position within the fellowship – we do not know. However, Paul knew what some people today do not know, that is there is a difference between unity and uniformity. True spiritual unity comes from within; it is a matter of the heart. Uniformity, on the other hand, is the result of pressure from without. That is why Paul opens this section of his letter by appealing to the highest possible spiritual motive.

Philippians 2:1-4

Paul is saying to them in a most gracious way, church, your disagreements reveal that there is a spiritual problem within the fellowship that is only going to be resolved when your hearts are right with each other and with Jesus. Since the believers at Philippi are 'in Christ' that should encourage them to work towards unity and love, not division and rivalry.

Paul wanted them to see that the basic cause of the problem was their self-absorption, their self-centredness. There is no joy in the life of a believer who puts themselves at the centre of everything and who demands to be put first at the expense of everyone else.

If the secret of joy in spite of circumstances is the single mind, the secret of joy in spite of people is the **submissive** mind, letting the mind of Christ rule.

Philippians 2:3 - *'³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.'*

This is where we come to the crux of the issue. Many of us come into Christianity receiving Jesus as Saviour, but not as Lord. Unless and until He is our Lord and we are His possession, Philippians 2:3 will remain a mystery to us. We just cannot do this thing in our own strength. We can exert self control, determine to love people, but we will run out of 'steam' and the real 'me' will surface sooner or later. Conversely we may only stay around those with whom we get on well and with whom we agree. This was what was causing the division in Philippi – Euodia and Syntyche had their own ideas about how things should be run and they were making it known to the whole church at the risk of bringing division.

We need a complete transformation of our minds to enable us to think the way God thinks and see things the way He sees them, He tells us in –

Isaiah 55:8-11

Bob Mumford coined the phrase regarding Romans 12:1 'be transformed by the *removal* of your mind'! Every one of us needs a brain transplant, removal sounds like a great idea to me. God's ways are not our ways and He definitely *does not* think the way we do, or see things the way we see them.

Everything that's on His mind brings forth a harvest of good fruit. Wouldn't you love to have a mind like that?

The first step toward this is a mind **surrendered** to the Lordship of Christ. That is why making Jesus your Lord is so important.

If you haven't done that, why not stop just here and ask Him to not only be your Saviour, but your Lord.

Our submission is to God, if we are submitted to Him, we will not 'bite and devour one another' -

Galatians 5: 14 -15 NKJV *¹⁴For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." ¹⁵But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!*

In Chapter 1 Paul puts Jesus first, in chapter two, he puts others second, fulfilling what Jesus said was the first and greatest commandment to - 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength' and the second - 'your neighbour as yourself.'

Matthew 22:37-39.

In Chapter 1 Paul is a soul winner, in chapter 2, he becomes a servant.

And Paul talks about humility in this Chapter; humility is the opposite of pride. Humility describes a person who does not think of themselves at all, they are so wrapped up in Jesus. Humility is the grace that when you think you have it – 'I'm ever so 'umble' - you have just shown you haven't!

A truly humble person knows and accepts themselves without feeling the need to be constantly referring to themselves, they also recognise that everything that is good about them is what God has done, is doing and will continue to do to bring them into the image and likeness of Jesus. The humble person yields themselves wholeheartedly to Jesus to be a servant, for the glory of God and for the good of others.

Romans 12:1 – 3 NIV

Living Sacrifices

¹Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. ³For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.'

Philippians 2:3, 4

Paul is saying, have the mind of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:5

'We are servants for the Lord Jesus sake'.

Galatians 1:10 NIV

'¹⁰ Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ.'

If we have a **single** mind we will not have a problem with the **submissive** mind. Paul gives us four great examples of people who had a submissive mind –

- Jesus
- Paul himself
- Timothy
- Epaphroditus

Paul begins with Jesus, because Jesus is our greatest example.

Jesus was the servant King. In giving His life a ransom for many, He became the perfect example of what it means to follow Him by laying down our lives in the service of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He showed total agape, the selfless giving of His own life to save us, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, the Message says it like this –

Philippians 2:5-8 The Message

'Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.'

When we speak of the mind of Christ, we are talking about the **heart attitude** of the Lord Jesus. He didn't think so much of Himself that he clung to the advantages of being God – true humility. If our attitude is selfish, our actions will be destructive and divisive –

James 4: 1 – 10

This particular scripture is very good in the Message if you have it.

So, Jesus did not think of Himself, but of others. His outlook and attitude was that of unselfish concern for others doing only the will of the Father during His earthly life.

Jesus modelled for us both the perfect **servant** and the **submissive** will. Paul traces these steps in the life of Jesus in -

Philippians 2:7 AMP

'But stripped Himself [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a servant (slave), in that He became like men and was born a human being.'

1. He emptied Himself, laying aside His own power
2. He became a human being in a sinless physical body
3. He used that body to serve, leaving us an example
4. He took that body to the cross and willingly died for us

What grace! From heaven to earth, from glory to shame, from master to servant, from life to death, even death on a cross.

John 13:1-17

Jesus washed the disciples' feet. That was the submissive mind in action. It is no good thinking of others if we do not get down to the nitty gritty of serving them. It is one thing to talk about it, and a completely different thing to do it.

Are you prepared to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ? Service is one of the marks of a submissive mind – but you have to let **Him** choose the field of service for you, that is the mark of a submissive mind.

Acts 26:16

Acts 22:15

Philippians 2:8

Many people are willing to serve others if it does not cost them anything, but if there is a price tag then suddenly they lose their interest in serving.

Then there is the question of sacrifice. Verse 8 shows us that Jesus' death was not the death of a martyr, but the death of a Saviour. Jesus willingly paid the price and sacrificed Himself. It has been said that ministry that costs nothing, accomplishes nothing. You will remember that David in the Old Testament would not give the Lord that which had cost him nothing.

The person with the submissive mind does not avoid sacrifice, they live for the glory of God, they have counted the cost, paid the price, and it is settled. This was the attitude of Paul in verse 17, Timothy in verse 20, and Epaphroditus, verses 20 – 30.

Philippians 2:17-30 New International Version

¹⁷ *But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.* ¹⁸ *So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.'*

Timothy and Epaphroditus

'¹⁹I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. ²⁰ I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. ²¹For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. ²³ I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. ²⁴ And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. ²⁵But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. ²⁶ For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. ²⁷ Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. ²⁹ Welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honour men like him, ³⁰ because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me.'

So we see **service** and **sacrifice** go together with the **submissive** mind. It means that you have laid down your will at the feet of Jesus and decided that you will be His love slave. Whatever your life may consist of after that, it is *His* will. A submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to *suffer*, but how much we are willing to *sacrifice*. One of the paradoxes of the Christian walk is the more we give the more we receive. The more we sacrifice, the more God blesses. This is why the submissive mind leads to joy inexpressible and full of glory, as the word tells us that if we share in His suffering we shall also share in His glory.

Philippians 3:10

A truly submissive and humble heart never mentions or measures the sacrifice, the person who constantly tells others how much they have given or done does not have a submissive mind. So the question is – has it cost you anything to be a Christian? Take a break at this point and see what your answer is to this question.

And the final thing with a submissive mind is that it glorifies God.

Philippians 2:9 – 11

Competition that pits Christian against Christian and ministry against ministry is fruitless and gives the enemy a place he should never have. Jesus humbled Himself and God highly exalted Him – Jesus' whole purpose was to glorify the Father –

John 17:1

The whole purpose for Jesus was that He might finish the work His Father sent Him to do and that He might bring glory to Him.

May we have the same goal for our lives.

Amen.

Fellowship of the saints with one another, all scriptures taken from the Amplified Bible:

John 13:14 *'If I then, your Lord and Teacher (Master) have washed your feet, you ought (it is your duty, you are under obligation, you owe it) to wash one another's feet.'*

John 13:34 *'I give you a new commandment: that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another.'*

John 15:12, 17 *'This is My commandment: that you love one another (just) as I have loved you. (17) This is what I command you: that you love one another.'*

Romans 12:5,10,16 *'So we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ (the Messiah) and individually we are parts one of another (mutually dependent on one another). (10) Love one another with brotherly affection (as members of one family) giving precedence and showing honour to one another. (16) Live in harmony with one another: do not be haughty (snobbish, high minded, exclusive) but readily adjust yourself to (people, things) and give yourselves to humble tasks. Never overestimate yourself or be wise in your own conceits.'*

Rom. 13:8; *'Keep out of debt and owe no man anything, except to love one another: for he who loves his neighbour (who practices loving others) has fulfilled the Law (relating to one's fellow men, meeting all its requirements.)'*

Romans 14:13,19 *'Then let us no more criticize and blame and pass judgment on one another, but rather decide and endeavour never to put a stumbling block or an obstacle or hindrance in the way of a brother. (19) So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and for mutual up building (edification and development) of one another.'*

Romans 15:5-7,14 *'Now may the God Who gives the power of patient endurance, (steadfastness), Who supplies encouragement, grant you to live in such mutual harmony and such full sympathy with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may (unanimously) with united hearts and one voice, praise and glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah). Welcome and receive (to your hearts) one another, then, even as Christ has welcomed and received you, for the glory of God (14) Personally I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you yourselves are rich in goodness, amply filled with all (spiritual) knowledge and competent to admonish and counsel and instruct one another also.'*

Romans 16:16 *'Greet one another with a holy (consecrated) kiss. All the churches of Christ (the Messiah) wish to be remembered to you.'*

1 Corinthians 11:33 *'So then, my brothers, when you gather together to eat (the Lord's supper) wait for one another.'*

1 Corinthians 12:25 *'So that there should be no division or discord or lack of adaptation (of the parts of the body to each other) but the members all alike should have a mutual interest and care for one another.'*

Galatians 5:13,15,26 *'For you brethren were (indeed) called to freedom only (do not let your) freedom be an incentive to your flesh and an opportunity or excuse for selfishness but through love you should serve one another. (15)But if you bite and devour one another (in partisan strife) be careful that you (and your whole fellowship) are not consumed by one another. (26) Let us not become vainglorious and self-conceited, competitive and challenging and provoking and irritating to one another, envying and being jealous of one another.'*

Galatians 6:2 *'Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens and troublesome moral faults and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly and law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking (in your obedience to it).'*

Ephesians 4:2,25,32 *'Living as becomes you, with complete lowliness of mind (humility) and meekness (unselfishness, gentleness, mildness) with patience, bearing with one another and making allowances because you love one another. (25)Therefore, rejecting all falsity and being done now with it, let everyone express the truth with his neighbour, for we are all parts of one body and members of one another. (32) And become useful and helpful and kind to one another, tender hearted (compassionate, understanding, loving hearted) forgiving one another readily and freely.'*

Ephesians 5:21 *'Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.'*

Philippians 2:3 *'Do nothing from factional motives (through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends) or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the other as better than and superior to himself (thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves).'*

Colossians 3:9, 13 *'Do not lie to one another, for you have stripped off the old (unregenerate) self with its evil practices. (13) Be gentle and forbearing with one another and, if one has a difference (a grievance or complaint) against another, readily pardoning each other; even as the Lord has (freely) forgiven you, so must you also (forgive).'*

1 Thessalonians 3:12 *'And may the Lord make you to increase and excel and overflow in love for one another and for all people, just as we also do for you.'*

1 Thessalonians 4:9,18 *'But concerning brotherly love (for all other Christians) you have no need to have anyone write you, for you yourselves have been (personally) taught by God to love one another. (18) Therefore comfort and encourage one another with these words.'*

1 Thessalonians 5:11,15 *'Therefore encourage (admonish, exhort) one another and edify (strengthen and build up) one another, just as you are doing. (15) See that none of you repays another with evil for evil but always aim to show kindness and seek to do good to one another and to everybody.'*

Titus 3:3 *'For we also were once thoughtless and senseless, obstinate and disobedient, deluded and misled (we too were once slaves to all sorts of cravings and pleasures, wasting our days in malice and jealousy and envy, hateful (hated and detestable) and hating one another.'*

Hebrews 10:24, 25 *'And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities (25) not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together (as believers) as is the habit of some people, but admonishing (warning urging and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching.'*

James 4:11 *'My brethren, do not speak evil about or accuse one another. He that maligns a brother or judges his brother is maligning and criticizing the Law and judging the Law. But if you judge the Law, you are not a practicer of the Law, but a censor and judge of it.'*

James 5:9,16 *'Do not complain brethren, against one another so that you (yourselves) may not be judged. Look! The Judge is (already) standing at the very door. (16) Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offences, your sins) and pray (also) for one another, that you may be healed and restored (to a spiritual tone of mind and heart). The earnest, (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available (dynamic in its working).'*

1 Peter 1:22 *'Since by your obedience to the Truth through the (Holy) Spirit you have purified your hearts for the sincere affection of the brethren (see that you) love one another fervently from a pure heart.'*

1 Peter 4:9 *'Practice hospitality to one another (those of the household of faith). (Be hospitable, be a lover of strangers, with brotherly affection for the unknown guests, the foreigners, the poor, and all others who come your way who are of Christ's body.) And (in each instance) do it ungrudgingly (cordially and graciously, without complaining, but as representing Him.)'*

1 Peter 5:5,14 *'Likewise, you who are younger and of lesser rank, be subject to the elders (the ministers and spiritual guides of the church) – (giving them due respect and yielding to their counsel). Clothe (apron) yourselves, all of you, with humility (as the garb of a servant, so that its covering cannot be stripped from you, with freedom from pride and arrogance) toward one another. For God sets Himself against the proud (the insolent, the overbearing, the disdainful, the presumptuous, the boastful) – (and He opposes, frustrates and defeats them) but gives grace (favour blessing) to the humble. (14) Salute one another with a kiss of love (the symbol of mutual affection).'*

1 John 1:7 *'But if we (really) are living and walking in the light, as He (Himself is in the light we have (true, unbroken) fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses (removes) us from all sin and guilt (keeps us cleansed from sin in all its forms and manifestations).'*

1 John 3:11,23 *'For this is the message (the announcement) which you have heard from the first, that we should love one another (23) And this is His order (His command, His injunction): that we should believe in (put our faith and trust in and adhere to and rely on) the name of His Son, Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and that we should love one another just as He has commanded us.'*

1 John 4:7,11,12 *'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is (springs) from God; and he who loves (his fellowmen) is begotten (born) of God and is coming (progressively) to know and understand God'*

(to perceive and recognize and get a better and clearer knowledge of Him) (11) Beloved, if God loved us so (very much), we also ought to love one another (12) No man has at any time (yet) seen God. But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us!

2 John 5 *'And now, I beg you, lady (Cyria) not as if I were issuing a new charge (injunction or command), but (simply recalling to your mind) the one we have had from the beginning, that we love one another.'*

Conscience:

Job 27:6;
Acts 23:1;
Acts 24:16;
Romans 2:14, 15;
Romans 9:1;
Romans 13:5
1 Corinthians 8:7, 9–13;
1 Corinthians 10:27–32;
2 Corinthians 1:12;
2 Corinthians 4:2;
2 Corinthians 5:11;
1 Timothy 1:5, 19;
1 Timothy 3:9;
1 Timothy 4:2
2 Timothy 1:3
Hebrews 9:14;
Hebrews 10:22;
Hebrews 13:18;
1 Peter 2:19;

