

25. Learning to Regard One Another as More Important than Self

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to pray for one another. We saw that we are to pray for more than just the physical needs of others. We are also to pray for the spiritual growth of others. We saw that it is very important to pray for the spiritual growth of our physical and spiritual children. The Lord is able to accomplish more than they could ever imagine through their lives as we pray for them. Today, we are going to focus on an attitude that Christ calls us to have in our relationship with one another. Philippians 2:3 says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.” This attitude will be the focus of our topic today.

As we read Philippians 2:3, we see that we are to regard one another as more important than self. This is the exact opposite of the attitude of the world. Nearly all people who have not placed their trust in Christ are very self-centered and selfish. Such people often feel that we are showing weakness when we regard one another as more important than self because they are so self-centered that they cannot even understand the attitude that Christ calls us to have toward others in this verse.

Philippians 2:1-4 describes the attitudes that Christ wants to develop in our lives that will lead us to regard one another as more important than self. Then, Philippians 2:5-8 show us how Christ demonstrated those attitudes so that we can follow His example. As we model this attitude in our own lives, our physical and spiritual children will see that their lives can also model the attitude of Christ as they grow spiritually in their lives and become more like Christ.

Philippians 2:1-2 says, “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.” In verse one, we see that Christ does several things that help us to regard one another as more important than self. Christ comes alongside us and gives us consolation or encouragement. Christ promised in John 14:16-18, “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever--the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” Christ encourages and comforts us because He cares for us.

Christ chose to give us the comfort of His love. This speaks of the fact that Christ comes close to us and whispers words of comfort and love to us. Here, we see that Christ first shows the actions that provide encouragement. Then, He speaks the words that minister that encouragement to us. By combining His actions and His words, Christ gives us an example to follow as we minister to other Christians. We are able to see the needs of others and minister to them only as we regard others as more important than self.

Christ also gives us the fellowship of the Spirit. Christ explained this in more detail when He said in John 15:15-16, “No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made

known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” Christ does not consider Himself separate from us. Instead, He considers us friends and partners. In fact, in John 20:17 Christ called the disciples, “My brethren”. We are able to enjoy the fellowship of the Spirit because we are partners in ministry with Christ.

Then, Paul wrote that Christ also shows His affection and mercy. Here, we see words that speak of the fact that Christ expresses His love to us. As Christ prepared for the cross, He said to the disciples in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Christ wanted the disciples to know His peace. He wanted them to know that they did not need to be troubled or afraid because He would not forget them even though He was going to leave this earth and return to the Father.

Paul wrote that the way we would fulfill his joy was by having the same attitude as Christ had for us when Christ showed that He regarded us as more important than His own life. We will fulfill this joy by being like-minded. This means that we are to think the same way that Christ thinks and have the same attitudes that Christ demonstrated in verse one. To think as Christ thinks means that we regard others as more important than self.

As we learn to think in the same way that Christ thought as He thought of us, we see that three things will happen in our lives. First, we will have the same love for others that Christ has for us. John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We will only be able to obey this new commandment as we yield our lives to Christ so that His love flows through us to other Christians.

Second, we will be of one accord. The word that is translated “one accord” is actually two words put together and this is the only time that it is used in the New Testament. The two words are the words for “together” and “soul”. This means that *we will have the same desires and goals in our lives*. It is possible for Christians to have the same desires and goals in our lives because we all have the same Holy Spirit living within us. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, He will give us both the desire and the power to serve Christ by loving others. Galatians 5:13 says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” We are thankful for the opportunity to serve others if we are motivated by the love of Christ.

Third, we will be of one mind. To “have the same mind” means *to have the same purpose in life*. Romans 15:5-6 says, “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another, according to Christ Jesus, that you may with one mind and one mouth glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The Lord wants us to yield our thoughts to Him and allow His thoughts to fill our thinking. This involves thinking the thoughts of God from the Word of God. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”

As we think the thoughts of God, our thinking will be transformed. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” As our minds are being transformed by the Word of God, we are then able to meditate on the Word of God. Psalm 1:1-3 says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” This process helps us to make decisions and choices based on godly thoughts rather than worldly thoughts. That makes it possible for us to follow the example of Christ and regard one another as more important than self.

Philippians 2:3-4 says, “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.” As we yield to the Lord and think godly thoughts, these verses show that such thinking will also transform our actions. We will not act on the basis of self-ambition to get what we want to please ourselves. We will not act out of pride or conceit. Instead, godly thinking will cause us to have a humble attitude because we realize that all that we have comes from the Lord. That makes it possible to esteem others better than self.

When we esteem others better than self, we will be concerned about the interests of others. That will cause us to follow the example of Christ and do what is best for others even though it may involve suffering on our part. That was the example that Christ gave when He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. He provided the payment for our sin even though it meant suffering and death for Him. Philippians 2:7-8 says that Christ, “... but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Christ became a servant for us and died in our place for our sin. That is the example that Christ gave us to follow.

As a physical or spiritual parent to other Christians, we will only help our physical and spiritual children to learn to regard one another as more important than self if we provide an example for them to follow. The example that we provide will have a great impact on what our children will become. If we have the same attitude that Christ had, our physical and spiritual children will likely develop similar attitudes. They will also begin to regard others as more important than self. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to become more like Christ.