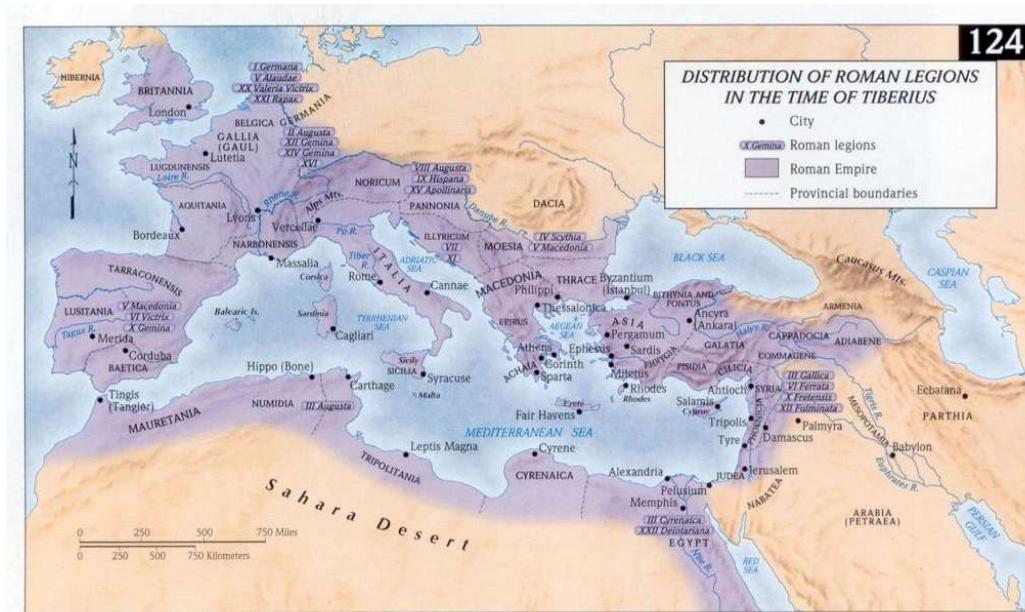


Study 4

THE MIND OF CHRIST



Background

Paul has shared with the Philippians the hardships that was enduring, yet despite these difficulties and the looming doom of his martyrdom, he was able to rejoice. As much as he loved his beloved Philippians he had become concerned about news of a dispute between two of its leaders that seems to have upset him and needed to be addressed (Phil. 4:2). Rather than *reacting* to this dispute between two women he felt obvious affection for, he set a model for church leaders today about how to deal with the early stages of conflict within a church. From my experience many pastors today become frustrated at what they consider the petty reasons for conflicts among believers within their congregation and then react in frustration to it which often seems to only inflame the situation rather than resolve it. Wise pastors and church leaders have often learned that sometimes a point can be made without confronting it *directly*. Perhaps this is what Paul has been doing thus far by talking about his present sufferings and in chapter two is about to continue by discussing the sufferings and humility of Christ. My posthumous mentor, Dr. F.W. Boreham, taught me a lot about the art of pastoral

subtlety in dealing with church conflicts. Many of essays reflect a *subtle* point of correction for younger inexperienced pastors like myself. In presenting this examination of Philippians chapter two's first eleven verses, I too will try to be subtle as I seek to correct those like Euodia or Syntyche who have allowed some offence between them and another member of the church to create a breach in the church's fellowship.

The Attitudes Needed to Fellowship

Philippians 2:1 resembles Paul's benediction to the Corinthian believers (2Cor. 13:14) who had been troubled by agents of disunity. To the Corinthians Paul concluded his epistle by invoking a reflection upon the ultimate example of unity: *the Trinity*.

1. Read Second Corinthians 13:14 and note how Paul refers to each member of the Trinity and what each member of the Triune Godhead contributed to enabling the unity of believers within the Corinthian church -

The Father: _____

The Son: _____

The Holy Spirit: _____

2. How then does Paul seem to invoke the Trinity in addressing the Philippians in Philippians 2:1 and what each member of the Triune Godhead contributed to enabling the unity of believers within the Philippian church?

What does the Father's *love* enable: _____

What does being *in* Christ enable: _____

What does being *in* the Spirit enable: _____

Wise church leaders model how to encourage, comfort, get along, appropriately show affection. Dr. Stuart Robinson states, "To discover how warm or cold a Christian congregation may be the simplest test is metaphorically to place a thermometer in the mouth of the Pastor. If the Pastor is 'hot', zealous and passionate regarding their faith, the people will be too" (*Daring To Disciple - Making Jesus' Last Command Our First Priority*. 2020, 34). You can not be spiritually *on fire* and yet inconsiderate of your brothers and sisters in Christ.

3. In Philippians 2:2 what did Paul say would bring him joy?

4. If we were to apply Philippians 2:2 would it be possible for us to be *united* yet disagreeing with each other? Discuss.

Achieving Humility

In encouraging the Philippian believers to be united, Paul tells them to *think differently* which the ESV translates as “mind” (Phil. 2:2; 2:5). C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* that humility began with how a person thought about themselves. Humility was not, wrote Lewis, a matter of thinking *less of yourself*, but a matter of thinking *less about yourself*. In this way, *pride* was always a matter about how a person thought of *others*. Pride was thinking *competitively* about others.

5. Instead of thinking competitively about others, how does Philippians 2:3-4 instruct believers to think about themselves?

6. In Philippians 2:5 believers are told to collectively have the mind of Christ. How does John 13:5-6 reveal the mind of Christ in this context?

Christ's Deity Makes His Humility Remarkable

The Greco-Roman gods of the ancient world were jealous, petty, proud and competitive. But Jesus, God-in-the-flesh, was meek, humble, lowly, the Servant to all (Phil. 2:6-7).

7. According to Philippians 2:8 what was Christ's ultimate expression of His humility?

Christ's sufferings culminating in His death on the Cross led to Him atoning for our sins, defeating death, and triumphing over the enemy. But ultimately it brought the eternal Father glory and declared once and for all that there was nothing in the universe, not even death, that was more powerful than God.

8. What then did the Father give to the Son in honour of what He had done? (Phil. 2:9)

And now because Christ has conquered sin, death, and powers of darkness, everyone will bow their knee to Him and acknowledge that Christ is Lord — either willingly and gratefully, or begrudgingly and obstinately (Phil. 2:10-11). I hope that you and I will desire to do it worshipfully.

Application Discussion

- Why do you think some believers find it difficult to congratulate others?
- How would you counsel a struggling believer who was having an ongoing conflict with another believer over some small thing?
- How can we reflect the lessons from the unity within the trinity into our church?