

Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus

Key verse 2:5: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (Phil 2:5 NIV)

Hello. I am Nehemiah Lee from St. Petersburg Art Center chapter in Russia. Today we'll be looking at a passage from Philippians chapter 2 titled, "Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." I will read the key verse and will pray. "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus." (Phil 2:5 NIV)

The most important thing in the community of believers is to be one. When there is a struggle in the community, the church, which is the body of Christ, is torn apart, and the sheep are wounded and scattered. So before his ascension, the last lesson Jesus gave his disciples was to be one. The church in Philippi also struggled with the issue of becoming one. In response, Paul earnestly urged them to have the mindset of Jesus.

In verse 1, the Philippian believers encouraged each other in Christ, comforted each other with love, shared the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and showed compassion and mercy. What were they supposed to do with this gift?

Look at verse 2, "then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind." (NIV). The St. Petersburg Art Center, where I serve, consists mostly of musicians, so I'm going to give an example about an orchestra. Each instrument has a distinct characteristic. It has its own tone and sound. If all the instruments in the orchestra play randomly at the same time, it wouldn't be a pleasant sound. For example, if an oboe thinks, "my sound is the clearest in the world" and keeps playing, ignoring other instruments in the orchestra, its "clear" sound becomes a "clear" noise. Only when each instrument plays notes on pitch, keeps the time, follows the conductor's direction, listens to other instruments and follows the dynamics of the flow – only then the orchestra can produce beautiful music.

Likewise, the believers in a faith community each possess a different gift and personality. Therefore, to create a beautiful life and environment we need harmony. We need to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind" (v2). This way, the community can become a strong fortress. It becomes a strong stronghold that does not fall even at Satan's attacks.

What are the things that prevent us from being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind? "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit" (verse 3a). (The Korean word used for "selfish ambition" also means "fighting.") The selfish

ambition is when a person tries to fulfill their personal ambitions in the name of Jesus. Conceit is considering oneself superior and greater than others. Such a mindset destroys the unity of the church. Therefore, Paul recommends four things: “Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (verses 3b-4).

First, be humble. We need to realize how great a sinner we are before God and we need to realize how much God loves the other person too.

Secondly, “value others above yourself.” We are good at finding other people's weaknesses. However, rather than focusing on our fellow coworkers' weaknesses, we should recognize and acknowledge our coworker's strengths and desire to help them develop their strengths even more.

Thirdly, take care of your own work. We should be good stewards of the gifts that each person received from God, diligently carrying out our work in everyday life.

Fourthly, look to the interests of the others. We shouldn't look to only our own interests. We need to attend to other's interests. Let me give you an example from the time that I was a college student living in a common life with other shepherds. There used to be free weekly lunch tickets for the campus dining hall offered in the common life so that struggling shepherds may not starve. Usually those tickets were gone the day they were made available. So, some shepherds couldn't get even one ticket for the week. This is an example of what not to do. Let's leave some spare “tickets” for other coworkers. Let's be considerate of others and see to others' needs.

So then, how can we be like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind? Let's look at verse 5: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” Paul says to have the same mindset as Christ Jesus. This means, we are to have the same mindset towards each other in the Church community, as we do towards Jesus Christ.

In Greek, the word “mindset” is φρόνημα (*fronima*), which can be translated as “an attitude.” A behaviour does not change unless the attitude also changes, much like misbehaving teenagers who do not easily change their behaviors even if they are severely punished by their teachers.

Apostle Paul says to have the mindset of Jesus. The verb “have” is imperative. We should strive to embrace this mindset. If we don't put in the effort, we may age but not mature.

Then what is this mindset of Jesus that we are to have? “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage” (verse 6). Jesus, though initially equal with God, gave up his rightful privileges. He chose the path of giving away what is rightfully his rather than claiming it. Instead of using his position to maximize his profit, he embraced the mindset of sacrifice and humility.

Look at verse 7: “Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” Jesus also made himself nothing by taking the nature of a servant and became like humans. It is hard to make oneself nothing. “Don’t disrespect me. I have a degree from Ehwa Womans University!” In this way, we cannot tolerate other’s attacks on our pride. However, incarnation is not merely on the level of one person lowering themselves below another. For God to become a human being is much more humbling than for a human being to become a cockroach. Recently, cockroaches made an appearance in our house. At first, I left them alone, thinking that they too are living creatures. However, over time, they began to increase in number. So, I ruthlessly stepped on them and burned them with fire. They are worthless lives. But then, it dawned on me that, perhaps for God, we are no better than cockroaches. That we are beings that would perish without a word if we were judged with fire. To think that God loved humans who are no better than bugs, that he lowered himself to the point of becoming such a creature himself — I realized that this is an unthinkable degree of humility. Not only that, but Jesus gave up his own life to save us who are no better than cockroaches. Could we give up our lives for cockroaches?

Such humility is practically impossible, so how can we humble ourself to that point? It is possible only when we embrace the same mindset as Christ Jesus. If we remind ourselves of the grace we have received, we cannot help but be humbled. Even Jesus, who is by nature God, emptied himself to obey. Obedience is going further than humbling yourself because one has to actually act. In this way, when we have the mindset of Christ and obey, surprisingly, we grow and bear good fruit.

If you look at the marriage life, even in the best combination of great people, quarrels are bound to arise. If the couple insists on winning against each other, they would hurt each other to the point that they would separate. However, when the husband and wife embrace the mindset of Christ, their family will bloom laughter and happiness.

Likewise, when we take care of a sheep, we can shatter the relationship in a moment of anger, even though we may have been caring for them for a while. When we prioritize expressing our emotions, it may feel good at the time, but we cannot save lives or become one. Rather, we can maintain peace when we empty ourselves, humble ourselves, and serve others. We should constantly have the mindset of Christ and have it as the foundation of all aspects of our spiritual life. In this way, our community can become one in spirit and of one mind.

I wasn’t aware of it, but my wife tells me that I am a man of great pride. Looking back on 20 years in Russia, I see that I lived a self-centered life. At first, Missionary Paul Noh was the leader of St. Petersburg Art Center, and I succeeded him in 2010. As soon as I came to Russia, I worked as an employee in a travel agency founded by Missionary Paul Noh. Now that I am a leader of both the church and the travel agency, I see that I used to excessively assert my opinions and insisted too much on my way. Yet, Missionary Paul Noh never once said “no” to my opinions or arguments, even though his name is Mr. Noh. He tried to encourage me and develop my strengths despite my numerous weaknesses. Only now do I confess that it is through Msn. Paul Noh’s humility and serving that the Art

Center chapter exists and that I am who I am. I realize that it is time for me to learn and imitate his humility and servant leadership. I sincerely pray that I may have the mindset of Christ to humbly serve Art Center coworkers.

We can all agree that it is good to have the mindset of Christ and humble ourselves. But it is easier said than done. It is not so easy to sacrifice ourselves and bear the losses. Is the Christian life really the life of only losses?

Look at verse 9-11. "Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God exalted Jesus Christ, who humbled himself and obeyed to the point of death. This is the rule that God has established. God exalts those who humble themselves and embrace the mindset of Christ. He exalts those who, like Jesus Christ, humble themselves for the sake of peace and lead others to the path of righteousness.

Just as God exalted Jesus to the highest place that every tongue would acknowledge that Jesus is Lord, so will he exalt us. Therefore, we should not think that humbling ourselves leads only to suffering. God will surely exalt us. I pray that in the light of such a hope and faith, we may humble ourselves like Jesus and live the lives of obedience.

Let's look at verse 12. "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling," Here the phrase "to work out your salvation" in the context of the passage can mean that the church community needs to work together to resolve the conflicts and discord within the community. Apostle Paul is saying that just as Jesus humbled himself in the human form and obeyed to the point of death, we should also work out our own salvation with fear and trembling by always obeying. God does not want the members of a community to remain in selfish ambition or conceit. He wants us to be of one spirit and of one mind. A life that works out salvation is that which fears God and becomes one in Christ.

However, there's only so much we can do with our sheer efforts because our selfish nature limits us. We might often say, "I can't help it," "I can't help it because I was born like this! Let me just live this way until I die!"

Considering our hopelessly fallen flesh, how can we have the same mindset as Christ and achieve oneness? Look at verse 13. "[For] it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose." God is the one who works in us. He is the one who works in us to fulfill his good purpose — that is, he gives us the desire for the life of unity and the ability to live it out.

I am so moved that the subject of this verse is God. When we consider ourselves honestly, there is no way that we would voluntarily humble ourselves as Christ has done. However, God himself works directly within us. God himself! He gives us the desire, and he works in

each one of our hearts. He leads our quarreling hearts to repentance and gives us the desire to work together as one. I am certain that we can work out our salvation through life in the community. God fulfills his work of redemption by inspiring each of us who are born again to seek oneness in our community. I thank and praise God for his power and grace which works in me to will and to act, regardless of my weaknesses.

Let's look at verses 14 and 15: "Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky." Grumbling and arguing refer to complaining and doubt. When we are filled with complaints and doubts, we end up falling into temptation. Doubt arises from distrust of another person. When we live with distrust of others, we experience doubts and dryness in our daily lives of faith. We lose our joy. We become weak and divided as a community. On the contrary, if we live in thankfulness and trust, wouldn't our community be healthy? Seeing us, people around us will marvel and be amazed. "Can such a thriving and harmonious community really exist?" In this way, we must be able to appear flawless and pure before the unbelievers. If we remain pure and without blemish as children of God in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, we will shine as lights in the world. I pray that we may become such a pure and whole community of love.

Look at verse 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." The drink offering is the last part of a burnt offering, in which wine is poured over the sacrifice on the altar. The sacrifice and service coming from the faith of believers are the sacrificial lives that the believers live within the community of faith. Paul is saying that, if the believers in Philippi are living such lives of sacrifice and service, then Paul would gladly give himself up as the drink offering that completes the sacrifice and rejoice with the Philippian believers. What a humble expression! Even though Paul was in a position deserving of respect in the Philippian church, nevertheless, he expressed his eagerness and even joy in pouring out all that he had for the sake of the Philippian believers. It is easy for us to preach the message of humility to our coworkers but not live it out ourselves. However, Paul was consistent in his teachings and his life. Paul was someone who truly and thoroughly followed the life of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at verse 19. "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you." Acts chapter 16 describes clearly how Timothy and Paul together pioneered the church in Philippi. When Paul was looking for somebody to send to the church in Philippi, some thought only of their own business and did not seek Christ's. Timothy was the only one who was fully committed. He had also previously remained with Paul despite various difficulties and trials they experienced. Because Timothy's character was already tested and proven true, Paul was able to depend on him. Through Timothy, Paul wanted to send his gratitude for the help that the Philippian church provided to him and also to hear and be comforted by any news from them.

Look at verse 25. “But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs.” Epaphroditus was someone whom the Philippian church sent to help Paul. He was also someone who, while helping Paul, became severely ill and almost died, but then he miraculously recovered. Therefore, Paul considered it right to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi, but it was possible that the Philippians would not have approved of him returning so soon. So, to avoid any misunderstanding, Paul thoughtfully laid out what Epaphroditus did. Paul praised him as a brother, coworker, fellow soldier, and their messenger.

Paul honored Timothy and Epaphroditus as fellow coworkers. So, he thoughtfully mentioned them in the letter to ensure that there would be no misunderstanding in the church due to their sudden visit to Philippi.

I was sent as a missionary to Russia St. Petersburg in 2002 and have been a missionary for 20 years. At the time of my departure for Russia, I had not made any disciples in Korea and didn't have the full qualifications or a sense of mission as a missionary. And even now, I have not been able to raise a Russian shepherd yet. Furthermore, due to the revision in the Russian religious law, it became practically illegal to preach to Russians. Considering my position as a missionary, I cannot but admit that I am not fulfilling my mission very well. Yet, despite all these, I have not forgotten the words that I have received at the time that I was sent to Russia: “A life that learns Jesus Christ.” Having held on to these words, though there are still no Russian sheep in the Art Center chapter, I saw four missionary house churches become established in our chapter. Through such spiritual fruit, God helped me realize that my 20 years of missional life have not been in vain. God exalted me — someone who was lacking in faith and passion for mission. God has now prepared the Art Center chapter to be a vessel to serve Russian sheep. I pray that these house churches would have the same mindset as Jesus and obey God just as Jesus did, working out their own salvation. For this, God has been training me to be humble. Because our center coworkers also work together to support ourselves financially, we may have frequent disagreements both at work and at church. I pray that I may remember the saving grace I have received from God and love my coworkers.

I pray that God may work powerfully in the hearts of each of our coworkers so that we may live a life of unity and service. So that, in God's time, we will bear the beautiful fruit of evangelism.

The only way for a community to become one is to have the same mindset as Christ. To have the mindset of Christ is to humble ourselves before God living the life of service and obedience. May we, as a community, fear God and, like Jesus, live the life of unity and sacrifice. Although we, in our sinful and selfish nature, are unable to humble ourselves as Christ has done, God gives us the desire and the ability to do so. May we work out our salvation in a community that is united and, by doing so, bear the fruit of life. Just as God exalted Jesus to the right hand of God's throne after he had obeyed to the point of death, so God will reward us for the life of humility. Therefore, may we humble ourselves and, as a community, have the same mindset as Jesus Christ. Amen.

