

# “Thoughts in Christ Jesus”

December 29, 2024

By Rev. Che Choyong

This is the last Sunday service of the year 2024. I thought the year had flown by. Looking back on this year, I feel that God has helped and guided us in many ways. I hope that this service will be a time to give thanks for God's work and to gain strength for the new year ahead.

I would like to read today's Bible verses.

## **[Philippians 2:1-5]**

- 1. Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,**
- 2. then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.**
- 3. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,**
- 4. not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**
- 5. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

Let me give you some background.

### <1. Background of Philippians>

The church in Philippi was the first church Paul founded in Eastern Europe, which can be confirmed from Acts 16:12. Philippi was a city under Roman colonial rule. It is a city with many Roman veterans and many patriots. So, this city has a very strong Roman color and there were few Jews. The church started as a place for women to pray and worship, as can be inferred from the names of the two female leaders in chapter 4.

The city had a lot of patriotic people, so when Paul proclaimed that Jesus was God and King, he was met with a backlash. Even in the midst of that opposition and persecution, this Philippian church was a church that was zealous toward God and striving to preach Christ. Paul wrote this letter while in prison, and it is well known that the theme of Philippians is a “joy”.

For the people living in this city, Roman citizenship had become very important. It seems that there were many privileges to which they were entitled by virtue of their Roman citizenship. The Philippians were well aware of this, and perhaps that is why Paul emphasizes in Philippians 3:20 that our “nationality is in heaven. I think he wanted to convey that we have privileges and obligations in a different sense of heavenly citizenship.

The letter touched on many topics, but one of them dealt with a certain problem in the Philippian church. It was a schism. From 1:17, we know that this division is a partisan division. They are preaching Christ and doing ministry for God, but some of them are doing it through partisanship. Paul's text for today is about this challenge facing the Philippian church, and he encourages us how to do as people whose nationality is in heaven.

## <2. Be one>.

The first is verse 1.

Divided into two parts, the first half focuses on the human aspect, namely Paul's encouragement and love for the Philippian church congregation.

“If my words of encouragement have helped you to stand firm in the faith in the past, do so in the present. If my love has been a comfort to you in your struggles, respond appropriately to my request now.” I believe this is the meaning.

The second half is about the relationship with God, that is, it focuses on the fellowship of the Philippians, which was generated by the Holy Spirit, and I think it is saying that God has surrounded them with warm affection and mercy.

“If you belong to a community born of the Holy Spirit and consequently enjoy mutual communion, then live worthy of it.” I think this is what Paul is saying here.

And he encourages them to live worthy of those who have accepted God and become Christians. He recommends that they walk in a manner befitting “those who have a nationality in heaven.”

Then verse 2. There is a section in today's text that says “be one,” and Paul has also given the theme of “one” in 1:27. Let us look at the “one” in 1:27.

**[Philippians 1:27].**

**Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know**

**that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel,**

This verse also encourages us to live a life worthy of the gospel. The Philippian Church was being persecuted by the environment around them, so “being one” is a very important and necessary equipment when confronting such things. Being one is not only a useful weapon against this world, but also that it belongs to the essence of the Christian life, he says.

Then he says that “being one,” as he shows us in chapter 2, “is something that fills Paul with joy”.

The “one” in verse 27, mentioned earlier, has elements such as “stand firm” and “fight”. It appears to refer to an outward action, something external. 2:2 I get the impression that the demand to be “one” is not some external action, but something “internal”. Paul is talking about the internal attitude of the Christian, such as “thoughts, lovingkindness,” etc. And he seems to be recommending “one” in these internal areas.

So what was preventing the Philippian church from being internally “one”?

I think we can get a hint from verse 3.

### **3. Do not do anything out of selfishness or vanity,**

The “**selfish thoughts**” here is the same word used for “partisanship” in verse 1:15. They are preaching Christ, but some people seem to have had a kind of “competitive mindset” that they preached with this partisanship. This sense of competition can communicate Christ, but it can destroy reconciliation within the church, and Paul is saying that he suffers because of this.

Next, **vanity** has the basic concept of “vain views” and “error”. It refers vain conceit (to be boastful and selfish), unfounded confidence and unprofitable views. People who are motivated by this are those who arrogantly claim to have the right view, but are actually in error. Such people are also those who are conceited without reason, delusional, covetous of honor, envious (envy) of others, jealous (jealousy), and challenge others to compete with them. Thus, they are also those who try to fight to prove that their ideas are correct.

In fact, you can be a “partisan” and still share Christ. You can see the effect. Through evangelism people believe in Christ. But Paul is very distressed when Christians insist on their own righteousness to each other and have no regard for the other.

I believe that behind the Philippians' zeal to preach Christ, but their inability to be "one" was this human element in their zeal for the gospel. I think Paul is demanding that whoever or whatever it is, cease the desire to boast, and that each of us look back at ourselves and reflect on any possibility (partisanship or vanity) that we may have had that led us to do so. Where there is vain vanity, no matter how good we try to do, we cannot be "one" in it, even if it is a work for God and even if that work produces good results. Christ will be transmitted, but it will be to the detriment to him.

Then Paul said, "**Humble yourselves and consider one another better than yourselves. Each of you look not only to yourselves but also to others.**" Let's think about this verse more details later.

<3. This thought in Christ Jesus.

**5. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:**

Paul also gives us an example. He encourages us to have the mind that is in Christ Jesus.

So what are the thoughts that are in Christ Jesus?

I believe it is written in verses 6-11, but it is also said that verses 6-11 is a hymn or poem. Perhaps it is the same hymn that Paul was singing when he wrote his letter to the Philippian church.

**[Philippians 2:6-11.]**

**:6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;**

**:7 rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant being made in human likeness.**

**:8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!**

**:9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name,**

**:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,**

**:11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

What is the example set by Jesus?

It is said, **“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;”**

This is the exact opposite of Adam. In Genesis, when the serpent says, “When you eat of the fruit, your eyes will be opened, and you will know good and evil like God,” Adam tried to be equal with God. As a result, sin spread to all mankind. Since then, mankind has been no different from Adam. The same is true of the Tower of Babel: “Let us build a tower that will reach heaven, and let us make a name for ourselves.” Higher, higher, higher, to reach God, to become God.

But on the contrary, Jesus Christ did not claim the position of being God, but rather abandoned it and became man. I thought there was no way to explain how the Creator became a creature. Not only that, but He became a servant of all men and lowered Himself. In obedience, He was killed on the cross. But this death was reversed and He was exalted. Rather, **he made himself nothing, by taking the very nature of a servant, he humbled himself even death.**

Unlike those who go high, Jesus goes low, low. Unlike those who claim to be “me, me, me,” he empties himself. But by this “Jesus who is exalted” may be the “principle of the Kingdom of God,” unlike the principle of the fallen human world.

Such a work as Jesus' servant led to the scene where every tongue confessed, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” and it became the glory of God.

I told you that the Philippian church was a dedicated church. They were people who were courageous and faithful enough to share Christ without fear of Roman persecution. I thought that their goal, evangelism, this work of communicating Jesus Christ, might have been partisanship - insisting on the rightness of their own way. But Paul encourages them to learn from Christ Jesus, who became a servant in this aspect.

Paul is also the same. In his other letters, Paul sometimes begins with “Paul, an apostle,” introducing that he is an “apostle,” but in Philippians he seems to be saying, “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,” indicating that he, too, has taken the form of a servant. (1:1)

<4. One who is better than himself.>

Paul also encourages us to fight as one against the outside world, and to serve and unite with other Christians by seeing each other as superior to ourselves in terms of our internal attitudes.

**“3. Rather, in humility value think others above yourselves,**

**4. not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”**

In terms of humility, the example of Jesus Christ is more than just “putting others above yourself”.

For example, this is how it should be. If someone is a “good, wise, earnest, pious, and excellent” person to whom all men would gladly bow, it would not be difficult to “humble” oneself before him or her. But what these verses are saying here is not conditional. We are talking about “humbling ourselves” before a person, even one who lacks these good traits.

Let’s think about this. Did Jesus humble Himself and serve because we humans have “even a little bit of the appearance of being worthy to be served, even a little bit of the appearance of being respected, even a little bit of the appearance of being good” by **God's standards**? No, he served us with none at all. By God's standards, we are perishable.

But we have a habit of looking for and finding the “good” in a person's own standards in order to humble ourselves before him or her, and only then do we humble ourselves. So, when we have to be humble as Christians, but it is difficult, we try our best to find the “good points” of the other person. Of course, this is also a good thing. But Paul is saying that Christians must respect each other “unconditionally”.

The problem of division in the Philippian church will be solved “when we **respect each other**, not because we can respect each other on these grounds or because we have these good qualities, but when we respect each other even if we have no good qualities in the other, even if we have no grounds whatsoever.” What I'm trying to say is that the fundamental problem of division is not “on the ability or goodness” of the other party, but on the attitude of one's own heart.

I think Paul's recommendation and command is that we choose to be low to each other and think better of the other than ourselves. This is the path we, as citizens of the “Kingdom of Heaven,” should follow. It is in this kind of walk that God's glory will be manifested on earth.

We often judge and think about what went well and what did not go well. What things did we look back on and what things did we strive to do better throughout the year's activities? To

the outside, we are to be “one” and share Christ. Inwardly, we are to be “one” and serve one another.

We want to acknowledge the struggles of our fellow workers of faith who have lived with us for a year, and whether the results were good or bad, we want to “unconditionally” lower ourselves to each other, take the form of servants, and embrace the thought of Christ Jesus in our service to each other.

<Conclusion>

We are those who “have a heavenly nationality” and walk on earth. We pray and work for the spread of Christ in the world. God manifests His glory through our image and does His work of evangelization. He has also taught us the desire that we should have. It is the desire to “humble ourselves and consider one another better than ourselves.” It is to think unconditionally that the others are superior. Let us remember the image of Jesus who gave up his own image to become a servant, and let us embrace and practice this thought and walk as “the ones whose citizenship is in heaven.”

In this last service of the year, we would like to thank Jesus for protecting us in all our activities and lives this year, and we would like to reflect on ourselves and move forward into the new year embracing Jesus' thoughts.