

The Consolation Bracket

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Philippians chapter 2, Philippians chapter 2, verse 1.

Been watching Obadiah wrestle a little bit and it's been a fun thing. But if you lose your first match, you enter the consolation bracket. The consolation bracket, and kind of like you missed the opportunity to be a champion. But the consolation is you'll maybe get yourself a ribbon of some sort, participation trophy or something, Right? But here we're going to talk about consolation a little bit.

So in Philippians 2, 1, we're going to read through verse 4. It 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, let nothing be done through sin, 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. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

Let's pray. This is a weighty thing. This is something you and I struggle with continually. We need help understanding it and applying it. Pray with me, for yourself and for our church, that we'd put this perspective into practice.

Let's pray. O Father, Lord, we come. Lord, acknowledging our selfish conceit, deceit, pride, ambition, backbiting, tearing down, Lord, striking those who are part of the body. O Lord, forgive us. Thank you for taking away the stench and the penalty of sin.

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But Lord, help us put into practice the beautiful participation of walking with Christ. Lord, we ask you to do it, please, in Jesus name and Amen. So Paul here is going to start off with a question he's going to ask you and I, the Philippian Church, a question. This is a question that he's not asking because he wants to know the answer. He knows the answer already.

He knows what it means to walk in a certain way. But he's asking us the question so that we can consider and put into practice the evidence or the answer of the question as we apply it to our own life. He is trying to build up the evidence in us to make a decision to walk like Christ. Because he knows just how difficult it is to walk with Christ. He knows how easy it is to follow the world, the flesh and the devil.

Our flesh wants to exalt itself continually.

It is always interested in what we can get from the situation, the circumstance, for our own benefit. It's always looking out for itself. The world is consistently pushing, hammering the rightness of us exalting ourselves. The devil is always there telling us that we can be like God and exalt ourselves, put ourselves on our throne. We are so concerned about building our own kingdom that Paul is going to ask ourselves, ask us questions so that we can put the heaviness of the weight that would contradict our own selfishness would be in view so that we can make decisions that are Christlike.

The evidence against walking with Christ from a fleshly perspective is so powerful that he's asking us to carefully consider the evidence that would cause us to walk with Christ.

If anybody has walked selfishly this week and considered their own priorities above the priorities of other people, then this is good evidence, good time to question ourselves.

If anyone has acted with conceit, it's a good time to put things in a real Christian perspective. So we're going to ask ourselves this question here. It says, therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, any consolation in Christ. Consolation is when it appears that everything has gone wrong.

It says in chapter six of Hebrews, verse 18. It says that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hope, to lay hold of the hope set before us. The Christian message is all about consolation. It's all about a people who appear to have lost their first match. It's all about a broken people who don't deserve anything but having fled to that place of refuge, of grabbing hold of the horns of the altar.

There has been a strong consolation demonstrated to individuals who didn't deserve it, who were broken and downcast and not have the right requirements for victory. To those people, Christ has been a strong consolation. We're to ask our own self if there is any consolation in Christ. It doesn't take much thought if we ask ourselves honestly to recognize the consolation that Christ is to you and I, the brokenness that you and I deserve, the mistakes that you and I have made are made up for by the mighty working consolation of Jesus Christ. He is working on, on our behalf to make up for all the mistakes that we have made.

It's a beautiful thing, even with this thing in Jason's car, that there is a consolation, a unity that is being involved in the situation because Christ is at work there in the hearts of Jason. In this situation, I think if we're to weigh it correctly, has there been a tremendous amount of victory that Christ has worked in our lives when we didn't deserve it? Wasn't it even a seemingly disastrous blow by the devil to place Jesus upon the cross in the first place. What appears to have been a disaster ended up in the very victory that we all needed. It seems that this is the way that Christ chooses to work, that in appearing to be a disastrous time, Christ works amazing victories in our lives.

If that means something to you, then we're to take it as evidence. He's going to say, hold this into your hands. If you appreciate that work which Christ Christ does in your disasters, in turning them to glory, if that means something to you, if you hold it into your heart as something valuable, then hold onto it and use it as evidence. Because I'm going to ask you to consider something. It says, if there is any comfort of love, if you and I, as a broken, unlovable creature, we were talking today in Sunday school.

It says in Hosea, after he had called his daughter by the name of not loved, that he was going to call her in the place where she was called not loved. I am going to call you loved. If there is any appreciation in God's love for you, if those scriptures where it says for God so loved the world, it says that God demonstrated his love for us in this way while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. If you appreciate that love, if you recognize that you were nothing but an outcast and a sinner deserving of God's wrath, but instead he demonstrated his love to you by rescuing you from the situations that you were bound up in, deserving and should have experienced. If that means something to you, if you can say, the love of God is good and has been beautiful in my life.

He's saying, look, this is the evidence you need to answer this question that we're going to bring before you. It says, if any fellowship of the Spirit. I'm just going to turn to Romans and read it. It says, it says In Romans chapter 8, for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, Abba.

Father, the Spirit himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God. And if children, then heirs. Heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him, that we might be glorified together. Here we see that there's a picture. Paul is asking us if the fellowship of the Spirit of God means anything to you.

Him adopting an outcast orphan into his family and choosing to share with that individual the riches of Christ. Through adoption. If that means anything to you, then put it on the scale because you're going to need it. Because the temptations you're going to encounter to live selfishly are great. You need as much weight as possible because you're going to encounter things in your flesh that are going to cause you to strike out like a serpent.

If any affection and mercy, if there is in your life just a degree of a gratefulness of God's goodness being poured out on you just because you're his child, just a gift given to you for no reason, no deserving, where you lift up your eyes and just say thank you,

I did not deserve that any mercy. Where when we do deserve something, when we know we have been wrong, know we know we demonstrated and he overlooked that transgression for Jesus sake. If any of these are true in your life, if you can say Amen with Paul, I have walked in that I have experienced it, I feel the blessing of being called a child of God. Then he's going to ask something. He's saying, fulfill my joy.

John says, I have no greater joy than to see my children walking in the truth. Look, his joy is going to be made full by seeing other people walking in the same line or according to this same doctrine that he has shown that we need evidence to contradict this selfishness that we all encounter. He wants us to be like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. He wants to see individuals walking in a way together. This does not mean for sure that anyway, but there is a certain way in which he wants us to walk that is going to cause him joy.

This way that he's calling us to walk in this old way, this narrow path is the path that is the most difficult for you and I to walk on. Of any path there is. The reason the weight or the evidence needs to be so strong is because it goes against everything we are, everything we've trained to be since we're a baby, everything the world is saying to us. All the temptations of the devil are all pushing us to abandon the old paths, the righteous way. And so he's calling us to seriously consider this way.

This is the way that he is calling us to avoid in verse three. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition. Selfish ambition is the desire of an individual to gain something from someone else for their own personal needs. I hate to say it, but the proving ground for selfish ambition is in an individual's home. First, it's in their workplace and it also is in the church.

But it's in our everyday life that selfish ambition tries to creep into our heart, that we're to guard against conceit, the desire to lift up ourselves in the sight of others. The path that we are encouraged to take in verse three. 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. Here we are being called in the light of the evidence that Paul is bringing to our mind regarding that work in kindness which

God does in our lives.

He is asking us to take the same road. Lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than himself.

We see that displayed in the life of Christ, and this is also where we are going. But when he came to this earth, it says that he did not come to be served, but to serve. And his life would be a. I can't remember the word right. A sacrifice for many.

He showed that when he washed the feet of his disciples, he took off his outer robe, stripped himself down to a servant's attire, and washed the dirty feet of those around him. Each of us are being called in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than ourselves. Our own needs seem very pressing, very much needs solved right away. And other people's needs tend to take a lower position than our own needs.

God is asking us through this Scripture to consider that these things are of enough weight, enough importance for us to put our own needs aside and to esteem the needs of other people. It's put in practice in verse four. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. If we're to use this weighty evidence practically, we have to be on the lookout. We have to be aware that situations are going to come into our path that's going to be able to put these things into practice.

James says, maybe referring to that instance when Abraham received the angels, that people have entertained angels unaware, and that we are to look for opportunities when strangers come or when there's an opportunity to serve people, we're to watch out for them. Because the idea is if they're not looking out, you're probably going to miss it. But have an idea that because of God's great love for me, because of this great body of evidence, I want to be on the lookout for service for other people.

It's in my mind, in my community, where I live, that if there's a willingness, there's a place to practice.

It's my personal experience that wanting to practice this is not necessarily what you want to do.

It comes at an uncomfortable time, an inconvenient time, from people we don't like and don't deserve it. It comes from people who we'd rather not have around us.

But if we miss it, we take a different path. If we miss it, we miss walking in the path that God chose to walk in to experience a relationship with us. My encouragement as we go towards verse five, it says, let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

There's a lot of good things that come from being a Christian. But if those good things that we receive from being a Christian aren't weight enough to walk as Jesus Christ does, we need to seriously examine what we actually have received from Jesus Christ. My goal in closing this up would be to encourage you and I to look out this week. Look out and base that looking out a focus on, okay, has God really been good to me or not? Are there any benefits that come from walking with Christ?

Has he been to me something more than I deserve? And if so, I just pray that it would be a reminder to you and I that in those situations where your flesh says, no, don't do it, where the world says that's ridiculous, where the devil pushes you, don't get involved to be there showing honor preference to those people around you. And I pray that it would start in our families, in our relationships, in our church, showing honor to each other, blessing each other, and that would spread into our community and into our world. Look out, take stock, weigh for yourself. Has a relationship with God been beneficial for me?

Has there been any good at having called the child of God? And if so, look out. Look for opportunity to show honor to someone who does not deserve it in any way. Because the truth is, you don't either.

I'm just going to close with verse 5. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. It is the softened ground which enables his spirit to work beautifully in our lives. Let's pray. Oh, Father, I think for this whole group, if I were a leader, the first thing I

would do is, Lord, ask forgiveness for our selfishness, Lord, for our conceit, for lifting ourself up and placing our own, our own bodies, our own position in a place of authority, Lord.

Forgive us, Lord. And if for us we could ask for something beautiful, give us eyes to watch, for the opportunity to develop a life lived like Christ. In Jesus name, amen.