

## **"If There Is Therefore ..."**

*"... any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassion, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, one mind ..."* (Phil. 2:1f).

*"If there is therefore ..."* Always the word *"therefore"* links together what follows with that which preceded it. In this instance Paul has called attention to the fact that he and the Philippians mutually had been granted *"to believe on Christ and also to suffer in his behalf."* They mutually experienced conflict. Their steadfastness in the face of it was a token of their salvation! They had something to rejoice about. There are four things the apostle implies is *"in Christ"* although it is only the first one -- exhortation -- which is followed by that phrase. The remainder of these, consolation, fellowship, and tender mercies and compassion are elliptical phrases: all understood also to be *"in Christ"* but which phrase is omitted, avoiding redundancy.

*"If any exhortation in Christ."* The apostle wrote many times to exhort brethren. The Thessalonians were to *"admonish the disorderly, encourage the fainthearted, support the weak, be longsuffering toward all"* (1 Thess. 5:14). In these cited instances, Paul administered exhortation but in the Philippian passage he received exhortation from them because there is *"exhortation in Christ."*

*"If any consolation of love."* To console or comfort which carries the same idea. In Christ there is mutual consolation which we tender one toward another. Comfort was extended to the Thessalonians: *"wherefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thessalonians 4:18). That comfort was His assurance that those who had fallen asleep in Jesus would be brought with Christ when He came for living saints. Isaiah spoke of the hope that the captivity of Babylon would have they would return to Judaea when he said, *"Comfort ye, comfort ye my people"* (Isa. 40:1). The Corinthians had *"consoled"* Paul by receiving his letter to them with repentance. For this Paul wrote of God *"who comforteth the lowly"* (2 Cor. 7:6).

*"If any fellowship of the Spirit."* While John's words, *"If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another,"* is primary reference to fellowship between God and man, it is equally true that when two people walk in the light, they not only have fellowship with God but with each other as well (1 John 1:7).

*"If any mercies and tender compassion (in Christ)."* Mercy shown to one another is a mark of discipleship. God's people who show no mercy are really not God's people in such conduct. *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one for another"* (Jn. 13:35) The Hebrew writer spoke of the early years of the Hebrews when they had *"compassion on those in bonds"* (Heb. 10:34). The Philippians, by their gift to Paul, showed compassion, remembering his bonds. We have a high priest who is touched with the feelings of our infirmities, who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring and we must imitate Him (Heb. 5:1; 4:15)! Please understand that Paul's prefacing each of these appeals with the word *"IF"* is not to be construed to mean he had doubts about what he was about to say. He calls to their minds that because there is exhortation, etc., IN Christ, the Philippians were to make full the apostle's joy by having the same mind and love and by being of one mind and accord. Thus he urges, *"Make full my joy."* There is potentially exhortation etc. available in Christ, but like a water faucet which must be turned on to draw from its reserve of water; these have to "be turned on" by mutually having the same mind and love; by being of one mind and accord.

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