

I press on  
toward the goal to  
win the prize for  
which God has  
called me  
heavenward  
in Christ  
Jesus

Philippians 3:14

Following the upward call through Philippians ...

## If There Is Any ...

Jesus had commented that a house divided against itself cannot stand. Hence His earnest prayer west of the Kidron was that those in the upcoming church would all be one, even as He and the Father were one, that the world would believe that the Father had sent Him. The devil, the author of confusion, has as his goal the destruction of any such unity through strife, through enmities and hatreds, through the little perversities of the fleshly mind which destroy the proper mindset of the brethren, and which disrupt the momentum the saints had gained in working together. Therefore the apostle Paul had really exhorted the brethren in Philippi "with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." As he works into the next section of the epistle, he continues on that theme, again encouraging the brethren to "make my joy complete by being of the same mind" (Philippians 2:2). But this he prefaces with a series of propositions as to why they should make his joy complete.

- ▼ **Encouragement in Christ** — "If there is any encouragement in Christ ..." is the apostle's initial probe (Philippians 2:1). Of course, there is major encouragement in Christ! "In Christ" is where all the eternal blessings are. The Father "has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ" (Romans 8:1). "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Corinthians 5:17). These are just a few introductory comments on what it means to be in Christ. Properly understood and processed, these blessings continually encourage the faithful saint.
- ▼ **Consolation of love** — The apostle adds another conditional to the list: "if there is any consolation of love ..." The idea expressed here is that there is someone near, who hears, and who loves unconditionally, so that the beneficiary is comfortable, relaxed, and encouraged. Ultimately, this is the love God has for each of His children, demonstrated in the sacrifice of Christ. The answer to this conditional is a "yes!"
- ▼ **Fellowship of the Spirit** — Another is added: "if there is any fellowship of the Spirit ..." The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God; it is death (Romans 8:5-8). But those who have their minds set on the Spirit have wonderful and deep fellowship with others who have their minds set on the Spirit. They fight the same battles in putting to death their own flesh, they share in the victories of the gospel and the salvation of precious eternal souls, and they focus on Jesus in glory in spite of the efforts of the god of this world to blind their eyes to that light. The answer to this one is another resounding "yes!"
- ▼ **Affection and compassion** — Paul superadds, "if any affection and compassion ..." The gospel calls people out of the domain of darkness and transfers them to the kingdom of God's beloved Son, wherein they come together with those who have similarly been called into the fellowship of God's marvelous light. By working and sharing together in the local congregations of the saints, they develop true affection for one another, as they are bonded together with spiritual bonds which are far stronger than mere fleshly or familial bonds. They develop true compassion as they share the struggles of fighting their way through the vicissitudes of mortal life, as they work together to combat the forces of darkness, and pray together for the salvation of the lost and conservation of the saved. Once again, the answer to this *if* is "yes!"

The Holy Spirit and the apostle Paul are excellent communicators. Here a series of powerful and weighty propositions have been stacked on top of one another, and then used to drive the point home that the brethren are to make Paul's joy complete.

THE ANSWER  
TO THESE IF'S  
IS "YES!"

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