

# A Life Shaped by Jesus

Thomas Robinson, *Lives Shaped by Jesus 4*, October 28, 2012

## Philippians 2:1-11

<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ/Messiah,  
any comfort from love,  
any participation in the Spirit,  
any deep feeling and compassion,

<sup>2</sup> fill up my joy that you think the same thing, having the same love, together in soul and thinking the one thing.

<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or empty glory, but with **humility of thought** consider others even more valuable than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

<sup>5</sup> **Think this** in/among yourselves, which also means in Messiah Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who,

Though he was in the form of God,  
he did not consider that equality with God  
a thing to be exploited,

<sup>7</sup> rather he emptied himself,  
by taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.

<sup>8</sup> And being found in human shape,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to the point of death,  
even death on a cross.

<sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him  
and graced him with the name  
that is above every name,

<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bow,  
of those in heaven and on earth and under earth,

<sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess  
that “Jesus Messiah is LORD,”  
to the glory of God the Father.

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## Philippians 1:27

<sup>27</sup> Only let your life as citizens of a community be worthy of the gospel of the Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one Spirit, with one soul striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,.

## Isaiah 45:22-24a

<sup>22</sup> “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. <sup>23</sup> By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance.’ <sup>24</sup> “Only in Yahweh (LORD), it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength...”

## Struggle and Reflection

In this passage we come into the heart of what Paul desires to do through this letter: to help the believers in Philippi (and us) live lives deeply and truly shaped by Jesus. It requires breaking into the stream of messages about life's meaning (or lack) flooding in from Roman propaganda (for them) or (for us) advertising, entertainment, politics, pop-philosophy, education, peers, etc. He has led them to reflect on the struggle they are in and his own struggle with life and death and dangerous opposition. He has modeled hope, love, & joy even in intense hardship, even talked of the gift of suffering. The struggle brings clarity and moves them/us to reflect on what matters, on the gifts we receive that help us and point to a new shape of life – deeply beautiful and satisfying. They are together “in Christ”/“in the Messiah” a place / self-definition neither Gentile nor Jew would have understood before this Gospel. Now it surrounds life with meaning. Their vision of God has new clarity – Messiah, God's love, participation in God's Spirit. It reaches deep to their inner being (*splanchna*) to create deep compassion for others.

## Are You Thinking the Same Thing I Am?

Then comes a remarkable request, strange to our ears. *“Fill up my joy: think the same thing.”* Then, *“Think the one thing.”* What is this? Rigid orthodoxy? Mind control? We've all known situations that enforced thinking the same: politics, religion, business, art. It's important to see that Paul is not at all wanting the believers to agree on everything – Giants, Jets, Cowboys – Democratic, Republican – abstract expressionism, Norman Rockwell – vegan, sushi, steak – Mozart, rock 'n roll, hip hop – Calvinist, Arminian, etc. There's room for believers to be all over the map on all kinds of important differences. But a life shaped by Jesus does have at its heart a way of thinking, a renewal of mind. He starts by calling it *“the same love,”* being *“together in soul.”* It is a way of thinking that excludes selfish ambition, empty glory, unconcern for what matters to others.

## The Story at the Heart of the World

Paul leads them/us into the center: *“Think this in you (pl.), which is also in Messiah Jesus”!* It is poetry, a story, a song. It is the story of Jesus in about 120 words. Six 3-line verses pivoting on a line about the cross. It encapsulates so much, like the Lord's Prayer, but now not from within Jesus' ministry, but with Jesus' full story in mind. It's the story of God, creator, redeemer. On another level it's the story of humanity, sinning, dying, exalted. It is the story of Israel, enslaved, embodied in a Messiah, delivered, receiving the Kingdom. The eternal God who chooses to take on our form for our sake, who does not exploit his power but comes in service and humility taking on himself our suffering and death, even on a cross. We see him as one of us in Jesus, completely human. But he is also completely God and does among us what only God can do – what God in love promised to do, climaxing in the cross and resurrection. Therefore, God exalts that human Jesus and reveals that the profound love, service, humility, life-giving joy, bondage-breaking grace, life-transforming forgiveness, self-giving obedience even to the point of death that Jesus showed and embodied are the very heart of God, the meaning of the world and of all human life. God says, *“That is Me!”* *“Think this!”* Paul says. Let it permeate every cell of your body and soul. Let it tell you who you are, remake your mind. Then you'll really be free. Your mind can soar!