



water from rock

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – January 4, 2021

The Lord be with you.

Happy New Year! I hope your new year is off to a good start, and I wanna give you some encouragement for the new year, and I'm praying that what I have to say in the next few moments, that it will be a big boost to you as you begin the year, but it's not really what I have to say, it's what God's word has to say that, well, it really encourages me today, and I pray that it will encourage you too. I'm looking at a passage of scripture that is often read during added and Christmas, about the Son of God humbling himself and becoming one with us, and how we too should humble ourselves and give of ourselves, but I wanna begin reading a little bit earlier in this text, and we usually begin.

I wanna read Philippians Chapter 2, beginning at Verse 1, where the apostle Paul, of all places, he's writing from a Roman prison, these words, "If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, and he's sharing in the spirit, any compassion and sympathy. Make my joy complete. Be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." And then Paul holds up Jesus Christ as the example of humility and self giving. Now, it's the first part of this passage today that I went to zero and in which Paul says, If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the spirit, any compassion and sympathy. Notice here that before Paul asked readers to do anything, he reminds readers of what we have in Christ. And you're gonna find this pattern throughout the New Testament, the before God asks us to do one thing, he first tells the good news of what Christ has done for us, of who Christ is for us, and so Paul writes here... Let me list them. He writes of encouragement in Christ, consolation from love, sharing in the spirit, and compassion and sympathy. Now, in this chapter and the next, Paul is seeking to deal with some ugly problems in the Philippian church, whether it's conflict that is bubbling over, arguments being waged, but notice that rather than scolding or rebuking that Paul wants to melt their hearts by reminding them of all that we have in Jesus Christ. And notice that Paul begins this passage with the word if, if there is any encouragement in Christ.

Now, Paul's use of the word if here begins what a Greek grammar waht is called a first class condition. A first class condition is where... Well, for the sake of argument, we say if such and such is true, then such and such will be the case, so a first class condition here, Paul is assuming that for followers of Christ, that there is... There is in fact, encouragement in Christ, consolation from love, sharing in a spirit, compassion and sympathy, this is the normal Christian life, the healthy functional life of following Jesus. First, he says There is encouragement in Christ. You see Christ is the encourager of his people. Why Paul himself in a Roman prison, is experiencing the encouragement of Christ. And at a time when... Well, there's a lot of discouragement in our culture today, Christ is encouraging us, he is a true, solid, strong encouragement.



water from rock

A second dimension of the normal, healthy Christian life, Paul says is consolation from love, God wants to console us with His love. Before God ask us to do anything, He wants to console us with His love for you and me to comfort us, to refresh us with His love for us just as we are... Paul can never get over the fact that he's loved by Jesus. I like how Paul in Galatians, Chapter 2, Verse 22 says, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me." It wasn't just a knowing that Jesus loved the world, but that He loved me, me, and gave himself for me. And that's a love, Paul wants readers to know, to be assured of, to live in consolation from love.

The third dimension of the Christian life here is sharing in the spirit sharing, that's the Greek word *koinonia*. It is a fellowship, a communion, a sharing in the very life of the Holy Spirit as we increasingly experienced the influence of the Holy Spirit in our lives, whose fruit is love, joy, peace, patience, encouragement in Christ, consolation from love, sharing in the spirit. These are followed, Paul says, by compassion and sympathy, the one emotion most often expressed of Jesus in the four gospels is His compassion. Jesus has compassion on the leper, on the demon, oppressed, on the multitude of the lost who were a sheep without a shepherd. And to be a Christian is to know the compassion of Jesus, and Paul says it is to know sympathy. Yes, that Jesus feels with us in our joys and sorrows, in our gains and our losses, Jesus sympathize as he feels with us The pain of covid, the financial uncertainty, a concern for grandchildren and children, Jesus feels with us... I like how Paul goes about correcting the problems in the Philippian church. He begins by reminding them of what we have in Jesus Christ.

And that's how I want to begin the new year with you today, with a prayer that you experience more and more of Christ, encouragement of you, that you know the love of God for you, and the daily fellowship, the life shared with the Holy Spirit, and all that that means, and the compassion of Christ and his deep feelings for you. So Happy New Year.

I'm Tim Smith, a fellow traveler. Thank you for listening. Until next time.