

**The Problem of Expedient Self-Interests & Self-Glorification; the Virtues of True Humility & Modesty, Phil 2:3; Concern for Others, v. 4**

**Philippians 2:3 -** [NASB] **Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.**

2. “Do nothing” is not quite correct here. There is no main verb in this verse but the subjunctive mood of the main verb in verse 2 is implied as the main verb for verse 3: **φρονέω, *phroneō*** means “to be thinking the same things.”
3. The first word in verse 3 is the negative adjective **μηδείς, *mēdeis*** which with *phroneō* gives an even stronger translation: “Don’t even think any thoughts.”
4. The word “selfishness” is **ἐριθεία, *eritheia*** and its etymology reveals some interesting concepts about the disposition of mind it describes:

**Kittel, Gerhard (ed.). *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 2:660-61:**

**ἐριθεία** [*eritheia*] comes from ἐριθεύω [*eritheuō*], “to work as a day-laborer,” “to work for daily hire,” and this comes from ἔριθος [*erithos*], a “day-laborer.” ἐριθεία [*eritheia*] thus means the “work,” then the “manner, attitude or disposition of the day-laborer.”

Aristotle, *Politics*, Book V, chap. 3, p. 1303<sup>a</sup>, line 13ff.: ἐπιθευόμενοι [*eiptheuomenoi*] are those who procure office by illegal manipulation, and therefore ἐριθεία [*eritheia*] is their attitude. ἐριθεία [*eritheia*] is thus the attitude of self-seekers, those who are busy and active in their own interests, seeking their own gain or advantage. (p. 660)

It is best to understand ἐριθεία [*eritheia*] as “base self-seeking,” or simply as “baseness,” the nature of those who cannot lift their gaze to higher things. (p. 661)

NOTE: A better English translation for *eritheia* than “baseness” is “expedient”:

**Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.:**

**Expedient.** Characterized by concern with what is opportune; especially governed by self-interest. Usually implies what is immediately advantageous without regard for ethics or consistent principles.

5. The word (*eritheia*) originally described someone who was a member of the laboring class. It then came to apply to politicians whose daily efforts were designed to gain or retain power. Later it came to describe the mental attitude of the office seeker who labored to win office by manipulation of the vote or, having gained office, plotted for personal plunder. The use in the Koine describes the mental attitude of anyone who seeks to gain a personal advantage motivated totally by expedient self-interests.
6. The next phrase, “empty conceit,” is one word in the Greek: **κενοδοξία, *kenodoxia***. This is a compound word made up **κενός, *kenos*** and **δόξα, *doxa***. *Doxa* is the Greek word for glory. The root idea of “glory” is “giving credit where credit is due.” For example, we “glorify” God when we recognize the fact that He is the source of all our necessities.
7. He is the One that should receive credit for whatever legitimate function we contribute to the prosecution of the Invisible War. For example, divine good production by a believer glorifies God. It is His doctrine applied under the filling of the Holy Spirit that enables believers to successfully perform it.

8. Grace orientation requires that such efforts be kept private whenever possible since the ability to perform the act is through the provision of divine power under the policy of grace.
9. However, acts of divine good often result in the one doing them receiving credit and accolades from others. A spirit-filled believer would never take such a compliment personally, much preferring to remain anonymous.
10. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for those with approbation lust to extend helping hands to those in need, make big contributions to the church, or be involved in various Christian ministries. Such types have an insatiable desire to be noticed and complimented.
11. The difference between a person who performs acts of divine good for the glory of God and one who is in it for his own personal aggrandizement is that the latter's lust for approval will not allow him to keep quiet about it.
12. This is where the prefix to our word comes in. *Kenos* is the antithesis of *pleroō*. It means "empty, hollow, without content, and meaningless." With reference to people it means "vain, boastful, and false."
13. The two words together indicate that Paul wants the Philippians to avoid showy Christianity. A person with approbation and power lust feeds off attention from others and the power it gives him over those he manipulates with his benevolence.
14. Expedient self-seeking and meaningless performances of self-glorification are denounced followed by the adversative conjunction of contrast: **ἀλλά, *alla***: "but."
15. What's on the other side of the "but" is the alternative to such a self-centered disposition, the instrumental of means from the noun, **ταπεινοφροσύνη, *tapeinophrosunē***: "modesty, humility, unselfishness," in a mental attitude of service to others.
16. How is the mental attitude of this humble believer different from the self-seeking believer? How are the acts of service of the humble believer different from those of the self-seeking believer?
17. The humble believer is filled with the Holy Spirit and functions in the status quo of spirituality. He makes his decisions based on resident doctrine under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. His works are low-key and he desires no aggrandizement or glory.
18. The self-seeking believer is usually not filled with the Holy Spirit and thus functions in status quo carnality. He makes his decisions based on an insatiable desire to manipulate people through benevolence in order to receive approval and glory from man. He arranges things so that it is clear to all observers that he is the source of the good deed.
19. The Philippians are being advised by Paul to get rid of mental attitudes that inspire an over-emphasis on self. And to give them a means of checking themselves out, Paul offers a test that enables each of them to see where they stand mentally: "regard one another as more important than yourselves."
20. The word "regard" is **ἡγεομαι, *hēgeomai*** which means "to go first, to lead the way." It is used metaphorically in this verse "to lead out in one's thinking." The concept is to put other people before self so that the clause reads, "consider your fellow believers more important than yourselves."
21. The words "more important" are one word in the Greek, the verb **ὑπερέχω, *huperechō***: "more excellent" and "superior in rank."

22. Here's our translation as far as we have gone:

**Philippians 2:1 -** [Protasis] If there is any encouragement from one's position in Christ, if there is any comforting sense of well-being in the love of God, if there is any fellowship in the filling of the Holy Spirit, if there are any resultant mental attitudes of compassion and sympathy, and there are,

**v. 2 -** [Apodosis] then bring to completion [ **plēroō: imperative** ] the same true happiness I enjoy in order that you think the same doctrinal principles [ **phroneō: subjunctive** ], maintaining the status quo of personal love for God and occupation with Christ, in harmony of soul with other believers, intent on executing the sophisticated spiritual life.

**Philippians 2:3 -** Don't even think any thoughts motivated by expedient self-interests and vacuous, self-glorifying, human-good PR, but with true humility and modesty consider your fellow believers superior in rank to yourselves;

**Philippians 2:4 -** [NASB] Do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

1. Verse 4 is pretty straightforward but we need to take a look at its main verb **σκοπέω, skopeō**: “to be concerned about, to contemplate, to give attention to, to consider something critically.”
2. The believer who is not self-centered is not only to have concern for his own well-being but also for that of his fellow believers.
3. Verses 1 through 4 form a conditional sentence. The first verse is the protasis, or the subordinate clause that presents propositions assumed to be true, while the apodosis is the main clause that states the consequences that should result assuming these propositions are true.
4. It is important to understand the structure of a conditional sentence since the verse on which we will place our emphasis is a conditional sentence, namely, 1 John 1:9.
5. Protasis comes from the Greek **πρότασις, protasis** which means literally “that which is put forward.” In logic the idea is “to present a proposition.” In grammar it is the “hypothetical clause of a sentence, answered by the **ἀπόδοσις [apodosis]**” [Liddell & Scott 1533-34]. The protasis is usually the first clause of a conditional sentence.
6. Apodosis comes from the Greek ἀποδοσις [*apodosis*] whose literal meaning is “giving back, restitution, or return. In a sentence, the *clause answering to the πρότασις [protasis]*” [Liddell & Scott, 198].