

Keeping the Balance

Key Verse: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”*
—Phil. 2:3

Selected Scripture:
Phil 2:1-11

starts this lesson by stating the importance of the mutual love, fellowship, and unity of the Spirit his body members should continue to share one with another. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.” (Phil 2:1,2) In the Key Verse, Paul takes the matter one step further, that we should exercise humility in our dealings with the brethren, and look for those qualities in them which we can esteem better than those in ourselves. He states also that we should look out for the needs of others, rather than simply focusing on our own wants and desires. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”—vs. 4

AS WE CLOSE OUT THE OLD

year and look forward to the new, it is a good time to review our progress thus far in following in the footsteps of Jesus, and likewise helpful to remind ourselves of the important responsibilities and privileges we have as his brethren. Paul’s admonitions to the Philippian brethren provide a solid basis for such self-examination. He

It is this humble, loving, and caring attitude which Jesus had, and exemplified so perfectly for all to see. "Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, [and] being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:5-8 *New American Standard Bible*) Paul says here that we are to develop this same character as Jesus had, and even though we have not been asked to do everything that he did, we must have a corresponding humility, love, and desire to serve others, regardless of the cost and sacrifice to our flesh.

As we look back over the year past, it is appropriate that we evaluate our progress in these areas, seeing where we have both succeeded and failed in attaining the likeness of our dear Lord's character. As we do so, let us resolve to continue our progress in those things in which we have had a measure of success, and not slip or backslide from previous attainments. Additionally, let us resolve to do better in those areas of Christian development which have been more difficult for us to achieve the desired result of Christlikeness. We also are to remember that we can only examine ourselves concerning these things, and should not focus on looking at the faults and weaknesses of our brethren. It is good that we set goals for the New Year, not lofty ones that are most likely unattainable, but goals of step-by-step progress in those areas of development that are most needful. God will not judge us on outward results nearly as much as he will on sincere and honest efforts to progress. It is that effort, day by day, that we should resolve to be engaged in even more fervently in the New Year than ever before. If we do, 2007 will be a banner year for the development of the character of Christ. ■