

Philippians 2:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

Analysis

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's (οἱ πάντες γὰρ τὰ ἑαυτῶν ζητοῦσιν, οὐ τὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, hoi pantes gar ta heautōn zētousin, ou ta Iēsou Christou)—Hoi pantes ("all, everyone") is hyperbolic or refers to Paul's Roman associates (excluding Timothy). Ta heautōn zētousin ("seek their own things") violates 2:4's command ("look not...on his own things"). Ou ta Iēsou Christou ("not the things of Jesus Christ") contrasts Christ's interests with self-interest.

This indictment echoes 2:21's context: after the Christ-hymn (2:5-11) modeling self-giving, Paul laments that most don't live this way—even Christians. Timothy is exception. Seeking "Christ's things" means prioritizing His kingdom, glory, and people's welfare over personal comfort or advancement. The diagnosis is universal: self-centeredness is default; other-centeredness requires grace-transformation. Only those indwelt by Christ's mind (2:5) escape self-seeking.

Historical Context

Roman culture prized gloria (glory), dignitas (dignity), and honos (honor)—self-advancement was virtue. Paul's gospel inverted this: seek Christ's glory, not your own. That even believers struggled with self-interest shows sin's persistence. Paul doesn't excuse it but highlights Timothy's exceptionalism. The verse presumes contrast between kingdom values and cultural norms—a recurring Pauline theme (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:17-24).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. In what ways do you 'seek your own things' rather than 'the things of Jesus Christ'?
2. How can you diagnose whether decisions are self-serving or Christ-serving?
3. What would it look like practically to prioritize 'Christ's things' over your own this week?

Interlinear Text

τοῦ	πάντες	γὰρ	τοῦ	ἐαυτῶν	
the things which are	all	For	the things which are	their own	
G3588	G3956	G1063	G3588	G1438	
ζητοῦσιν	οὐ	τοῦ	τοῦ	Χριστοῦ	Ἰησοῦ
seek	not	the things which are	the things which are	Christ's	Jesus
G2212	G3756	G3588	G3588	G5547	G2424

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 10:24 (Parallel theme): Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth.

Matthew 16:24 (References Jesus): Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.

Philippians 2:4 (Parallel theme): Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

1 Corinthians 10:33 (Parallel theme): Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 13:5 (Parallel theme): Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil;

2 Timothy 3:2 (Parallel theme): For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Isaiah 56:11 (Parallel theme): Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.

Luke 14:26 (Parallel theme): If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.

2 Timothy 4:10 (Parallel theme): For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.

2 Corinthians 1:5 (References Christ): For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ.