

Philippians 2
Unity Rooted in Gospel Humility

This SUMMER we're going to do a fly-over of Philippians: 1 message from each chapter

The overall theme of Phil is rejoicing- as you read through the letter you see the words "joy, and rejoice" all through the text. Those are the words that become the soundtrack of the letter.

This is a LETTER to real people living in the real world of the Roman Empire
Consider the church in the earliest centuries: They were not perfect people, but they rocked the Roman Empire through the proclamation and practice of the Gospel. Has any generation had as great an influence for Christ in a shorter amount of time that the early Christians?

What Paul describes and commands in these first 15 verses is a shock to the system of living of his day (and our day). Humility was not valued in the ancient world. It was seen as weakness, not as a virtue.

All preachers encounter passages that are beyond their preaching gifts and beyond their level of spiritual experience. Some passages are more evident than others. This is one of them. I'm out over my skis with this passage, and probably won't stick the landing.

Do our lives ever surprise anyone, in a GOOD WAY?

Phil 2

1 Therefore if there is any comfort in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

6 Who, though he was in the form of God, Did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped

7 But emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, Being born in the likeness of men.

8 And being found in human form, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, Even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place

And gave him the name that is above every name,

10 So at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, In heaven and on earth and under the earth

11 And every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, To the glory of God the Father.

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Here's a challenging perspective from D A Carson

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/3-worth-of-gospel-please/>

I would like to buy about three dollars' worth of gospel, please.

Not too much – just enough to make me happy, but not so much that I get addicted.

I don't want so much gospel that I learn to really hate covetousness and lust.

I certainly don't want so much that I start to love my enemies, cherish self-denial, and contemplate missionary service in some alien culture.

I want ecstasy, not repentance;

I want transcendence, not transformation.

I would like to be cherished by some nice, forgiving, broad-minded people, but I myself don't want to love those from different races – especially if they smell.

I would like enough gospel to make my family secure and my children well behaved, but not so much that I find my ambitions redirected or my giving too greatly enlarged.

I would like about three dollars' worth of the gospel, please. (pp. 12-13)

What we read in Phil 2:1-11 is NOT \$3 WORTH OF THE GOSPEL. It is the full meal deal that will reorient our whole life, and one manifestation will be something that is counter-intuitive and supernatural - HUMILITY IT IS this Christ centered humility that is the foundation of real Unity that Paul calls for in Phil 2 This UNITY through Humility is one aspect of what Paul means in 1:27

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Paul explains that the threat to unity does not come from the outside, but from within our own hearts as believers in the church.

- 1) An exhortation to Unity
- 2) The Basis of unity
- 3) What it looks like

#1 Exhortation to Unity

1 Therefore if there is any comfort in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

Paul gives a personal word that express how important this internal unity would impact him: "make my joy complete". His sincere pastoral heart is revealed

EX parents with kids.....sibling arguments are very deflating for parents, and sibling affection is a source of great joy.

The world offers so much shallow or false unity that disappears in the face of disagreement or personal offense. It is NOT TO BE THAT WAY WITH THE CHURCH.

"Christians have transcendent reasons to be like-minded and to maintain a unity in love in defiance of differences of opinion, even in the teeth of perceived slights and offenses. They are supposed to be different from the world precisely in this way! Christians are to be people who get along with one another no matter what." Dr. Rayburn

#2 THE foundation Of unity – Gospel truths

Verse 1 is what it means to be a Christian- comfort in having Christ as an "advocate" before God; consolation of the breath, depth, length, and height of the love of God, and the fellowship of the Spirit by which we cry out Abba, Father.

Verse 1 is written in a way that assumes or affirms what he is saying, i.e. "there is encouragement in Christ, there is consolation of love, there is fellowship of the Spirit, there is affection and compassion.

So, given that...2 make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.

If we live out of v. 1 then v. 2-4 become possible. Our real-world problem and struggle is that we often fail to draw on Christ. We fail to remember, and we fail to think it through and connect the dots.

EX; an old TV commercial promoting higher education had a tag line – "the mind is a terrible thing to waste."

"The Christian mind is a terrible thing to waste"

If you lack comfort, study the love of God toward us in Christ. Meditate on Jn 3:16, Rom 5, 8, etc. Don't just read them but marinate your heart in the reality of the Love of God.

#3 What DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

v. 3-4 A SURPRISING LIFE – IN A GOOD WAY

But first, There is a REAL WORLD reason for our problems – v.3

KEY WORD- “vain glory” or “glory hunger”

Glory hunger is at the root of most / all of our relationship issues –

EX: Listen to a group of kids or adults talking and bragging and trying to top each other’s story or exploit.

“My toy, gadget, team, company, etc can do this...”

“Well mine can do it faster or better or cheaper...”

How do we recognize conceit and selfish ambition(strife)? **14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, V. 14** Look for complaining and disputing. They are the expression of selfish ambition and conceit. They threaten any church.

Just listen to yourself for complaining, grumbling and disputing. Look underneath at the roots and will likely find selfish ambition, self-advancement, conceit.

They are examples of how we contend with God for the glory of which only He is worthy i.e. GLORY HUNGER.

Selfish ambition and conceit are not as complicated as we might think.

Selfish ambition and conceit are more dangerous than we might think.

Selfish ambition and conceit are not as complicated as we might think – we don’t have to go to counseling and find the cause – bad parenting, poor potty training techniques, not enough attention, too much attention, birth order issue, low self-esteem, too much self-esteem, a certain Enneagram type, called names as a child, didn’t get enough playing time in sports, got too much playing time, etc.

NO, IT’S JUST NOT THAT COMPLICATED. It boils down to GLORY HUNGER – we are looking for glory – meaning, significance, worth – in the wrong places – in ourselves or in how others view us. We’re looking for glory in something other than God.

Selfish ambition and conceit are more dangerous than we might think – it’s not a personality flaw that we’ll outgrow. It is the IDOLATRY OF SELF. We want the glory that belongs to God alone and the glory that we can create from a worldly basis will not satisfy our souls, so we are HUNGRY. We try to deal with that hunger through getting our own way, building ourselves up, or putting others down.

This glory hunger is rooted in the ‘organic network of compulsive attitudes, beliefs and behavior deeply rooted in our alienation from God.’ This gets to the heart of the biblical view of sin. RICHARD LOVELACE

Learning to recognize and repent of glory hunger is a key aspect of growth as a Christian. It is an important part of learning to regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

We can’t see others as more important than ourselves, or see them as important at all, if our hearts are suffering from glory hunger.

How do we tame that hunger?

We remember v. 1

1) Therefore, if there is any comfort in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit,

When we are humbled by v. 1, then humility can grow. We no longer walk into a room and think that we are the most important person in the room. We no longer evaluate other in the room based on social standing or the ‘cool factor’.

These sins of selfish ambition threaten unity in the church. This could not be more serious for our own lives and for the church as a whole. It will affect our ability to stand together for the sake of the gospel. Satan wants to keep us focused on other things and there are multiple issues that confront us today: Covid, lockdown or open, masks, open schools or not, statues or not, etc.

We must be alert to these impulses in our soul so that by grace we might put them to death. We must cultivate humility, not just recognize, and deny selfish ambition.

What does humility look like?

- When you choose to serve your spouse or your children and put their needs ahead of yours; then you are demonstrating humility.
- When you watch your peers prosper and succeed without feeling jealous, but you can rejoice in their success, then you are demonstrating humility.
When you share your faith in Christ at work or at school, knowing full well that you may be insulted or put down, then you are demonstrating humility
- When you can draw out the other person in conversation instead of always telling your story or opinions, then you are demonstrating humility
- When you can accept criticism willingly and with a teachable attitude, then you are demonstrating humility
- When you can handle interruptions in your schedule and can patiently endure irritations, then you are demonstrating humility. EX: man at Walmart paying with coins
- When people break their promises to you and let you down and you refuse to become bitter, then you are demonstrating humility.
- When you are misjudged for your actions and you don't retaliate, then you are demonstrating humility.
- When you develop the attitude of Jesus Christ, then you are demonstrating humility

I say this a lot, as much for me as for you. It is a reminder that the Christian life is about Christ, and not about me and what I do, or you and what you do.

Humility is SOMEONE WE MEET before it is something we experience.

If you settle for \$3 worth of the Gospel, then you'll get \$3 worth of fruit, humility, unity, comfort in Christ, consolation of love and fellowship in the Spirit.

Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we should have died so that we might know the fullness of Comfort in Christ, Consolation of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and the unity that is rooted in Gospel Humility.

Amen

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