

PHILIPPIANS 2

Please turn in your Bibles this evening to Philippians chapter 2 as we continue our study through the Word of God.

Keep in mind that this letter is the epistle of joy and that joy was not based upon the outward circumstances that Paul was in. Remember, Paul is in jail in Rome for his faith in Christ!

Then how can he speak of so much joy?

Because that joy was based upon the inward reality of Jesus, that He is in control of all the situations we find ourselves in.

And, as we will see here in Philippians chapter 2, this portion of Paul's letter is focused upon living a life of humility; a life emptied of self and filled with the Lord.

Think about this for a minute. How do we keep the proper mindset and have joy in the midst of tough times, or, for that matter, in the Christian life in general?

We need to deny ourselves and put others first, and that is what Paul is going to focus on in this chapter.

The key is found in Philippians 2:3, where Paul writes, "**Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.**"

But many times, it is all about us and instead of joy in our lives, we have anger, bitterness, hate. Yes, not the fruit of the Spirit but the works of the flesh!

Let me share this with you and you will see what I mean about how bad it can get and what our witness ends up looking like.

We are told,

When a certain church in Dallas became divided, the rift was so bitter that each side instituted a lawsuit seeking to dispossess the other from the Church's property – this despite Scripture's warning about taking such matters before public courts (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

The story, of course, hit the Dallas newspapers and garnered considerable interest from the readers. The judge wisely ruled that it was not the province of the court to decide such matters until the case had been heard before the denomination's church court.

So the dispute was remanded to the ecclesiastical court where, eventually, the decision was made to award the real estate and properties to one side.

The losers withdrew and formed another church nearby. Church growth the American way!

It was reported in the Dallas newspapers (no doubt with some delight) that the church court had traced the trouble to its source – the trouble began when, at a church dinner, an elder had been served a smaller slice of ham than a child seated next to him. Church hostesses, make sure you always serve heaping elder portions to the elders and deacons or you might come before Judge Judy!

Imagine the laugh that the good people of Dallas got out of that one!

- R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians – The Fellowship of the Gospel*, p. 73

What a sad story. Did you notice that it was not an issue of doctrine but how much ham an elder got! How silly and sad. I guess you can say it wasn't even Kosher!

For me, that is an easy situation to deal with. The elder is no longer an elder if that is what he is complaining about! Pretty simple and yet, he had a following and he took some of the church with him.

This evening, we will see where our hearts should be focused upon and, as you have seen, it is not to be focused on self but upon others.

In fact, as we are going to see, Paul gives to us four examples of people who lived a life of humility.

He first shows us the ultimate example, the life of Jesus in Philippians 2:1-11.

Then Paul uses his own life as an example of humility in Philippians 2:12-18.

Then Paul moves to his son in the faith, Timothy who also lived a humble life and Paul shows us this in Philippians 2:19-24.

And lastly, the fourth example, Paul uses a man by the name of Epaphroditus, who was a humble servant of the Lord, and we will see that as we finish up the chapter in Philippians 2:25-30.

With that as our introduction, let's begin reading in Philippians chapter 2, beginning in verse 1 and let's see what the Lord has for us as we study through His Word.

PHILIPPIANS 2

VERSE 1

The word "**Therefore**" links us back to what Paul was speaking of in the previous chapter.

In Philippians 1:27 Paul said, **“Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”**

And then we read **“if”** and this is not speaking of doubt, but the Greek word really means, **“since.”**

In other words, Paul is saying, ***“Since*** there is so much encouragement **in Christ**, ***since*** His **love** is so comforting to us all, ***since the Holy Spirit*** brings us all together in fellowship as one Body, and ***since*** there is so much tender **affection and mercy** in Christianity, we should all be able to get along and work together having the same mindset.”

I hope that makes sense.

We are to strive together in Christ and suffer for Him. That was what Paul was saying in Ephesians 4:1-3, **“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”**

In other words, Paul is saying that since you are part of the body of Christ; since you are enduring these things, then live in humility!

You see, it is difficult to have unity when people are looking out for themselves.

Unity comes as we humble ourselves before God and others in Christ!

Yes, sound doctrine, moral purity and a passionate commitment to the Lord and His work are vital, they are essential to a church’s effective ministry, but they cannot guarantee protection from discord, disunity.

William Barclay put it like this. He wrote,

The one danger which threatened the Philippian church was that of disunity. There is a sense in which that is the danger of every healthy church. It is when people are really in earnest, when their beliefs really matter to them, that they are apt to get up against each other. The greater their enthusiasm, the greater the danger that they may collide. It is against that danger that Paul wished to safeguard his friends.

- William Barclay, The Letter to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, p. 31

Let's look what Paul is saying in this verse here in Philippians 2:1 a little closer.

Remember, Paul said, ***"If this condition is true, and it is, then . . ."***

You see, the **"therefore"** looked back to what Paul was saying and the **"if"** looks forward to what we have in Christ.

Paul speaks of our **"consolation in Christ"** or encouragement. It is the Greek word PARAKLESIS (par-ak'-lay-sis) and it is a word that is used of the Holy Spirit.

Thus, our encouragement by the Holy Spirit should cause us to walk in a manner worthy of Christ.

Next, Paul speaks of our **"comfort of love"** which speaks of a genuine concern. Christ loves us and we are to love others.

He then speaks of sharing things in common. Believers have this in common, the Holy Spirit indwelling them.

Lastly, Paul speaks of **"affection and mercy."** We have received the comfort and encouragement of God and thus, let us give that to others as we have received, let us go forth with affection and mercy towards others.

And as Paul opens up this section on humility, please understand that these qualities are not just a suggestion by Paul; they should flow from our lives in all humility, striving to keep unity within the body of Christ, with other believers.

And notice what Paul says next.

VERSES 2-4

How are we to live out our faith? What is practical Christianity all about? How do we maintain that joy in our lives?

It is as simple and as difficult as this. You need to put others above yourself!

We see here Paul pouring out his heart and he wants them to fulfill his joy and he lists a few things that would do this in his life.

He starts out with the idea of “**being like-minded.**”

That phrase, “**by being like-minded**” in the Greek is HO AUTOS PHRONEO, (ho ow-tos’ fron-eh’-o) and it literally means “to think the same thing.”

In other words, to think as God thinks in regard to things, to let His nature then flow from our lives.

Paul put it this way in I Corinthians 2:16, “**For ‘who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ.**”

How is this done?

It is done as we read, and study God’s Word and the Holy Spirit then opens us up to the things of God.

We know the mind of God because it is God Himself who is teaching us these things!

Interestingly enough Paul's joy for the Philippians was linked to their unity and their unity was linked to their humility.

Now how do we achieve that unity?

How is that unity manifested in our lives?

Paul speaks of that in Philippians 2:3-4.

And here's the thing. Self-will is at the heart of every sin, it caused Lucifer to fall, it caused Adam and Eve to fall, and it remains at the forefront of sin today!

You see, ***there can't be unity when there is selfishness.***

Paul then speaks of "**conceit**" and it comes from the Greek word KENODOXIA, (ken-od-ox-ee'-ah) and it is formed by the adjective KENOS meaning "empty" and the noun DOXA which means, "glory."

Thus, it speaks of empty glory, vain glory. The point is this. It is thinking too highly of yourself; it is an issue of pride!

Thus, ***there can be no unity when there is conceit.***

And then Paul speaks on the positive side, "**lowliness of mind.**"

You see, how do you put away self-will and vain glory?

By having humility of the mind and that will then be manifested in your actions.

As I have said, unity is seen through humility!

In this position you place others above you, you are a servant of God.

You see, as you have a humility of mind, you are going to be watching and helping others more than yourself, it would be impossible then to have strife and contention if that is our hearts focus.

I realize this may seem difficult; it may seem unfair.

Some may say, *“You don’t know how I’m being treated. How people unfairly treat me.*

I have to fight for my rights!”

It is true. I don’t know everything you are going through, how people are treating you.

And let’s face it, I’m sure we have all felt that way at one time or another or we may even feel that way right now.

What can we do?

To help us see how important this is for our lives, to have a lowliness of mind, to have a humble spirit, Paul is going to give to us the ultimate example, Jesus Christ to show us His humility!

Before we dig into those verses, I want you to listen to what Andrew Murray said in his book, *Humility: The Journey toward Holiness*.

He wrote,

It is a solemn thought that our love for God is measured by our everyday relationships with others. Except as its validity is proven in standing the test of daily life with our fellowmen, our love for God may be found to be a delusion.

It is easy to think that we humble ourselves before God, but our humility toward others is the only sufficient proof that our humility before God is real. To be genuine, humility must abide in us and become our very nature. True humility is to be made of no reputation - as did Christ.

In God's presence, humility is not a posture we assume for a time - when we think of Him or pray to Him - but the very spirit of our life. It will manifest itself in all our bearing toward others. A lesson of deepest importance is that the only humility that is really ours is not the kind we try to show before God in prayer, but the kind we carry with us, and carry out, in our ordinary conduct.

The seemingly insignificant acts of daily life are the tests of eternity, because they prove what spirit possesses us. It is in our most unguarded moments that we truly show who we are and what we are made of. To know a truly humble person, you must follow that one in the common course of daily life.

This is what Jesus taught. He gave them an example when He washed their feet. He taught His lessons of humility by demonstration. Humility before God is nothing if it is not proven in humility before others.

- Andrew Murray, *Humility: The Journey toward Holiness*

How true that is. Are we living what we say we believe?

And the problem why we don't live this way is simple. Satan loves to get us to spend all of our time trying to learn to love ourselves more. You have heard it said before, "You can't love others until you first love yourself!"

That sounds so good and yet, you will not find that in the Bible. What you will find in the Bible is that we are to die to self.

And I am pretty sure we all think plenty about ourselves. If we didn't, why did we get washed up, comb our hair, put this outfit on, and-so-on before we came to church?

It is because we love ourselves that we do those things and thus, love others as you love yourself! And we love ourselves plenty!

And thus, the problem. If we are so focused on ourselves, if we listen to what Satan is telling us, we won't have time left to love anyone else because we are so focused on ourselves!

A great example of a group of Christians who loved themselves is seen in the lives of the Corinthians. We are told in I Corinthians 3:1-3, **“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, ‘I am of Paul,’ and another, ‘I am of Apollos,’ are you not carnal?”**

This is not loving the brethren and it is not showing any unity, but they were so focused on themselves that we see this petty bickering and these contentions. And this all arises out of a carnal mindset, not the mind of Christ!

There is a great freedom that comes when we stop striving and fighting for our rights or to get ahead of others and we simply put others first and let God lift us up in His time.

But what about me? Paul is going to give to us the ultimate example of humility and after reading through this, after listening to what Paul has to say here, if you still are thinking it is all about you, something is wrong!

Look at what Paul says.

VERSE 5

If you are struggling in this area of humility, of reaching out to others, you need to change your mindset or get refocused upon Jesus and what He did!

In John 13:12-17 we are told, **“So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.’”**

The idea here is this. *“If it is true for the greater (Jesus), then it must be true for the lesser (you and me).”*

You see, we have a choice. To follow His example or to have a life that is selfish, full of vain glory, looking out for yourself!

But again, Paul told the Philippians, **“fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”** Philippians 2:2.

If you want to be great in God’s kingdom, learn to be a servant to all, as the song goes and as the Scriptures teach us!

Now, when Paul says, **“Let this mind [this mindset] be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”** what was this mindset of Jesus that Paul was referring to?

That is what he speaks of in Philippians 2:6-8. Look at what Paul says, the example of Jesus!

VERSES 6-8

First of all, we see that Paul is saying here, in regard to Jesus Christ, that He has existed and will always exist as God, which is unchangeable.

The word “**form**” is the Greek word MORPHE and it speaks of the outward manifestation of an inward reality.

In other words, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Word has always existed, He has always been God and when He became flesh and dwelt among us, He was still God even though He took on a body of flesh. That inward reality was manifested in the things He did even though He was covered with flesh!

Then Paul says that Jesus “**did not consider it robbery to be equal with God**”?

What is he trying to say here?

He is saying that Jesus did not try to steal His deity from God, He didn't try to take away something that was not His.

You see, Jesus is God, equal with the Father; He is not “*a god*” like some teach, but Almighty God!

Thus, he didn't have to take it because it was already His!

Satan tried to steal that, but, obviously you can't steal it, but he was put down for his rebellion against God!

And then, in Philippians 2:7 we are told that He “**made Himself of no reputation**” or that He “**emptied Himself.**”

Again, what does that mean?

Jesus Christ, God Almighty, the one who created the heavens and the earth, “**emptied himself**” of all the rights He had as being deity and took on the body of not just a man, but a servant!

It was not that Jesus was 50% God and 50% man or even 75% God and 25% man. But He was 100% God and 100% man and God alone can do that.

I may not understand that, but it is what the Scriptures teach.

Then what did Jesus empty Himself of, which that phrase “**made Himself of no reputation**” speaks of?

First of all, He emptied Himself of His divine glory. We see that in John 17:1, 5, where we are told, “**. . . ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You . . . And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.’**”

Secondly, He emptied Himself of His divine authority as we are told in John 5:30, “**I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**”

Thirdly, He emptied Himself of some of His divine attributes, he did not stop being omniscient or all-knowing; He did not stop being omnipresent or present everywhere; He did not stop being omnipotent or all-powerful; He did not stop being immutable but He chose not to exercise those attributes during His earthly ministry.

We see Him get up early to pray and seek direction from His Father. In Mark 13:32 we are told, “**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.**”

The fourth thing Jesus emptied Himself of was His eternal riches that are due Him. We see that in II Corinthians 8:9 where we are told, **“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”**

And in Mark 10:45 we are told, **“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”**

The fifth thing that Jesus emptied Himself of when He became flesh and blood was that He temporarily emptied Himself of His intimate relationship with the Father as He bore the sins of the world on the cross of Calvary.

In Matthew 27:46 we are told, **“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”**

I like the way that one writer summed this all up for us. He wrote,

What is the Incarnation but His humility in emptying Himself and becoming Man?

What is His life on earth but humility in taking the form of a servant?

What was the His death on the cross if not the supreme demonstration of humility - “He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”

Everything about the life and ministry of Jesus spoke of humility.

What could speak of humility more than a lion becoming a lamb - the Lion of the Tribe of Judah becoming the Lamb of God - the Sovereign of the universe becoming the sacrifice for our sins?

- Source Unknown

That is our God. He is our example in how we are to live out our lives and if Almighty God could focus on the needs of others, why can't we? Because we don't want to! Not a good answer!

Also, as we look at Philippians 2:8, Jesus was flesh and blood, not some ghost that just hovered over the ground, as the Gnostics tried to tell people.

No, He was flesh and blood, He was man!

You could touch Him, feel Him, He was real and thus, being a man He understood what we go through, the pain, the hurt and He could have compassion on us because He knew what we felt. He crawled into our skin you might say!

So Jesus humbled Himself in His nature, He humbled Himself in His form, and He humbled Himself in His attitude even to the point of death, the death on the cross, which was not only cruel, it was brutal, it was horrible! You died slowly of suffocation; you could no longer push yourself up to breath.

Of this Ralph Martin tells us,

His obedience is a sure token of His deity and authority, for . . . only a divine being can accept death as obedience; for ordinary men it is a necessity. He alone as the obedient Son of His Father could choose death as His destiny; and He did so because of His love, a love which was directed both to His Father's redeeming purpose and equally to the world into which He came. "I come to do they will" (Heb 10:7f.) was the motto-text of His entire life.

- Ralph Martin, The Epistle of Paul to the Philippians, p. 102

And listen to how Andrew Murray sums this up for us. He wrote,

I cannot too greatly impress upon my readers the need of realizing the lack there is today of humility within Christian circles. There is so little of the meek and lowly Lamb of God in those who are called by His name.

Let us consider how our lack of love, indifference to the needs and feelings of others, even sharp comments and hasty judgments that are often excused as being honest and straightforward, are thwarting the effect of the influence of the Holy Spirit on others.

Manifestations of temper and touchiness and irritation, feelings of bitterness and estrangement, have their root in nothing but pride.

Pride creeps in almost everywhere and the assemblies of the saints are not exceptions . . . Humility is the only soil in which virtue takes root; a lack of humility is the explanation of every defect and failure.

(We must come to admit) . . . that there is nothing so natural to man, nothing so insidious and hidden from our sight, nothing so difficult and dangerous as pride.

And acknowledge that nothing but a very determined and persevering waiting on God will reveal how lacking we are in the grace of humility and how powerless we are to obtain what we seek.

We must study the character of Christ until our souls are filled with the love and admiration of His lowliness.

We must believe that when we are broken under a sense of pride and our inability to cast it out, Jesus Christ Himself will come to impart this grace as a part of His wonderful life within us.

- Andrew Murray

That is what God wants to do in us and through us if we would humble ourselves before Him! **“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”** Philippians 2:5.

VERSES 9-11

Look at what we see here. Before glory there was death.

You see, as the Son humbled Himself to the point of death, being obedient to the Father, the Father *“super exalted”* Him!

One writer summed this up for us like this. He wrote,

And here in Philippians Paul pulls out all the stops, using a word found nowhere else in the New Testament, as he says literally “Therefore God super-exalted him” (v. 9a) Christ received the highest exaltation. This is incomprehensible. It is in a class by itself.

The awesome retrospect is that Christ’s humiliation eventuated in his resurrection, his ascension, and now his super-exaltation and rule as he reigns forever. This is theological-historical fact.

- R. Kent Hughes, Philippians – the Fellowship of the Gospel, p. 91

Paul is telling us that He who humbled Himself, Jesus, was raised in glory and is now seated at the right hand of the Father, the place of power.

And His name is Jesus or ***YAHWEH IS SALVATION*** and He alone has that name for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved. ***NONE AT ALL!***

In Hebrews 1:1-4 we are told, **“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”**

Now some take what Paul is saying here, that every knee should bow as there is a universal salvation, or all will be saved.

Is that what Paul is speaking of here, a universal salvation when he says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus is Lord? Is everyone going to be saved?

Not at all!

You will either bow your knee willingly, out of love for Him as you submit your life to Jesus now or you will be compelled to bow your knee before Him if you reject Him now.

You see, what you believe or don't believe about Jesus doesn't change who He is and because He is King of kings and Lord of lords, all will bow before Him in reverence!

The bottom line is this. It doesn't matter what your spiritual state may be, this has nothing to do with your will, as proud and arrogant as it may be, you will bow the knee to Jesus.

And here is the question. When will you bow the knee to Him? How much better it is to bow your knee before Him now than later, when you stand before Him and you have never made that confession of faith!

So we have seen Jesus empty Himself of some of His Godly attributes, but how does this relate to us? Listen to what Paul said, “**Let this same attitude and purpose and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]**” Philippians 2:5. (The Amplified Bible)

And the reality is folks, as Peter tells us, “**Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.**” I Peter 5:6.

Now Paul is going to use his life as an example of humility in Philippians 2:12-18. Let’s read on and see what he has to say.

VERSES 12-18

Philippians 2:12 is very troubling to some. They read this and they think, “*See, Jesus saves us but then you must work to keep, to maintain your salvation and if you don’t, you will lose it!*”

What is wrong with that statement?

It is not Scriptural! Listen to what Paul tells us Ephesians 2:8-9, “**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**”

So that is not right, that you have to work to maintain your salvation because the work was completed by Jesus on the cross of Calvary for us and we are to receive that free gift by faith.

We are saved by Grace through Faith and not by the Law through works!

Here is the key. Paul tells us that we are to “**work out**” not “*work to get in*” our salvation.

His point is simple, since God has worked in you, now let that flow out into your actions, the things you are doing, bear fruit in your life showing you are abiding in Him!

You see God put it in you and now you must work it out in your daily life. You must humble yourself and surrender your life to God, be in obedience to what He has said, like Jesus demonstrated for us, and that is how it starts to look as it's working its way out into your life.

Keep in mind that the verb "**work out**" carries the meaning of "*work to full completion,*" such as working out a problem in mathematics. In Paul's day it was also used for "*working a mine,*" that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible.

In other words, Paul is telling us that we are to reach for our full potential in all that we do for God's glory and that is only going to be accomplished as we surrender our lives fully to His will and purposes!

James put it this way in James 2:14-18, "**What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**"

It is as Calvin said, "Faith alone saves, but the faith that saves is never alone!"

Let what God is doing in you impact your life in such a way that it is manifested in your actions as you honor, respect the Lord and as you do it brings God pleasure as you minister to the people of this world!

And then Paul speaks of what we are not to do.

Remember in Deuteronomy 1:26-27, as Moses is reviewing the history of the nation of Israel, speaking of their refusal to enter into the Promise Land, we are told, **“Nevertheless you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you complained in your tents, and said, ‘Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.’”**

Just as they complained back then, they complained in Paul’s day and Christians do the same today!

And the idea here, I believe, is complaining and disputing against God, which then leads to complaining and disputing with each other.

Keep in mind that Paul is speaking of unity through humility and thus, there is no unity with complaining and disputing with each other.

Think about this, God is working in you and thus, what flows from your life should be his attributes.

You see, as we allow God to flow through us, we are growing, we are maturing in the faith. It shows others we are believers as we are blameless, we are innocent, we are God’s children because as dark as this world might be, you can still shine forth as a bright light to them, a light leading them to Jesus!

And Paul admonishes them to hold onto the word of life, hold onto Jesus and hold onto His Word. Make no mistake about it, Paul’s heart was for the believers in Philippi and that the work he started there would not be in vain, it would not be empty, but that they would grow in the Lord!

That is the heart of any true shepherd!

It is as John said, **“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”**

III John 4. And folks, that is my joy, to see you growing and maturing in the Lord!

And then Paul speaks of his life, that it was a living sacrifice unto God and now he isn't sure if the race is over, if he is going to be put to death for his faith, but it doesn't change his countenance, why?

Because his joy was based upon a constant, the Lord and thus, no matter what would come down the pike, Paul could rejoice! His heart was that of a servant and to see people grow in the Lord and for people to come to the faith was his work.

It is as Peter said, **“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.”** I Peter 4:12-13. That is what Paul was doing!

Now, as we read on in Philippians 2:19-24 Paul is going to give to us the example of Timothy, a humble man of God.

VERSES 19-24

If you remember, Timothy grew up, probably in Lystra in the province of Galatia, which is part of modern-day Turkey.

His mother was Jewish, and her name was Eunice, who was a believer, and his father was Greek, and he was an unbeliever.

He had a believing grandmother named Lois.

Timothy was converted to the faith, we are told, in II Timothy 1:3-5, probably on Paul's first missionary journey because in Acts 16:1-4 Paul saw Timothy as one he could clearly use in service to the Lord.

And notice what Paul says of Timothy, that Timothy is "**like-minded.**"

What does he mean by that?

First of all, Paul said in Philippians 2:5, "**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**"

They shared the mind of Christ, their love for the Lord and also for the people, like the Philippian believers and thus, Paul is going to send Timothy back to Philippi to see how they are doing, to bring back word so he may be encouraged by the report of their unity through humility, their growth in the Lord, as they put on the mind of Christ.

There were those that were only serving for themselves, what they could get out of it, through selfish motives, but not Timothy, he went wherever he was needed, did whatever was needed all for the glory of God. Timothy proved himself, he stood the test.

How great it is to have people who are like-minded, working together for the kingdom of God, it truly is a blessing!

And Paul's desire was to go to Philippi and minister to the believers there, but since he was in prison, he was sending Timothy, his representative because they were like-minded. He had confidence in Timothy, and he knew the believers in Philippi would be blessed when he arrives. Timothy truly had a spirit of humility that flowed from his life.

As we read on, we will see Paul move to his last example of a person who is walking in humility, and that is Epaphroditus. And we will see that in Philippians 2:25-30, to the end of the chapter.

VERSES 25-30

First of all, we see that Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to Paul in Rome to see how he was doing, to encourage Paul and to bring him some financial assistance, a gift.

Paul tells us of this in Philippians 4:18, **“Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.”**

But during his journey or stay with Paul, he got sick and as we have seen, he almost died.

And, without smart phones, the Internet, word spread of the sickness of their dear friend, Epaphroditus, all the way back to Philippi.

As much as he wanted to be back home, they wanted him home and so Paul is going to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi, probably with this letter.

What I want you to see here is that this man was so sick that he almost died and if it weren't for the mercy of God, he would have died!

Now think about that. Why didn't Paul just name and claim a healing for this man?

Why didn't Paul get out one of his sweatbands and place it on him so he could be healed?

Because not all are healed physically – it all falls upon the sovereignty of God!

Sin has infected this world with its devastating consequences; thus, diseases and death are part of this world.

God, in His sovereignty, in His mercy can heal people at times while others are sick, and they die. How come?

I can't tell you the reason why some wicked people are healed, and some dear saints are sick and some die, but I do know that Father knows best!

I fall back on the things I do know about God and rest in that.

Job was a righteous man and yet, God allowed his business, his family, his health to be taken away from him and it took Job some 36 chapters to find out that he is not going to know all the how's and why's of God, who is all-knowing, but he learned to trust in God.

In Job 42:1-6, after the Lord rebuked Job for his behavior, questioning God, we are told, **“Then Job answered the LORD and said: ‘I know that You can do everything, And that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You. You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me.” I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, But now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, And repent in dust and ashes.’”**

If you are struggling with this issue for yourself or a loved one, wondering why God hasn't healed the situation, you're in the same boat as Asaph was, in Psalm 73, who lost the perspective of things because his eyes were focused on the situation and not upon God.

Asaph was troubled by what he saw in the wicked, how they prospered, their death was easy, they were without trouble, even in their violence, they were wealthy, they had it all and they boasted about it, they are respected, quoted and they even speak against God.

Asaph lost perspective and he was not seeing things correctly. That was not how the wicked lived, they had problems too, but Asaph did not see that.

And Asaph said, **“Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning.”** Psalm 73:14-14.

He was overwhelmed by what he saw, he even came to the wrong conclusions in what he thought he saw, as I have said, and as they got away with so much, he who was clean was struggling.

Have you ever felt that way?

Have you ever found yourself in a situation like that, that you are serving God and yet all these things are happening to you?

You know what the solution is, don't you?

Asaph tells us, **“When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me - Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end.”** Psalm 73:16-17.

It was not until he went back to the place of fellowship with God that he had a correct perspective of the situation and the same is true for us.

We can have feelings that are wrong, untrue and they will grow until we get into God's Word, spend time with Him and He corrects things.

You see, in the end death for the Christian is not the end of living, it is moving day as we move from these bodies of flesh, these tents, into new bodies, mansions made by the Lord for our spirit and soul to dwell in that will never get sick or fade away! You see, perspective is everything!

And for the unsaved, they don't get away with anything. They will spend an eternity in the Lake of Fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth!

So Paul is going to send Epaphroditus home, back to Philippi, but he was not returning home a failure. And Paul wanted the Philippians to understand that.

He was willing to give his life to the Lord as a sacrifice, even to the point of death, but God had mercy on him and spared him, healed him. Thus, receive this man with joy and give him the proper recognition when he arrives!

In fact, in Philippians 2:30, that phrase “**not regarding**” in the Greek is PARABOLEUOMAI, (par-ab-oll-yoo’-om-ahee) and it literally means “*to throw away.*”

It speaks of voluntarily putting oneself in a dangerous or hazardous condition.

One writer put it like this. He wrote,

Soon after the New Testament times, a group of Christians banded together in an association they called Parabolani, which means “The Gamblers.” Taking Epaphroditus as their model, they visited prisoners and ministered to the sick, especially those with dangerous communicable diseases whom no one else would help. They boldly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever they went.

When the city of Carthage, on the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, suffered a severe plague in A. D. 252, the pagan inhabitants were so frightened of contagion [infection] that they refused to touch the dead bodies even to bury them.

Cyprian, bishop of the church there, led the Christians in the arduous [difficult] and dangerous task of ministering to the sick and dying and of burying the thousands of corpses. The spiritual influence of that silent but powerful testimony on their unbelieving and formerly hostile neighbors doubtless was immeasurable.

- John MacArthur

Do you see how they were living what Paul was saying here! “**Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.**” Philippians 2:5.

I remember some years ago someone who was upset with me sent me a rather long e-mail, and it was after I was pretty sick, and this person basically said that I was working myself to death, being a martyr and not in a good way.

All I could think of and still do think of is this man and his example, Epaphroditus, who was willing to give it his all, even if it cost him his life. As a servant of Jesus Christ, how can we do any less?

I am not saying that we are foolish, but are we willing to lay our lives down for others?

As I close this evening, keep in mind the examples we have seen regarding humility that brought about unity.

The example of Jesus who emptied Himself.

Of Paul who was being poured out as a drink offering for the service of others.

Of Timothy who was willing to go wherever there was a need, not holding onto his own agenda.

And Epaphroditus, a man who was willing to place his life on the line in order to serve others, to work hard in the faith.

May we have unity through humility as we learn from their examples and we allow God not only to work in us, but that the work God is doing in us may be worked out of us and be manifested in our lives, the things we do for the glory of God and the edification of others!

“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 2:5.