

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4
JOY IN HUMILITY!

Please turn in your Bibles this morning to Philippians chapter 2 as we continue our in-depth study of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

Keep in mind that this letter is known as 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 and out of that relationship with Jesus we look out for others, we placed them as a priority in our lives.

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 and so on.

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. And as you listen, you may not even believe something like this could happen in a church, but it can, and it does, and it has happened!

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. And I told you, hard to even imagine that adults, Christians, would behave like that, but they did!

And 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.

In regard to this chapter, one writer put it like this,

Perhaps the greatest danger facing the church is an attack on its source of authority, namely, the Word of God.

Spiritual apathy and a general coldness and indifference to biblical truth and God's standards of righteousness also pose serious risks. Such indifference is usually denied, often with an aura of self-deceptive sincerity, but it attacks the spirituality of the church.

Equally to be feared is whatever attacks the unity of the church. All of these can disrupt, weaken, and destroy a church by causing discord, disharmony, conflict, and division.

When Paul closed his last letter to the Corinthians, he expressed his fear of sins that destroy unity: ***“For I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish; that perhaps there will be strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances”*** (2 Cor 12:20).

He also feared sins that destroyed the purity of the church: ***“I am afraid that when I come again my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they have practiced”*** (v. 21).

Apparently the Philippian church faced the danger of discord and division from the personal conflict between Euodia and Syntyche (4:2).

Disunity is a potential danger for every church, a danger Paul addressed to some extent in every one of his letters to churches.

To the church at Rome he wrote, ***“Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God”*** (Rom 15:5-7; cf. 12:5,16).

To the Corinthians he wrote, ***“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and in the same judgment”*** (1 Cor 1:10), and ***“Brethren, rejoice, be made complete, be comforted, be like-minded, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you”*** (2 Cor 13:11).

He warned the Galatians, ***“Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another”*** (Gal 5:26; cf. 6:2-3). . .

The church at Philippi was for the most part theologically sound, devoted, moral, loving, zealous, courageous, prayerful, and generous.

Yet it faced the danger of discord that often is generated by only a few people. Such troublemakers can stir up the contention and strife that fractures an entire congregation.

And because disunity is so tragically debilitating, Paul gently but firmly pleads with believers to be constantly and diligently on guard against it.

He had just expressed to the Philippians his hope to *“hear of [them] that [they] are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”* (1:27).

- John MacArthur – Philippians 2

The title of this message this morning is – ***JOY IN HUMILITY!***

And that truly is the key as we will see. Are we willing to humble ourselves before the Lord so we can love others or is it *“My way or the highway!”*

For many, they just refuse to humble themselves and, in the end, there are divisions, fights, people are mad at each other.

That should not be!

And maybe that is why so many Christians are struggling with joy, they lack humility!

Someone said this about being humble, *“Humility does not mean thinking less of yourself than of other people, nor does it mean having a low opinion of your own gifts. It means freedom from thinking about yourself one way or the other at all.”*

I think that the biblical definition of humility goes beyond this. Humility is a critical and continuous emphasis on godliness in the Bible. We are called upon to be humble followers of Christ and trust in the wisdom and salvation of God. True humility is seeing ourselves as we truly are, fallen in sin and helpless without God.

And we will see this in our study, but the idea here is not putting ourselves down, but seeing ourselves as we really are!

Not an easy subject to deal with but again, our focus is joy and this joy is found in humility, and we will see that this morning.

I have broken our study down into two main points and they are,

BE LIKEMINDED – PHILIPPIANS 2:1-2

JOY IN HUMILITY – PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

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 this morning as we study His Word and look at this topic of – ***JOY IN HUMILITY!***

PHILIPPIANS 2

VERSES 1-2

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 work 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.

Let me give you this example and you will see what I mean about focusing on self and what we want and really, what is the best thing to do.

We are told,

Many years ago, in a small rural community in Minnesota the people got together to meet and decide on a name for their new town.

And there would have been no problem if people were not involved. But of course, they were involved, they had to be!

So it didn't take long for differing opinions to surface and for tempers to rise.

The meeting grew contentious and ugly.

And I am sure you know how that can go and it is not pretty!

Finally, one of the leading citizens pounded the table, shouting, ***“Let's have harmony.”***

You can imagine how that went over! His words just hung in the air.

That was until someone in the meeting saw their relevance and shouted it out, ***“Yea, let's have harmony!”***

Guess what? Just like that the town got its name: ***Harmony, Minnesota.***

As we will see in our study of Philippians, all was not well in the church.

It was not a doctrinal issue but a fellowship issue.

Some sisters in Christ were not getting along, they were squabbling with each other, and they were probably dividing the church. People had taken sides. That is what usually happens.

Paul wrote this in Philippians 4:1-3, **“Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life.”**

In other words, stop the bickering and work together. And he wants others to help stop this division because we are all on the same team.

We have lost sight of that today and this idea of fellowship, oneness that is in Christ only goes so far.

“As long as you agree with me, as long as you do what I want you to do, as long as you don’t bother me or whatever, we can have fellowship. Otherwise, keep your distance!”

I guess you can say that Paul is shouting out to those in Philippi and the Holy Spirit to us, ***“Let’s have harmony!”***

Let’s focus on Jesus - be of the same mind and heart.

Make no mistake about it, 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 take a 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 starts out with by saying, **" . . . if there is any consolation in Christ . . ."**

I thought that we have consolation in Christ.

We do.

Now some see this as a rhetorical statement by Paul, and I think it is. Of course there is consolation in Christ and we can rest in that.

This is what we have in Christ!

And if it is a rhetorical statement, then this is the first of four rhetorical statements by Paul. And like I have said, I think it is.

We are told in Luke 2:25, **"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him."**

Jesus is not only the consolation of Israel but of the whole world for those who come to Him!

Paul, in II Corinthians 1:5 tells us, **“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ.”**

Notice that this consolation of Christ abounds in us, not a trickle or just a little bit!

And in II Thessalonians 2:16-17 Paul wrote, **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”**

Not only does this consolation of Christ abound in us, but it is also everlasting, and praise the Lord for that!

And this idea of **“consolation”** is that of comfort. He is the God of all comfort and has given to us the greatest comfort we can imagine and that is eternal life with Him!

Not only that, but as 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 is the God of all comfort and as we receive that comfort from Him, we are to share that with others!

The third rhetorical statement by Paul is **“if any fellowship of the Spirit.”**

Fellowship is the ancient Greek word *koinonia*. It means the sharing of things in common. We share life with the Spirit of God that we never knew before. The Holy Spirit fills and guides and moves in our lives in a powerful and precious way. Of course there is fellowship of the Spirit!

One writer put it like this, *“The Lord doth usually and graciously water the holy fellowship of his people with the dews of many sweet and glorious refreshings; so that they have a very heaven upon earth.”* (Trapp)

This is what we have in common, something that only believers have in common, the Holy Spirit indwelling in them.

Lastly, Paul’s fourth and final rhetorical statement here and 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.

Paul mentioned these things in a manner that suggests to us that they should all be obvious parts of the Christian’s experience.

To make his rhetorical point, he could have just as easily said, *“If water is wet, if fire is hot, if rocks are hard,”* and so forth.

So, as we have seen, each of these gifts – *consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, affection and mercy* – are communicated to us both in a direct, spiritual way from Jesus, and from Jesus through His people.

But there isn’t any doubt that these are real gifts for Christians to really experience.

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.

It is out of these statements that Paul says here in Philippians 2:2, “**fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.**”

The Amplified Bible puts this verse like this, “**Fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention.**”

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.

Again, I like how The Amplified Bible puts this, "**... living in harmony and being of the same mind and one in purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention.**"

Live in harmony, we have the mind of Christ and the purpose of us being here as Christians is to spread the Gospel message, we have the same purpose!

Not only that, but we have the love of Christ, that same love and thus, may we manifest that love to one another.

Remember what Jesus said in regard to how people will know we are Christians. In John 13:34-35 Jesus said, "**A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.**"

Our love for each other is a witness to the world that we belong to Christ! I find that interesting because we have so many other ideas of what makes us a disciple of Christ. But this is what Jesus tells us, that the evidence for our relationship with Christ, that we are His disciple, is that we "**have love for one another.**"

Now let's think about this for a minute. If we put on the mind of Christ. If we are listening to the Lord. As His Spirit is guiding us. Then why can't we get along with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

That is a great question, and we have many reasons why we can't get along with each other.

I am not saying that every Christian will be our closest friend, but they are family and thus, we should get along with each other.

Again, you may not agree with this, but I truly believe why so many struggle today with joy is that they can't get along with each other and thus, they are mad, they are angry, they are this and that, and when you listen to what they say, you can see that there is no joy in their lives.

Unity is important as Christians. In fact, Paul said, "**fulfill my joy . . .**"

And that is our focus here in these verses – ***BE LIKEMINDED!***

Now how do we achieve that unity?

How is that unity manifested in our lives?

Paul speaks of that in Philippians 2:3-4 as we look at – ***JOY IN HUMILITY!***

VERSES 3-4

Let me talk a little about humility because many come to the wrong conclusion.

You see, humility is not beating yourself up or self-loathing, "***I am not worthy! I am worthless***" mentality. And it is not the same as low self-esteem.

In fact, if you think about it, when you go around saying that you are nothing, that you are worthless and so on, you are not being humble, but you are drawing attention to yourself!

Here is the reality. Humility, genuine humility doesn't focus on self at all!

In other words, it does not put self down and it doesn't lift self up! It doesn't focus on self!

Then what is the focus or what should the focus be in our lives?

First of all, and I think we all know this, the Lord needs to be the focus in our lives. If He is not the focus then everything else in our life is going to be out of focus, it is going to be messed up.

It is when the Lord is our focus that we are not focused on self, but we are focused upon others! That is what true humility looks like, looking out for the welfare of others!

In other words, ***“You are more important to me than I am!”***

Why do so many marriages struggle and fail?

Because it is all about ***ME*** and I will let you in on a little secret. ***ME*** will never be satisfied and you will focus more and more upon yourself and in the end, you will lose everything!

And that is what we see Paul speaking about here in Philippians, **“Do nothing from factional motives [through contentiousness, strife, selfishness, or for unworthy ends] or prompted by conceit and empty arrogance. Instead, in the true spirit of humility (lowliness of mind) let each regard the others as better than and superior to himself [thinking more highly of one another than you do of yourselves]. Let each of you esteem and look upon and be concerned for not [merely] his own interests, but also each for the interests of others.”**

(Philippians 2:3-4 – The Amplified Bible)

And let’s face it. How many of you like to deal with this subject of – ***HUMILITY?***

Okay, for all of you who raised your hand indicating that you like to deal with this subject, you are not being very humble! Sorry. But isn’t that the case?

In fact, many don’t even think this is an important issue. They focus on other things and ignore humility.

Why don’t we want to deal with this subject?

First of all, because then we will have to work on our heart, deal with this issue in our lives because we all fall short.

Secondly, because we like a quick fix to our problems.

I see this with marriage counseling. People come in and they want a quick fix to their problems.

And when they are told what the Bible has to say, what they are to do, they don't like it and usually just leave like they came in, unchanged. They don't want to work on it, they just want it fixed.

Imagine having a problem with your car and you don't want to work on it to fix it, you just want it fixed. Foolishness and that is what it is like in our own lives if we are unwilling to deal with these things.

Let me ask you this. If humility is not that important to you, then why does God speak so much about it in the Bible?

Now you may be thinking, ***“Hey, Pastor Joe, humility is not a fruit of the Spirit, so why the fuss. Why are you making such a big deal about humility?”***

I think it is and yes, maybe not mentioned there specifically but think about it. What is the fruit of the Spirit?

The fruit of the Spirit is – ***LOVE – AGAPE LOVE!*** It is an unconditional love.

Make no mistake about it, God's love is a totally unselfish love because it is others centered and that love, that agape love will only grow, it will only flourish when our hearts are humbled before God and others!

Let me add this because I want you to see the importance of humility and the danger of pride or thinking more highly of yourself than you should!

Self-will is at the heart of every sin!

How can I say that?

Because it is the first sin ever committed and it caused Lucifer to fall!

It caused Adam and Eve to fall!

And today, it continues to be at the forefront of sin! It is all about me and that is pride as we put ourselves above everyone else!

And like I said, if self is the focus of your life, you will never be satisfied because self is never satisfied. And thus, there is no joy because your focus is upon yourself and there is no joy, like I have said, because self will never be satisfied!

I hate to keep picking on marriages but think about it. We see people separate or get a divorce because they want to do what they want to do. Time is going by, and they want to enjoy life!

Isn't that a person that is focused on self?

Absolutely!

And here is the other thing, *there can't be unity when there is selfishness!*

We see this played out for us 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?"**

Freedom comes when we submit to the Lord and we see ourselves as we should, sinners that have been saved by the grace of God. When we let go of striving for all that we want to get, and simply put others ahead of ourselves, we will find that joy that is found in the Lord!

As James said, “**Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**” James 4:10.

Let me give you this example from Genesis chapter 13, the story of Abraham and Lot.

As their livestock grew the land could not support them both and there was tension between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot.

And this issue was not only their contention, but also their witness to the unbelieving people of Canaan. You see, Lot was a believer as was Abram.

Abram was the elder and God gave the land to him. Thus, he could have said to Lot, “*Take a hike boy, you bother me! This land is my land, not your land!*”

But Abram didn’t do that because he let love flow.

He told Lot to take what he wanted, and he would take the other portion.

You see, Abram walked by faith, he humbled himself and he was trusting in the promises that God made to him.

So, as Paul says here, don’t do things through selfish ambition, don’t do things that are centered or focused on self.

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.*

What is the point?

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 and it would be impossible then to have strife and contention if that is our heart’s 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.

And as we try to justify the way we are acting, the way we treat people, let me give you an example of what we are to do.

And yes, I am pulling out a trump card, not the former President of the United States, but a trump card!

And I think you may know where I am going with this. Jesus is my trump card because He is our example.

Look at what they did to Jesus.

He endured three religious trials where they had to try and make up accusations against him so they could bring Jesus to Ceaser to be tried and put to death!

He endured three civil trials were He was beaten! In fact, they covered His face so He could not turn from the punches but took the full punch!

He was scourged so that His back was like raw meat!

His beard was pulled out!

He had a crown of thorns placed upon His head!

He had to walk through the streets of Jerusalem carrying a 100-pound crossbeam on the way to Calvary!

They mocked Him, the Jewish people, His own people came against Him!

And how did Jesus respond to all of this?

He said, “. . . **Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.**” Luke 23:34.

In spite of all Jesus went through, He did not smite them but loved them and asked the Father to forgive them!

What can we do?

We can humble ourselves and ask the Lord to help us love people as He loves us, and He loves them!

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. And we looked at these verses in I Corinthians 3:1-3. Paul said that they were fighting with each other, there was envy between them, there was strife and all kinds of divisions because they were 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 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! And that ultimate example of humility is Jesus Christ!

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

Many don't!

And thus, the problem. Remember what I have said. 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!

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.

Again, listen to what Paul said here, "**Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.**" Philippians 2:4.

Let me share with you a few Scriptures showing us that God wants us to humble ourselves and true humility is manifested in how we treat people.

And think about that. Do you go around and pick apart the flaws of a person? You may even try to be spiritual about it and justify it by saying, "*I think the world of him, but . . .*"

And that "*but*" says it all! You really don't think the world of that person and it is easy to pick apart the flaws in a person.

Don't go down that path. God has forgiven you of all your sins, now forgive them!

Peter tells us in I Peter 5:5-6, "**Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.'** **Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.**"

As we are clothed in humility, we submit to God's will and put ours aside and we submit to all in the fear of God.

Some Christian's wonder why they aren't growing, maturing in the Lord and the answer may be very simple.

Do you have an attitude of submission; do you clothe yourself in humility?

In Titus 3:1-2 we are told, **“Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”**

That is interesting, we are to show humility to who?

He tells us that we are to show – *HUMILITY TO ALL MEN!*

In Colossians 3:12-15 we are told, **“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”**

Now, why do we struggle so much with this? What keeps us from not manifesting these qualities in our life?

SELF!

It is a choice on our part! You see, instead of being heavenly minded we are self-consumed, self-absorbed and then what flows from our life is not the nature of Jesus but the nature of the world!

What can we do about that?

Paul tells us in Galatians 5:16, **“I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”**

In other words, surrender yourself to the Holy Spirit, put off the old man and put on the Lord!

And here is the key, what holds all these things together, kind of the initiator of them.

And we see that in Colossians 3:14 – **LOVE!**

Love is what all these other qualities spring-forth from, the **AGAPE** love of God.

Ray Stedman sums it up like this for us. He wrote,

There they are named for us, those two hideous elements of the flesh: selfishness and conceit, or pride.

These are the causes of the critical attitude we've already referred to. They are the two most deadly dividers of all human history.

I've observed that most marital failures come from the presence of these two things in the home. For the Christian, the apostle gives two simple suggestions which, if obeyed, will effectively counteract the effect of these two things.

First of all, he deals with pride. What practical suggestion can you give us, Paul, about how to handle pride? He [said], in humility count others better than yourselves.

Just look at them and say to yourself, ***“that person is a better person than I.”***

He doesn't mean to ignore obvious differences of ability or maturity. He doesn't say we should think everyone is equally competent, because sometimes experience is a factor. . . .

How can we handle selfishness in a practical way?

He answers, ***“Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”***

Deliberately ask yourself, ***“How much time am I giving to someone else's interests, if possible giving priority to other's needs rather than my own.”***

Be sure that the results that accrue from your actions give advantage to others as well as to yourself. In other words, continually be alert to how much you can help someone else. What am I doing to give aid to another person? As you set your mind to that, reckoning on the indwelling of God's life in you to respond to others, you will discover you no longer act in selfishness.

These things are always possible to a Christian. When selfishness and pride are removed from our relationships, we find Christian fellowship is always possible, and when we are together the gospel is advanced.

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Again, that question, "*But what about me?*"

Paul is going to give us the ultimate example of humility next time.

And I should not tell you this, but this whole chapter deals with humility, so it is important!

Let me close with these words from Proverbs 22:4, where we are told, "**By humility and the fear of the Lord Are riches and honor and life.**"

If you want that joy in your life, then, and this is really the last verse, listen to what Paul tells us.

In Ephesians 5:21 we see the key to all of this, as Paul tells us, "**submitting to one another in the fear of God.**"

As you do you will find – *JOY IN HUMILITY!*