



Restored to Contentment and Joy Part 2: The Call to Church Unity

June 14, 2020

Reading Philippians Chapter 2:1-18

- Last week, we were reminded that this epistle was written by the Apostle Paul likely between 60-62AD from Rome while he was in prison.
- Prayerfully, our contentment and joy began to rise based on a few truths from the holy Text:
 1. That our fellowship (*koinōnia*) is in the Gospel! (v5) That we as a Body are united in Christ. We are not alone in this world, but we have our LORD and one another!
 2. That just as Paul believed God would finish the work in the saints at Philippi, He will finish the work in us too! (v6) **Philippians 1:6 (KJV)** Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:
 3. That we have the opportunity in Christ to allow our love and knowledge to abound more and more! (v9) We can love and grow intentionally! Reach out! Read! Invite! Invest time in one another and the Scriptures.
 4. That the best perspective during trials is a Gospel one! (v12) **Philippians 1:12 (KJV)** *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.* This is the perspective we need to balance out our western pursuit of comfort and our individual sense of entitlement. Sometimes, God calls His saints to suffer for His Name and Gospel.
 5. That we can magnify Christ regardless of circumstances (living or dying) and not be ashamed! (v20)
 6. That to live is Christ; to die is gain! (v21) Here is the Christian life in one verse. All of our living is in Jesus. It is for Him, through Him, and about Him. It is to honor and glorify Him at all costs!
 7. That we must strive to live lives worthy of the Gospel! (v27a) **Philippians 1:27 (KJV)** *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*
 8. That we can stand firm in unity! (v27b)
 9. That we can choose confidence in Christ instead of fear (v28)
 - **Philippians 1:28 (KJV)** *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*
 - **Philippians 1:28 (NLT)** *Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.*
 10. That suffering for Christ is an honor! (v29)
 - **Philippians 1:29 (KJV)** *For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*
 - **Philippians 1:29 (NLT)** *For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.*

We said “be encouraged in the LORD friends. In the sovereignty of God, as long as we are walking hard after Christ, even our suffering is cause for rejoicing. This literally means that you can rejoice at all times!”

The Call to Christian Unity (Php 2:1-18)

Philippians 2:1-2 (KJV) If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, 2) Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

1. The word *consolation* can also be translated “encouragement.” In the flow of thought, Paul is not saying “if” with a sense of doubt, but rather “since.”
 2. There SHOULD be encouragement in Christ. There SHOULD be comfort of love. There SHOULD be fellowship of the Spirit. There SHOULD be bowels and mercies. (“Bowels” is KJV language for denoting a very deep compassion or sympathy.)
 3. And beloved, there SHOULD be a Christ-based, Gospel-empowered “likemindedness” within a local body of believers.
 4. There SHOULD be a “sameness” of love, a “one-accord-ness,” and one overall mind or direction based on “the mind of Christ.” (see also v5)
 5. “Although uniformity and unity are different things, to be like-minded really means to have the mind of Christ, to see things as He would see them, and to respond as He would respond. To have the same love means to show the same love to others that the Lord has shown to us... To be of one accord means to work together in harmony toward a common goal. ...To be of one mind means to act so unitedly as to show that Christ's mind is directing our activities.” - MacDonald
1. *I truly believe that in addition to the household, the local church should be a place that helps restore peace and joyfulness after dealing with the world all week. A spiritual oasis in the dry, carnal desert! That possibility begins to crumble if encouragement, love, mercy, and unity aren't present.*
 1. **Therefore let us redouble our prayerful efforts to be unified. It matters! Like it brought Paul “fulfilled joy,” it can bring such to all of us.**

Philippians 2:3-4 (KJV) Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 4) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

1. How should this joyful, peaceful unity look within the local church? How is it produced? The Spirit of God gives us direction through the apostle:
 - With hearts increasingly free of personal ambition as it concerns the body. The word for strife is a word that means “electioneering.” The implication is one trying to influence others for personal gain...the forming of “clicks.” This has NO place in God’s church.
 - Without vainglory, which is pride or conceit. Again, the antithesis of church communal life and ultimately detrimental to contentment and joy.
 - With hearts that esteem others better than oneself.
MacDonald said, “...we should live for others unselfishly, putting their interests above our own. It is easy to read an exhortation like this in the word of God, but quite another thing to appreciate what it really means, and then put it into actual practice. To esteem

others better than ourselves is utterly foreign to the human mind, and we cannot do it in our own strength. It is only as we are indwelt and empowered by the Holy Spirit that it can ever be practiced.”

6. Imagine if such a mindset were at work in every church....in every home? Not only would such produce contentment and joy...they would require it to even operate! You need both to truly walk in humility and selflessness over the long term.
7. In verse four, the church is told to look out for one another's interests! Amazingly, this “outward” focus is often the key to contentment and joy. Haven't you noticed that the more you focus on yourself, your wants, your disappointments, your anger, your issues, etc., the more frustrated and hard to please you become? For many, the antidote to depression is less self-focus, not more!

Philippians 2:5 (KJV) Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

1. If this all sounds crazy or too hard, Paul essentially says, “Let us now look to Christ to see how it's done!”
8. What mind was in Christ Jesus? A mind to serve and to accomplish His Father's will!

Matthew 20:28 (KJV) Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Luke 22:27 (KJV) For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

John 4:34 (KJV) Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

9. This is the heart we need...the counter-intuitive, flesh-denying entryway to contentment and joy!

Philippians 2:6 (KJV) Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7) But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

1. Let us marvel at the humility of Christ, and seek to emulate it!
10. He is God the Son, yet did not cling to His station or position, but veiled them for a season for our sakes!
11. Not only that...He did not come in glory, but in humility as a servant, and made in the likeness of men, subjecting Himself to hunger, thirst, exhaustion, pain, and suffering.
12. His love, humility and faithfulness ultimately sent Him to the cross, an instrument of torture and death, reserved for Rome's lowest criminals.
13. Paul's point for Philippi is this: “Look to Christ for an example of how you should walk amongst the brethren! THIS is how unity is truly manifest and maintained. THIS is the MIND you need!”
14. To have such unity, we must be willing to joyfully lay down title and influence, lower ourselves, serve, and humble ourselves unto death.
2. **Beloved, pride (and entitlement) is crushing the home and church. This “mind” (although not popular), will FREE US!**

Philippians 2:9 (KJV) Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: **10)** That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; **11)** And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

1. Hallelujah! Oh how our humble Savior deserves our worship for the Great things He has done! His Name is above all! All will bow before Him! Every mouth will confess Him!

Revelation 5:9-13 (KJV) And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; **10)** And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. **11)** And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; **12)** Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. **13)** And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Revelation 19:1 (KJV) And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God.

15. After you worship our LORD (how can you not after reading these verses), ask what the point is in context?

- “And what is the lesson in this for the Philippians—and for us? The lesson is that the way up is down. We should not exalt ourselves but be the servants of others, that God may exalt us in due time.” - MacDonald

16. One powerful key to contentment and joy is death to self.

- In other words, having a biblical perspective about life and its high and lows, dying to your wants, personal desires, grudges, pains, etc. This divine ability is one of the greatest gifts we have been given in Christ, and one of the hardest to hold onto!!!

Philippians 2:12 (KJV) Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. **13)** For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. **14)** Do all things without murmurings and disputings: **15)** That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; **16)** Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. **17)** Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. **18)** For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

1. Paul knows that gaining and holding onto this “mind” is not easy, so he encourages them to try hard in the LORD.
17. He tells them to work these things out very consistently and very carefully. (v12)
 - “The Greek verb rendered "work out" means "to continually work to bring something to fulfillment or completion." It cannot refer to salvation by works (cf. [Rom 3:21-24](#); [Eph 2:8-9](#)), but it does refer to the believer's responsibility for active pursuit of obedience in the process of sanctification.” -MacArthur
 - Fear and trembling imply care, honor, and reverence. This is the manner such a mind is to be pursued.
18. Ultimately however, it is God Himself who works in us according to His will! (v13) As God is working in us, let us also work:
 - Let us stop complaining. Grumbling is unbecoming of a Christian and is not the “mind” we should be working for. (v14)
 - Let us stop arguing. Same! (v14)
 - This is one way we demonstrate the light of Christ; a “crooked and perverse nation” is watching! (v15)
 - Let us hold forth (or fast to) the Word! (v16)
 - Let us bear suffering with joy as Paul did! (vv17-18)

Are you seeing the big picture yet? **Contentment and Joy are about Jesus!** They come insofar as our hearts and perspectives shift to be more in line with our LORD’s.

If we have received Christ’s gift of eternal life, everything truly needful for rejoicing is present. Present circumstances pale in comparison to the beauty of the LORD and His Gospel, which should be ever manifest in the Church!

Friends, the way UP is DOWN. The way FORWARD (Destination) is BACK (Reformation). The antidote to darkness is light. The cure to hatred is love. To fix fear one must walk by faith. To truly have life one must die (to self).

Remember:

John 12:24-25 (KJV) *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. 25 He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.*

This is the spirit-given mind that transforms individuals, homes, churches, cities, and nations. This is the mind of Christ that RESTORES true contentment and joy.

Final thoughts:

In the last few verses of chapter two, Paul mentions sending both Timothy and Epaphroditus to the church at Philippi.

Look at the way he described both the reasons for sending them and their character:

- Timothy was sent because Paul wanted good news about them (v19)

- Timothy also cared deeply about Philippi (v20)
- Timothy put Christ's interests above his own (v21)
- Timothy had proven himself as a good son (v22)
- Epaphroditus was a true brother, fellow soldier, and co-laborer (v25)
- Epaphroditus also cared deeply for Philippi (v26)
- Epaphroditus was loved by Philippi (v28)
- Philippi was to receive Epaphroditus gladly (v29)
- Epaphroditus risked his life for the Gospel (v30)

Look at this picture of love, service, faithfulness, fellowship, unity, and joy. Would this be our testimony, one to another?

May it always be!
Amen.