

~ Joy through Humility ~

Text: Phil 2:1–30

Theme: There is joy to be had in the Christian life through voluntarily humbling ourselves to serve Christ and our brethren in the fellowship of the Spirit and in Christian love.

Intro:

1. At the end of chapter 1, Paul described for the Philippian Christians that it was possible to suffer for Christ's sake and yet rejoice in Christ.
 - a. Remember that there were no chapter divisions on the original letter, these were supplied later on by the translators and are helpful in navigating through the scriptures collectively. This wasn't a problem when only one person in the church had a copy of the scriptures.
 - b. With that in mind, there isn't any break in the thoughts between chapter 1 and chapter 2. Paul states that the believers will suffer persecution and that it is possible to rejoice in that and now he continues by explaining that our consolation and comfort in suffering comes from Christ.
 - c. "This is a continuation of a series of exhortations to the believers that begins in chapter 1 verse 27. There is the exhortation to live as it becometh the gospel (Php 1:27-30), the exhortation to a life of love and unity among the brethren (Php 2:1-4), the exhortation to Christ-likeness (Php 2:5-11), and the exhortation to be the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (Php 2:12-16)."¹
2. There seems to be three key sections in this chapter, and we will consider the theme of each section as we progress through the study.
 - I. Joy in Humble Lowliness (Vs 1-11)
 - II. Joy in Humble Witness (Vs 12-18)
 - III. Joy in Humble Service (Vs 19-30)

Main:

I. Joy in Humble Lowliness (Vs 1-11)

Verses 1-4 could be summarised in two questions:

A. Haven't you been blessed in Christ? (Vs 1)

1. Consolation in Christ

- a. "Consolation in Christ" = *To call near; comfort, solace.*

¹ Way of Life Commentary Series; David Cloud, 2021; Paul's Prison Epistles, Pg's 320-321

- i. Salvation is called our “*everlasting consolation and good hope through grace*” in 2 Thess 2:16.
 - ii. This consolation is not necessarily a physical relief from suffering but an assurance of salvation that gives me confidence that the toils this life are not in vain.
 - b. Consolation comes from nearness to another person.
 - i. When someone is hurt and you seek to console them you don’t do that by sitting across the room from them shouting, “You got this!” at them. You go over to them, and you offer personal comfort to that individual.
 - ii. It is the nearness of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, which provides consolation to the grieving heart.
 - iii. Remember, this church at Philippi was suffering persecution and so Paul points them to Jesus Christ as their comfort and their consolation during times of trial. Get near to Jesus and he will give you comfort and rest.
 - **Matthew 11:28** “*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”
2. Comfort of love in Christ
- a. “Comfort of love” = *Consolation in love, specifically agape love.* (comfort in knowing God’s love)
 - i. The consolation and comfort that is found in knowing God’s love is encapsulated in what Paul describes for us in Romans 8.
 - Rom 8:38-39 “*For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”
 - b. How can you describe the comfort that is ours in knowing we can never come to a place where we are no longer loved by God. Nothing can separate us from His love.
 - i. **Psa 139:7-10** “*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*”
3. Fellowship of the Spirit in Christ
- a. “Fellowship of the Spirit” = *Partnership, that is participation in the Holy Spirit.*

- b. The fellowship of the Spirit is the only true fellowship for Christians.
 - i. It is “the fellowship created by the Spirit of God who indwells the believers... It is not merely eating together and sharing similar likes and dislikes. The world does that... It is the fellowship of those who are born again and indwelt by the Spirit and led by the Spirit and taught by the Spirit.”²
 - ii. In other words, it is not a shallow unity based on mere likeability. It is not generated by man but by the Holy Spirit.
- c. The fellowship of the Spirit is a fellowship with boundaries.
 - i. The Holy Spirit will not incorporate worldliness into the Holy fellowship he seeks to produce, nor will he condone the joining of hands with those who teach false doctrine or other errors.
 - **John 16:13** *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.”*
 - **1 John 4:6** *“We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”*
 - ii. The fellowship that the Spirit produces is a fellowship in which the truth of God’s Word is central.
 - This is why it is important we make sure that those who we take onto membership are in our church have been genuinely saved and are in agreement with our church’s doctrinal statement.
 - **Amos 3:3** *“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”*
- 4. Bowels and mercies in Christ
 - a. “Bowels and mercies” = *Pity, sympathy, mercy*
 - b. The word “bowels” refers to the intestines or inner parts of a man, but it is also used metaphorically to refer to the inner yearnings, particularly the affections of the heart.
 - i. “It is translated “tender mercy” (Lu 1:78), “inward affection” (2 Co 7:5), “bowels of mercies” (Col 3:12), “bowels of compassion” (1 Jo 3:17).”³

² Way of Life Commentary Series; David Cloud, 2021; Paul’s Prison Epistles, Pg’s 322

³ Way of Life Commentary Series; David Cloud, 2021; Paul’s Prison Epistles, Pg’s 322

- ii. The full picture of the phrase is that, in Christ, we have experienced God's tender mercy, affection, and compassion toward us and it should be evident in the way we live that God has touched our lives.
- B. Won't you be a blessing to others (Vs 2-4)
 - 1. The blessing of unity in the faith (Vs 2)
 - a. The exhortation beginning in verse two is based on the blessings that are ours in Christ from verse 1.
 - i. Verse 1 asks, "If there be any" and then lists four blessings which, if reflected upon, we would all say are ours in Christ. The question, if there be, is almost rhetorical, in that the answer is assumed to be "yes, there are" and yet it is thought provoking so that we can hardly pass them over without due consideration.
 - ii. You could almost rephrase the verse to say, "Since there is consolation in Christ, there is comfort of love, there is fellowship in the Spirit, and there are bowels of mercies..." This makes it clear that the sort of Christian living described in verses 2-4 flows out of a life that has experienced the blessings of being in Christ which are mentioned in verse 1.
 - b. Paul would rejoice if the brethren would exhibit this unity and humility that he is about to describe.
 - i. To fulfill my joy means, *"To furnish or make replete. To supply and perfect it."*
 - ii. Paul is saying that his joy would be full upon seeing the spiritual growth and maturing of the church at Philippi.
 - c. They were to have all things in common.
 - i. They were to be like minded.
 - To be likeminded means to be exercised toward the same things. To have the same thoughts about things.
 - We would say that they were to be on the same page.
 - ii. Having the same love.
 - This is, of course, the love of God flowing through us. It is self-giving, self-sacrificing love.
 - They were all to demonstrate the love of Christ toward one another.
 - iii. Being of one accord.
 - To be of one accord is to share the same sentiments, to be co-spirited and cooperative.
 - In musical terms it means to make the same sound, and to be harmonious.

- The opposite of being of one accord is to be always clashing with one another.
- iv. Being of one mind.
 - “To be of one mind is unity of spirit, unity of heart, unity of loving one another, unity of not allowing carnal divisions to enter in and corrupt the work of God.”⁴
- d. This kind of unity is beneficial to the entire church and approaching Christian service in this way will help prevent the following negative traits from developing.
- 2. The blessings of humility in the faith (Vs 3-4)
 - a. There are two negative traits that we are to avoid as Christians.
 - i. Let nothing be done through strife.
 - This refers to doing things in anger, forming factions that contend with each other, or provoking others to anger.
 - It is a spirit of contention that should not exist among brothers and sisters in Christ. This spirit is the total opposite to the unity describe in verse 2.
 - ii. Let nothing be done through vain glory
 - This refers to an empty, self-conceit. It is when an individual wrongfully desires to be elevated or put on a pedestal above everyone else.
 - They want position and prominence without first learning service and responsibility.
 - In other words, the things we do and say in the local church should be for the edification of others, not for our own glory or benefit.
 - b. There are some positive traits to exemplify
 - i. We are to exhibit lowliness of mind.
 - Lowliness of mind refers to an attitude of self-deprecation. It is the fulfillment of Paul’s command in Romans 12:3 *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think;”*
 - By the way, we should avoid fake humility too. You know those people who do things to draw attention to themselves and then, when they receive a compliment, they pretend as though they really didn’t expect it. That’s fake humility.
 - ii. We are to value others above ourselves.

⁴ Way of Life Commentary Series; David Cloud, 2021; Paul’s Prison Epistles, Pg’s 324

- To esteem others as better than me is to judge them and count them as being better than me and of more value than myself.
 - When you view others as being better than yourself you will find it easier to serve others, because you value them.
- iii. We are to seek the benefit of others over ourselves.
- To look on the things of others does not mean to covet what the next person has. The Bible clearly condemns covetousness.
 - To look on the things of others means, "To look to their welfare and advancement and have their good as your goal."
 - We are all used to thinking "How can I get ahead in life?" What this passage says is that we ought to be thinking, "How can I help my brother in Christ get ahead in life, particularly in spiritual matters?"
 - Remember, Paul is writing to a church that was suffering persecution. It would have been easy for people to focus inward on their own situation, but Paul wanted them to have an outward focus on others. How much easier should it be for us to think of others when we have it so good in Australia?
- C. Paul's illustration of Christian humility and unity (Vs 5-11)
1. The mind of Christ Jesus (Vs 5-8)
- a. "The mind of Christ is the rule and law of the Christian life. This is the law of Christ (Ga 6:2)"⁵ **Galatians 6:2** *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."*
- i. The mind of Christ is not some unknown thing.
- **1 Cor 2:15-16** *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."*
 - One of the ministries of the Holy Spirit is to, through the Word of God, reveal the mind of Christ to us.
- ii. To have the mind of Christ is one thing but to let that affect change within you is another thing altogether. We may know what Christ expects of us without obeying.
- **James 1:25** *"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a*

⁵ Way of Life Commentary Series; David Cloud, 2021; Paul's Prison Epistles, Pg's 328

forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed."

- b. The Lord Jesus was equal with God the Father.
 - i. "Being in the form of God" is not a reference to physical appearance. Afterall, God the Father is a Spirit not possessing a physical form.
 - The word "form" comes from the Greek *mor-fay* (*μορφή*) which means, "*shape, form, or figuratively nature.*" The root of the word carries the idea of sharing a part in the same thing.
 - ii. Together these concepts convey the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ possesses the same divine nature as God the Father. It isn't just that Jesus is like God but that he is the revealing person of the God-head, the Trinity.
- c. Despite being equal with God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ humbly performed the work that the Father required of Him.
 - i. He made himself of no reputation.
 - In this, the Lord Jesus exemplifies for us the lowliness of mind that the Apostle Paul commands us to have.
 - Although he could have come to Jerusalem riding in a great gold chariot with angels attending him, he rode into Jerusalem riding on a colt, exhibiting great lowliness of mind as he condescended to man.
 - ii. Took upon Him the form of a servant.
 - In taking the form of a servant he exemplified Paul's command to esteem others better than ourselves.
 - The Lord Jesus is the King of Glory but he washed the disciples feet.
 - iii. Humbled himself unto death
 - In his death, the Lord Jesus exemplified the command to look upon the things of others, afterall, his death was not for his own gain but for ours.
 - Although he suffered in humility, the Lord Jesus Christ saw that there was a joy that could be obtained through it all.

Isaiah 53:10 *"Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."*

2. The exaltation of Christ Jesus (Vs 9-11)
 - a. God hath highly exalted Him
 - i. Having finished his selfless work on the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ is now highly exalted in heaven and given a name that is above every name.
 - ii. One specific name that belongs to the Lord Jesus and is particularly important to us today is the name of Saviour.
 - **Acts 4:12** *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*
 - “Precious name, oh how sweet, hope of earth and joy of heaven.”
 - b. At His name we must all bow
 - i. At the name of Jesus every knee will one day bow.
 - For the atheists who mock Jesus Christ today, the day is coming when they will bow before him, not in thankfulness for his salvation but in submission to his judgement.
 - ii. Every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Lord to the glory of God the Father.
 - Again, the tongues of men that mock him today will confess him as Lord in the judgement day but by then it will be too late to receive him as Lord.

Lord willing, next week we will look at the next two sections of the passage:

- II. Joy in Humble Witness (Vs 12-18)
- III. Joy in Humble Service (Vs 19-30)

Conclusion:

1. There is joy that can be found through a life of humility and service to others, especially to our brothers and sisters in Christ.
Matthew 19:30 *“But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.”*