

~ Joy through Humility ~

(Part 2)

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. Last week we began our study of this chapter by looking at the first of three key sections in this chapter.
 - I. Joy in Humble Lowliness (Vs 1-11)
2. This week we will look at the other two sections.
 - II. Joy in Humble Witness (Vs 12-18)
 - III. Joy in Humble Service (Vs 19-30)

Summary of Part 1: (For the sake of time I need to keep this brief)

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
 2. Comfort of love in Christ
 3. Fellowship of the Spirit in Christ
 4. Bowels and mercies in Christ
- B. Won't you be a blessing to others (Vs 2-4)
 1. 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.
 2. They were to have all things in common.
 - a. They were to be like minded.
 - b. Having the same love.
 - c. Being of one accord.
 - d. 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.”¹
- 1. 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.
 - ii. Let nothing be done through vain glory
 - b. There are some positive traits to exemplify
 - i. We are to exhibit lowliness of mind.
 - ii. We are to value others above ourselves.
 - iii. We are to seek the benefit of others over ourselves.
 - e. Paul’s illustration of Christian humility and unity (Vs 5-11)
 - 1. 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.
 - a. He made himself of no reputation.
 - i. In this, the Lord Jesus exemplifies for us the lowliness of mind that the Apostle Paul commands us to have.
 - b. Took upon Him the form of a servant.
 - i. In taking the form of a servant he exemplified Paul’s command to esteem others better than ourselves.
 - c. Humbled himself unto death
 - i. 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.
- 2. The exaltation of Christ Jesus (Vs 9-11)
 - a. 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 and at His name we must all bow.

Main:

- II. Joy in Humble Witness (Vs 12-18)
 - A. A Witness in Good Works (Vs 12-13)
 - 1. Verse 12 begins with a commendation for service without supervision.
 - a. The Christian is not to concerned about pleasing men.
 - i. **Ephesians 6:6-7** *“Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from*

¹ Way of Life Commentary Series; David Cloud, 2021; Paul’s Prison Epistles, Pg’s 324

the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

- b. Paul commended the Philippian Christians because they had always been obedient to Christ, even when Paul wasn't there to watch them.
 - i. One of the biggest telltale signs of the spiritual maturity of our young people is what they do when they become adults, or perhaps get married, and they no longer have mum and dad watching over them.
 - I've seen quite a few young adults begin attending church less frequently and sometimes they stop coming altogether, and they either don't go to church or they look for a church that is closer to their own spiritual temperature.
 - ii. It has been said that people who move from the front row to the back row are often the ones who are on their way out the door. They make a move in the direction of shallow, cooled off Christianity and, before long, they make the move out the door altogether.
 - iii. What you do when nobody is watching over your shoulder is a far better indicator of where your heart is at then what you do in eyeservice.
2. What does it mean to work out your own salvation?
 - a. Well, I think we can all agree that the Bible very clearly teaches against a works based salvation.
 - i. By that we mean, no one will ever enter heaven on the basis of their own good works.
 - **Ephesians 2:8-9** *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*
 - ii. These verses make it clear that salvation is a gift that cannot be earned by self-effort, no matter how good our works may be.
 - b. However, the very next verse tells us where the works fit into salvation.
 - i. **Ephesians 2:10** *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”*
 - ii. We have been made new creatures in Christ and it has been ordained by God that this new creation should walk in good works.

- To walk in them means, “to tread all around.” It effectively means that it is to be our job, our duty, our occupation to do good works.
 - c. As we often say, “You’re not saved by works but if you’re saved you’ll work.”
 - **James 2:17** *“Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.”*
 - i. To work out, means to carry to its conclusion. Like a student working out a math problem has to follow the correct process until he reaches a conclusion, the Christian is to take his salvation to its logical conclusion which is reverent service for God, in fear and trembling. Not that we fear God’s wrath, but that we fear our own failure.
 - d. “The believer works out the salvation that God works in him. It is God who **“worketh in you.”** Obedience and holy living are the product of and outworking of salvation.”²
 - i. The power of the Christian life is Christ living in me.
 - **Galatians 2:20** *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”*
 - ii. “The word “worketh” is *energeo*, “to be effective, operative” It is the word from which “energy” and “energize” are derived.”³
 - iii. It is God who energizes the Christian, enabling them to accomplish the things that He desires of them.
- B. A Witness in Godly Character (Vs 14-18)
1. Our Christian service is to be without complaint and without arguments or debates.
 - a. Christians ought to exhibit the joy of the Lord, not the misery of the world.
 - i. During their time in the wilderness, how often did God have to punish Israel because they murmured against God? Murmuring reveals a lack of gratitude toward God. It is discontentment with what God has given me and done for me.
 - ii. I have seen a comical picture of a preacher standing in the pulpit and the people in the congregation are saying, “Why study the book of Numbers?! Thirty-six chapters of

² Way of life Commentary Series, Paul’s Prison Epistles Pg 346; David Cloud, 2021

³ Way of life Commentary Series, Paul’s Prison Epistles Pg 346; David Cloud, 2021

self-centred people who whined every time they didn't get their own way! Give us something relevant!" And the poor preachers is just looking at them with a "Are You Serious?" look on his face.

- iii. Preaching against murmurings and disputings is just as relevant today as it ever was.
- b. The goal in avoiding murmuring and disputing is to maintain a godly testimony before the lost world around us.
 - i. To be blameless and harmless means that there is nothing that the world can point to in our lives and actions, either toward the brethren or the world without, that would bring disgrace to the name of Christ.
 - ii. Blameless does not mean sinless, but it means you maintain a good testimony and leave no sin undealt with which the world might use to bring an accusation against you and the cause of Christ, for which you are a light, or a representative in this dark world.
 - iii. The word "harmless" carried a broader meaning when the KJV was translated and meant more than just not causing physical harm.
 - It meant to be absolutely innocent and pure in morals. This carries the idea of not causing spiritual harm.
 - iv. How many Christians have been the cause of someone being put off, or dissuaded from coming to Christ because of a bad testimony? That is one way in which Christians can cause spiritual injury. They do damage on a much deeper level because the soul is lost for eternity.
 - Our Christian conduct, our godly testimony; these are to shine as a light in the midst of a world that is dark and perverse with its sinful habits.
- 2. We are commanded to hold forth the word of life, which is the Word of God and the gospel message it presents to all the lost.
 - a. Paul viewed the faithfulness of his converts as a sign of the successfulness of his ministry.
 - i. We often do this as parents with children. If our children grow and mature well and go on to be successful in life, then we take that as a sign of successful parenting.
 - ii. Paul viewed his converts in a similar way.
 - b. Paul was effectively saying that, if the Philippian believers would faithfully hold forth the word of life, then he would be able to rejoice over them when they all stood before the judgement seat of Christ and received the reward for their labours.

- i. Notice that the holding forth of the word of life is supposed to be done in conjunction with the holy living spoken of in verses 14-15.
 - ii. Your personal life has a huge impact on the way people perceive the things that you say. If your life doesn't line up with the gospel message you are preaching, then people won't take the message very seriously.
- 3. Paul was able to rejoice at being made a martyr for the faith because he knew it was for the glory of Christ and the edification of the believers.
 - a. "He could reckon himself happy if he could promote the honour of Christ, the edification of the church, and the welfare of the souls of men; though it were not only by hazarding, but by laying down, his life: he could willingly be a sacrifice at their altars, to serve the faith of God's elect. Could Paul think it worth while to shed his blood for the service of the church, and shall we think it much to take a little pains? Is not that worth our labour which he thought worth his life?"⁴
 - b. Even as Paul was willing to lay himself out in serving God's people, he called them to join him in rejoicing in his ministry.
 - i. "If the minister loves the people, and is willing to spend and be spent for their welfare, the people have reason to love the minister and to *joy and rejoice with him*."⁵

III. Joy in Humble Service (Vs 19-30)

A. Timothy's Humble Service (Vs 19-24)

1. Paul's commendation of Timothy

Paul wanted to send Timothy to the church of Philippi with two purposes in mind.

- a. That Timothy would bring him a concerning the welfare of the church.
 - i. The church at Philippi was still a young church and had been suffering opposition since its infancy and the Apostle Paul wanted to send someone he could trust to go and check on them and help them where necessary.
 - **2 Corinthians 11:28** "*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.*"

⁴ Matthew Henry, [*Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume*](#) (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2325.

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- As an Apostle, Paul had the responsibility of caring for all of the church, and he had a special concern over the churches that he had been instrumental in starting.
- ii. If Paul were to hear a good report of the church at Philippi, and that report was from someone he trusted like Timothy, then Paul would be comforted even in his time of imprisonment.
- b. That Timothy would care for and instruct the brethren.
 - i. Paul wanted to send Timothy because he knew that Timothy had a natural care for the brethren that was not found in so many others.
 - ii. In verse 22 Paul commends Timothy to the brethren because Timothy had worked with Paul as though he was Paul's own son.
 - In many ways he was Paul's son in the faith, having been Paul's understudy for some time and later leaving Paul to take over the work of pastoring a church.
 - It is during his time of pastoring that Paul wrote the books of I & II Timothy to him to encourage him in the ministry.
- 2. Paul's concern over uncaring ministers
 - a. Paul mentions that he is sending Timothy because he has no one else who he can trust to naturally care for the brethren in Philippi.
 - i. This is still a huge issue today with so called pastors who's first care is for themselves and what they can get out of the people.
 - ii. Uncaring ministers are those who are just there to fleece the flock and they'll only hang around as long as the fleece keeps coming back in large amounts.
- B. Epaphroditus' Humble Service (Vs 25-30)
 - 1. Paul commended Epaphroditus to the Philippian believers
 - a. Epaphroditus had been sent by the church to Paul.
 - i. Epaphroditus was the messenger of the church at Philippi and was likely sent to Paul to bring him the monetary gift from the church as well as to seek Paul's counsel regarding certain church matters.
 - ii. Epaphras ministered to Paul during his time in Rome but then he became seriously ill and it was thought that he would likely die as a result of this illness, but God allowed him to survive the illness, which Paul testifies was a personal blessing to him and a relief to the Philippians.

- b. Paul sent Epaphras back to Philippi so that he would be out of Rome and not at risk of contracting what ever disease it was that had nearly killed him, but also so he could comfort the brethren who had been worried about him and assure them that he was fine.
 - i. Paul mentions that Epaphras had also been very concerned about his home church at Philippi and longed to see them.
 - ii. Because of his faithful service in the Lord and his willingness to spend and expend himself in serving others, Paul instructs the church to receive him and hold such people in very high regard.
- c. Those who give themselves to the work of the Lord, whether as pastors, deacons, or church members, those people ought to be held in high regard by the local church, not because they are someone special in and of themselves but because they are allowing themselves to be used by God in a special way and that makes them valuable in the work of God.

Conclusion:

1. There is joy that can be found in being a faithful witness for Christ through good works and godly conduct.
2. There is joy that can be found in humbly serving others and letting God use us in whatever way He desires, for His glory.