

## **Living Joyfully** **Philippians 2:1-13**

**Intro:** Luke records Paul's first visit to Philippi in Acts 16.

### **First: The Setting**

- Paul ministered at Philippi during his second missionary journey.
- Philippi was his door into Macedonia after receiving the Macedonian vision from Troas. (Acts 16:8–12).
- He invested about three months in the city (Acts 16:11-40).
- - The businesswoman, Lydia was converted there.
  - Paul and Silas were imprisoned there and God miraculously freed them.
  - The Philippian jailor came to Christ there.
  - A church was established in Lydia's home (16:13-15)
- He later briefly visited the city on his third missionary journey (20:6)

Paul wrote Philippians as the last of four letters (Eph, Col & Phil) sent from a Roman prison about 61-62 AD. Tychicus carried the other three but this letter was delivered by Epaphroditus, visited Paul in prison with financial help from the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:25; 4:18). During his time in Rome, Epaphroditus took ill, which delayed his return home and the delivery of the letter (2:26–27).

### **Second: The Context**

Unlike many of his other letters, Paul did not write this letter in response to a crisis. He wrote to express his appreciation and affection for the Philippian believers. The Philippians had been faithful contributors to his ministry, more than any other church (2 Corinthians 8:11; Philippians 4:15–18) and he wrote to thank them. His affection for the church is evident throughout the letter as he encouraged them to live out their faith in

- a) joy and
- b) unity (1:3–5, 25–26; 4:1)

### **Third: The Big Ideas**

- a) God will complete his work in you – 1:6
- b) To live is Christ and to die is gain – 1:21
- c) We can live content in Christ – 4:13
- d) Jesus is our model for the Christian life – 2:5-11

Paul's joy at the mere thought of the Philippian church is clear in the letter:

*1:3-5 – I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*

He wants his readers to experience that same kind of joy.

For this reason, he directs them to Jesus. The only way to possess joy and maintain unity is to model our lives after Christ. His letter to the Philippians showed them that by centering their lives on Christ, they, too, might live in true joy. And that takes us to our text:

### **Sermon**

#### **First: His Hope. 1-4**

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, <sup>2</sup> complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup> Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

- a) Be of the same mind 2a
- b) Have the same love 2b
- c) Be in full accord and of one mind 2c
- d) Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit 3a
- e) Count others more significant than yourselves 3b
- f) Put the interests of others first. 4

This is Paul's for unity as a couple, in a family or a church. Of course, it would apply to any enterprise.

#### **Second: His Rationale**

Note that it is all based on:

- a) Encouragement in Christ
- b) Comfort from Love
- c) Participating in the Spirit
- d) Any affection
- e) Any sympathy

In other words, the way we live with others says a lot about us. We cannot compel others to live in joy or unity, but we can strive for it.

But all of it emanates from Jesus who is not only our model, motivation and means.

### **Third: Our Model and Motivation**

2:5-11 – *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

a) Christ our Model – 5 – *Have this mind among yourselves which is yours in Christ Jesus*

This generates three questions -

**1 - What** is it about Jesus, that makes him a model for us?

- He was in the form of God 6a
- He was equal with God 6b
- That equality was not his primary goal 6b

**2 - What** exactly did he do?

- He emptied himself 7a – of external glory
- By taking the form of a servant 7b – Mark 10:45 – “*diakoneo*” = to serve
- Being born in human likeness 7c -
- Humbling himself to obedience 8b
- Obeying to death 8c (and not just any death...)
- Even death on a cross 8d

**3 - Why** has Paul mentioned this?

Is he trying to build the doctrine of kenosis?

(Kenosis – κένωσις = the act of emptying – is the 'self-emptying' of Jesus' own will and becoming entirely receptive to God's divine will).

No. He's not. Does he? Yes. But is that his agenda for the Philippians?

No, his point is verse 2 – *“complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.”*

Jesus’s model of emptying, serving, humbling, obeying and sacrifice, is the path to joy and unity. Let’s review what we know about Philippi. It is a retirement community for conscripted Roman soldiers who have won their citizenship by surviving their tenure in the Roman army. Knowing that most conscripted soldiers would never survive their first tour of duty, the Romans promised citizenship to any man who served in the military as a career.

Shortly after the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC, Antony settled a first wave of retired veterans in the city as part of its transformation into a Roman colony.

- These men have served Rome.
- Rome has honored them with citizenship.
- Certainly, they will represent Rome in Philippi.

A second wave of veteran settlers arrived after Octavian defeated Antony at Actium in 27 BC.

Reconsider *the words Paul uses*: emptying, serving, humbling, obeying and sacrifice.

Think about *the people to whom Paul is writing*: Lydia, the jailer, retired Roman soldiers. Each of them have something to lose by following Jesus.

*Philippi is “a social landscape in which various cultures, peoples, and groups interact, struggle, and come into conflict with one another—all within the constraints of broader imperial power relations of domination and oppression. Among the inhabitants in the mid-first century, one would find an entrenched local elite, Roman soldiers and their families, Macedonians, Greeks, and a whole host of peoples moving in, out, and through the city along the Via Egnatia. And they all found their own ways to negotiate their places in a broader provincial landscape.”*

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Joseph Marchal

(The Via Egnatia was a Roman road constructed in the second century BC that ran through what is now, Albania, North Macedonia, Greece, and Turkey. See the map after the CG notes).

Paul was not asking his Philippian friends to do any easy thing. It was wholly contrary to the way to ‘get ahead’ in Philippi. He was asking Lydia not to wear her wealth as a badge of honor. He was asking the jailer to be tender toward other believers. He was asking Roman soldiers to sacrifice their rights to others.

- Lydia’s wealth was well-deserved and earned
- The jailer’s hardness was essential to keep his job

- A soldier's self-centeredness was a lifesaving mechanism

We all have something, don't we, that vies for first place in our lives. It says,

- "If you don't have me, you'll be less."
- "If you let go of me, you will die."

What is the one thing, or things, that promises you happiness and that, without which, you will not be you.

But think for a moment. All these things, while promising you joy, only make you afraid, and rob you of happiness.

How did it work out for Jesus?

#### **Fourth: His Honor. 9-11**

*Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup>so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup>and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Does this preclude sorrow?

- Will no one hurt Lydia if she assumes this posture? Yes, they will.
- Will no one take advantage of the jailer if he softens his heart? Yes, they will.
- Will no one backstab the soldier if he puts others first? Yes, they will.

God has not promised you a perfect life, only a perfect love. And the record of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, proves his undying love is an unfailing love.

But, we are our own worst enemy and following Jesus gets us out our own way.

#### **Conclusion:**

Think about your friendships, marriage, home, workplace, classroom, etc. Do these words describe your presence there? - emptying, serving, humbling, obeying and sacrifice.

And if they don't, how might those five words change you and your environment?

Then why should I do this?

1 – Look at the opposite of these five words:

- a) A life full of itself
- b) A life putting itself first

- c) A proud life
- d) A disobedient life
- e) An uninvolved, nongiving life

This is a life that creates schism, not unity. And that is an unhappy life.

2 - That takes us back to verse 1

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,*

- a) Christ encourages you to...
- b) Love will comfort you through...
- c) The Holy Spirit will enable you to...

Let's put it another way –

*12-13 - Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup> for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

There is no reason for a Christian not to!

### **Community Groups:**

- 1 – What were the circumstances of Paul's first visit to Philippi?
- 2 – Whom did he meet there?
- 3 – How did the Philippians relate to Paul after he left?
- 4 – Why did Paul love these people so much?
- 5 – What are the big ideas in Philippians?
- 6 – Which one is most meaningful to you?
- 7 – Read vs 2-4. What is Paul's hope for the Philippians?
- 8 – Read v 1. What is the basis for his appeal?
- 9 – Read vs 5-11. What did Jesus do to be our model for joy and unity?
- 10 – What made emptying, serving, humbling, obeying and sacrificing so hard for Paul's readers?
- 11 – What makes it hard for you?
- 12 – Can God be trusted with our self-humbling?
- 13 – Even though we may be hurt in doing these things, why do we do them?
- 14 – Read vs 12-13. What part does v 13 play in all of this?

