

Philippians 2:1–4

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[0 : 0 0] so olympians 2 verses 1 through 4 those of you who are able i'm going to ask that you stand for the readings of god's word and i pray that this morning these words grip your heart so if there's any encouragement in christ any comfort in love from love any participation in the spirit any affection and sympathy complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves let each of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interest of others this is the reading of the this is the word of god so so so so so so so good morning it's a joy to be together sun's out breeze is going temperature is low and uh this is the day that the lord has made let us rejoice well let's just turn to the lord briefly as we open his word father we come to you this morning and we remember the words of the psalmist that you have exalted above all things your name and your word and so this morning we sit in your name under your word and ask that christ would be exalted we know that in the day that we call you answer us we know that in the day that we call you answer us our strength of soul is therefore increased would that be the result of our time together may the strength of our soul be increased for jesus sake amen there are few things as a father that are more disheartening than watching your children fight and bicker shouting and striking among those whom you love is simply demoralizing especially when oftentimes the source of conflict is so small and trivial why can't we be a harmonious family why can't we be a peaceful family why can't we be united be a united family why can't we all just get along this may be the experience of some of us this morning we may have emerged from settings that people would call dysfunctional situations where there's repeated conflict or misbehavior and this morning we will find out that these circumstances not only happen in biological families they also happen in faith families as well it would seem that paul in our text this morning is aware that the church in philippi was unwinding the causes are hinted at the letter later they are grumbling they are disputing there's disagreement

there's unreasonableness if the opponents as we saw last week from the outside weren't enough to undo the church the inability for the church to get along would certainly lead to her undoing paul in chapter 1 verse 27 has summoned the church at philippi to live lives worthy of christian citizenship this was his expectation as i am in prison i want to hear of your united front i want to hear that you are a people standing firm and fearless he desired them to demonstrate one spirit one mind side by side in pursuit of the faith in chapter 2 he will continue to do the same he wants to exhort them toward unity and it's stated explicitly in the second verse you see it right there complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind allow me to restate what paul is saying make me happy by getting along make me happy by getting along this morning we will see paul's continued appeal to the church at philippi towards unity you see unity is essential to the christian community to make it more memorable we are expected to be a community in unity a community in unity i want to slice this passage into two parts the first slice is very small it's just verse 1 and the second slice is larger verses 2 to 4 in the first slice verse 1 i want to recount the christian experience what happens to a christian when they follow the lord jesus and it's followed by verses 2 to 4 the christian ethic what is the christian to do in light of this christian experience the christian experience 2 verse 1 paul exhorts the church to unity and he does so by calling upon their shared experience it is as if he's gathering the whole congregation at philippi and they're sitting around a campfire and they're telling stories of what jesus has done for them as contention surfaced in the church paul wants to remind them what has actually happened in their lives remember remember what you experienced since you encountered jesus consider the encouragement that you found in christ do you recall the comfort of his love that you sat there unloved unwanted and the love of the lord jesus filled your heart or consider the family the participation in the spirit that he set you in that you were lonely isolated and he set you in a group in a family consider the affection that he has expressed towards you the tenderness that he has extended towards you the mercy that he has embraced you with as surely as you've received blessing upon blessing paul is reminding them of grace upon grace think about these things and paul's appeal to them would be based on these shared experience of the christian life he is summoning their collective memory recall what jesus has done for you paul understands that you and i are brought together through a collective memory a shared salvation in a clever way what paul is doing is he's reminding them that you know christ has actually done all this

in order to unite you to one another all this has been accomplished and has actually put you in a family whether you like it or not uh i love my biological siblings but there were times growing up where i wanted to say ah i wish they were maybe i hope they're not watching part of that family that he's a little strange i think he belongs there or i she is annoying me she belongs there or i need to go to a different family but i didn't have that choice it is the same with a faith family that god brought you together under the shared salvation found in the lord jesus and here paul wants the christians at philippi to know that we've been united as a people and since we've been brought together now act like it act like it this is what paul is if i may he's leveraging or he's using their shared experience to leverage them toward action since god has accomplished all these things in your life would you pursue unity for my joy he's compelling them appealing to them motivating them toward unity it's worthwhile to note that the motivation for christian action is found here particularly the order in which it comes because as christians we're not motivated to action to obtain approval this is very important instead our actions flow out of who we are our identity or in this context our citizenship as christians there is an expectation for citizens to act in a particular manner that's why espionage in this country is punishable by death see the individual who finds themselves to be in god's kingdom will demonstrate allegiance to their king the individual who finds themselves part of god's kingdom will conduct their way their lives in a way that is befitting to the kingdom see there's two there's two ways to motivate an individual there's one who aspires to be a citizen and there's another who is already a citizen there is it's it's a very different experience for someone who's trying out for a team and trying to make it than the one who's already on the team it's a different mentality in a world where merit bestows value the gospel awards value without any merit this is essential to our experience as christians we're called to obedient action after god has initiated redemption in us consider this probably a majority of our our nation or our people around you or your neighbors is familiar with the ten commandments and this is how they think about it wow ten rules you must demonstrate to become a christian if i keep these laws i will demonstrate my goodness and justify my standing before god however that couldn't be further from the truth because if you if you follow the the book of exodus the ten commandments are given after the people are acquired by god and delivered from egypt it's after the people had witnessed the miraculous deliverance from foreign oppression after the people had

experienced his protection and his provision in the in the cloud by day the sun by night the food in the desert the ample water supply it was after they were nourished and they drank and were satisfied it was after they were told they would be a treasured possession and then god discloses the divine law why in the christian life deliverance comes before duty in the christian life redemption precedes requirement in the christian life divine acceptance always comes before human obligation and that's important because if you get misled or sidetracked you will be clamoring for god's approval you'll be working and serving and longing for his acceptance when the gospel actually tells us he's accepted you far before you've done anything to deserve it and this is what paul is doing remember who you are consider what has been done on your behalf recall the work in your life and he uses this as a catalyst for action for you and i what god has done in our life ought to compel us toward action what action but what specific ethic is paul pointing toward in this passage paul is calling the believers to unity specifically unity through humility secondly verses two to four the christian ethic paul expresses what he hopes will emerge from what god has done namely he's hoping he will receive his personal joy but the congregation will be at peace after making his appeal based on their experience now paul calls the church to action it's found in verse two he simply is saying be united for my joy be united for my joy and here we see this unique claim of this passage that christian joy flows from christian unity the striking part of this passage to me is that the relationship between the christians at philippi and would determine the amount of joy that paul experienced get this paul's joy was somehow tethered to the philippian unity i believe in the same way part of the joy you will experience will be directly correlated to the unity found in this congregation it's not too far fetched to consider how joy is tethered to unity for those in the realm of athletics players oftentimes we have podcasts or interviews attest to it all the time i enjoy playing basketball more now because of the team chemistry which is a a way of saying because our team is united the workplace of the laboratory is far more enjoyable when colleagues are cordial harmonious and in one accord we see it in marriage when two are united into one in marriage we witness joy because unity fosters joy yet notice that implicit in this in these verses verses two to four there is a relational nature to this joy this relational nature of christianity as i mentioned christianity is community

christianity is social christianity is interpersonal certainly there are individual elements to your faith but it cannot be reduced to an individual exercise we are not running a race against each other we are running a race with one another to hearken the language of earlier we are to strive side by side and the interpersonal aspect of christianity is so crucial that paul himself says his joy is contingent upon the progress of the congregation in other words if you don't do well i won't do well if there are relational fractures and factions the life of the church will suffer i would go as far as to say a joyless christian most likely is found in a bickering congregation certainly that may not be the only cause but from this passage one's joy is related to the harmony found in the congregation to which they belong and unity is so crucial to paul that he goes on to use four ways to describe this unity in verse four be of the same mind literally more woodenly translated think the same thing have the same love literally love the same thing be in full accord or in harmony and of the same mind four iterations of a single exhortation be united be united as one it was jesus's burden before he he was betrayed and arrested his final or one of his last petitions to his father were was for his people to be one and so it shouldn't surprise us that paul follows the lead of jesus calling god's people to oneness paul exhorts them to unity i can't help but recall that paul had learned something he knew what it meant to disagree he knew what it meant to be divided acts 15 there the bible tells us that as as the early church was expanding paul had a sidekick or paul was someone's sidekick and he and barnabas were were really taking the mediterranean by storm but next 15 luke records for us there was a sharp disagreement between the two and there they were separated and i can't help but think that paul had some learned something in that situation that as he walked the back of his friend his co-labor his beloved brother apart from him he understood the significance of unity see this is the reality of all gospel settings interpersonal conflict is seemingly unavoidable unavoidable in this setting here in this field even we will have disagreements divisions and factions how are we to navigate this turbulence and paul provides the remedy in verses three to four allow me to reread these verses do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves let each of you look not only to his own interests but also the interests of others see on one hand the christian experience brings us together it unites us we are participants in the life of the spirit but it actually goes beyond the divine work done in us paul wants

[20 : 05] us to know that it is actually unity is a work that is done by us unity doesn't just happen when you put everyone together in a room it doesn't even come through a shared salvation in the lives of those in the community we need to understand this morning that unity requires work unity requires patience unity requires forbearance unity requires listening and at least in this passage paul wants you to know unity requires humility unity requires humility paul's exhortation in the day may seem reasonable but it would have proven absurd to the philippians at the time in the greco-roman world that prize status accomplishment honor power humility latin humilitas wasn't even in the vocabulary and when it was used it was used really directed towards the impoverished the enslaved those who had little or no social status it carried a meaning to be crushed or debased associated with failure and shame humility was not a greco-roman virtue at all there have been large studies that humility only became meaningful after judeo-christianity influenced the greco-roman world in a time where honor and respect were to be desired paul prescribes something shocking put on humility put on humility instead of walking in a room reading the room and establishing yourself as superior in the room establishing your personal value your honor your worth your prestige paul is saying walk into the room and lay it all down in a day when selfish ambition or self enlargement or self promotion and self glorification ruled the day he was calling people towards selflessness as the city's culture promoted glory and hubris to achieve honor paul was summoning the philippians in the church to count others more significant than themselves selfish ambition and conceit were infiltrating the church and wreaking havoc self is the disease humility is the remedy perhaps one of the most shameful moments in your bible or in my bible is found in luke chapter 9 there jesus is accomplishing mighty things his little church of twelve are walking along the way and luke records for us an argument arises they began to bicker and fight and you know what was it about what it was about who is the greatest jesus is nearest and dearest we're intrigued with honor prestige notoriety greatness and argued over it so consider this with me for a moment in the context of this assembly what would it mean to count others more significant than yourself what would

it mean that every person you greeted welcomed conversed with you counted more significant than yourself could you imagine and all of us taking the definition of humility by historian theologian john dixon can you imagine if all of us made the choice to forego our status deploy our resources and use our influence for the good of others before ourselves what if you walked broke the plane of the sidewalk there and you intentionally walked here to give up your status rights privileges committed to deploying your resources and your influence for the good of everyone else but yourself instead of sharing and trumpeting our own interests which is appropriate at times why not inquire about the interests of others it would be an immense challenge would it not in a culture that in a world that has taught us to consume and find self actualization the bible now comes and collides and holds out an alternate reality the world calls us fulfill yourself the bible says deny yourself instead of arriving to church in search of songs you love or like a word i want to hear a face i want to see a program for my own personal enhancement and well-being and enjoyment and gain this passage challenges us instead of arriving to get to consume to devour could we arrive to give this fence we give ourselves not only to the worship of god but we are to give ourselves to one another we sing for the edification of one another we greet to express the joy of being together we participate in the life of the church for the benefit of one another you see people people may leave the church over doctrinal disputes and i get that that makes sense if you have a belief about jesus that is strange this place might not be home and i get that but it is to our shame if someone leaves this fellowship because of interpersonal strife because of unacceptance because we're too proud and too haughty to forego our rights to graciously receive to patiently listen to widely embrace to lovingly endure to extend significance that would be to our shame see our dating culture did not coin the term significant other paul did you are my significant other i am your yeah if you like it or not significant other when we walk into this field we are to honor others regardless of our social standing out there in the world now when you walk through these into this field through these gates what i see is a brother or a sister of which whom christ died a son and a daughter of a king that reigns and if i view you as anything else that is

my wrongdoing to close i want to quote a german theologian i don't read german but he writes in english or he's been translated into english jürgen moltman says this about the christian fellowship it's fascinating he says the christian fellowship means a liberating fellowship it no longer means just sitting down beside people i agree with it means sitting beside the people i don't agree with and staying there we live in divided times we live in polarizing times we live in an us versus them day we have to pick sides they say yet in this assembly we are those who have come under the shared christian experience and are to practice humility forbearance love in pursuit of unity we are those who practice self-denial not self-advancement we are those who count others more significant emulating jesus who is not only the penultimate example but he is the very content of our one mind of our one love of our accord with one another may we progress in this way i'm confident that if we do we will complete one another's joy may it be so may it be so father we come under the god of heaven as a family who's trying to get along we thank you for the lord jesus that purchased us that adopted us that included us and here under one roof maybe an apartment too small for all of us we desire to be humble people we desire to be self-emptying people we desire to be a people who are worthy of citizenship and so father as we sing to you may you bring into our remembrance things that may actually be impeding the unity of this congregation may we approach you with humility may we approach one another with humility so that we would be united we ask these things for jesus sake amen