

Philippians: The Book of Joy (Phil. 2:1-11)

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. There are some headwinds in our culture that the church faces today and will face into the future.

I'm going to name some that I feel are external headwinds that the church is facing and will face into the future. We could be shortly like our brothers and sisters in Canada who have to be very careful about what they say about different sins, especially moral sins.

Otherwise, it would be called and be named as hate speech. And many pastors in Canada have done prison time as a result. We could be like there could be the city or counties and states say, hey, nonprofit organizations, you're going to be taxed just like for-profit organizations that would make the ministry of forth much more expensive and become much more difficult and much more expensive to do ministry.

Could that happen? Yeah, absolutely. And I believe it's just a matter of time. Or could it be that our government, like either back in World War II with Nazi Germany, either try to utilize the church for its purposes or just puts its weight behind different laws and legislatures, and that makes persecution of the church occur?

Yeah, likely. And it's just a matter of time. But far greater, far greater is an internal concern I have than any external concern that I may have mentioned and neglected to have mentioned.

[1 : 39] The greater concern I have is a danger of spiritual apathy. It is the danger all of us could have of this general, cool indifference to the things of the Lord, His truth found in His Word, and God's standard of righteousness.

Such indifference is usually denied and often not without some aura of self-deceptive sincerity. And this kind of cool indifference attacks the unity of the church. And it is that attack of the unity of the church that Paul is writing to the church at Philippi, naming that concern.

I want you to church at Philippi to be unified. And I am really grateful for Pastor Jay's message last week because he pointed out to us in chapter 1, verse 27, if you want to look there with me, chapter 1, verse 27, this concern that Paul had, and he says, And that one thing would be count your life as worthy of the gospel of Christ.

But be of the same mind, church. Be of the same mind. And that was Paul's concern. And what would this cool apathy and indifference possibly look like?

[3 : 30] It would quickly lead to discord in the church. It would lead to disharmony, conflict, divisions, gossip, slander, and just a general lack of love or concern for one another.

That's what would happen. And Paul's writing to the church at Philippi and saying, Don't give in to that cool indifference to the Lord and apathy. Make Christ your chief aim.

So we get to chapter 1. I'm sorry, chapter 2, our text that Chamesh read for us. Chapter 2, verse 1. We begin this verse with the word so. And it looks back. Why am I going back to verse 27 in chapter 1? Because the verse begins with the word so, or some of your translations may say therefore.

He's looking back and saying, Okay, because you're to be of one mind and you to have unity, I'm going to write you these things. So then Paul makes the argument.

[4 : 37] And he's going to make an appeal toward spiritual unity. So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection or sympathy.

And then he's going to go on, but we're going to pause there for a moment. What Paul is doing is he is giving us the realities that exist that ought to motivate us toward unity. If when I was a child, I was, you can imagine, you already notice the social awkwardness about me.

It's plainly evident that each Sunday you get the privilege of observing. And imagine me as a little boy though, a little toddler, and I was extremely shy and I would hide behind the legs of my parents.

And so I was a little guy and I would always hang on to my mom's legs or hang on to my dad's legs because I didn't want to talk to anybody. And there would be even individuals that would get on a knee just to get down at my level and say, hey there, Scott, how are you doing?

And of course, I would just want to hide behind even greater legs at that point. And my parents would constantly, this would be a constant conversation in my home, they would say to me, Scott, that's unloving of you to not speak to those who are talking to you.

[5 : 57] That's unloving. And it really dishonors the Lord and it breaks his heart for you to be unloving toward others. So next time when someone greets you, come out from behind the legs and greet them and talk to them.

And so we would rehearse this in the home. And I, but what were my parents doing? Is they were giving me the reality of my behavior.

Scott, that's unloving behavior. Scott, that reality of your actions is it breaks the heart of the Lord for you to be rude to adults, to others.

That's unloving. So their instruction to me was rooted in reality. And so the argument that Paul is going to be making here in this second chapter is be unified.

unified. But what is that unity rooted in? What reality? These four things that we just see in verse one. Let me read them again. Let's start with the first one. And it's asked in a question form if there is any encouragement.

[7 : 02] But the rules of the Greek language, it's really more of, it's a statement that he's making. So you could read it this way. Since there is encouragement in Christ. He's not asking, is there any encouragement in Christ?

He's not asking that. He is appealing saying, since there is encouragement in Christ, it's closely related to the word for the Holy Spirit. The root meaning is coming alongside of someone to give an assistance, that word encouragement is, by offering comfort and counsel and exhortation.

It's like the good Samaritan who found this man beside the roadside. And he brought encouragement to him because he came along his side and then went to the innkeeper and said, whatever other expenses he incurs, put it on my account and I'll come and settle the account.

And he says, and that's the kind of encouragement we have all received from Christ. So the reason why I want you to be unified is you have all received comfort and encouragement from Christ.

And then he goes on. The second reality, since there is comfort from love, this is Christ's love. It's the idea of giving comfort or consoling.

[8 : 15] It's the consoling love that God grants unworthy sinners in the grace of salvation. And so we should pursue the unity of the church because we have Christ lavished his love upon us in forgiving sin and choosing us in him before the foundation of the world.

And he says, and you have experienced the comfort from his love. And what's the third reality that motivates us to unity since there is participation and fellowship in the spirit?

Since there is participation and fellowship in the spirit. This fellowship of the spirit is intimate because every believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Look at the others. We're going to look at some truths about the reality of the Holy Spirit here in a moment. It says the Holy Spirit is the seal and the guarantor of the believer one's eternal inheritance.

We find that in Ephesians 1.13. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. The Holy Spirit, we are to be continually filled by. And so the church ought to be diligent to preserve the unity of the spirit.

[9 : 28] And so the third reality that ought to motivate us toward unity is that there's been participation in the spirit. The fourth reality is this, since you share affection and sympathy.

These are qualities that Christ has who tenderly comforts and encourages the weak and the oppressed. And so these are the realities. He's about to, he's encouraging us to be unified as a body.

And he said, but those, that encouragement is rooted in realities. And what are those realities?

Verse one, we just read them, all four of them. So then you say, well, before we get into verse two, perhaps there's a negative implied side to these positive admonitions and realities that we find.

That failing to seek preservation of the spirit of unity in the church body, it weakens the church and said more bluntly, a failure on our parts to pursue unity is sinful.

A few years back, I was visiting with a pastor, Paul Funchess, who's in Trinity Church out in the valley. And I was just stating to him my appreciation for how the churches cooperate in the city of

Spokane.

[10:53] And I just was telling him, man, and I was kind of welcomed into this pastor's group and I just shared with him, how grateful I have been just for their friendship and partnership in the gospel.

And Paul said to me, though, he said, yeah, Scott, it's great that it has existed and it does exist, but each of us today need to be diligent to preserve that unity into the future.

That it could be lost just like this. And so that's this implied, that is this implied negative side is that if we stop pursuing unity and be diligent to not, to forget these realities that God has done for us, we could lose church unity, spiritual unity, just like that.

So I pray, while we are not perfect, forth, that we would enjoy the unity that we do possess and we would work hard and strive hard to both improve and continue it into the future.

Otherwise, if we have this cool indifference and apathy toward the Lord, conflict will set in. Sin sets in. Grumbling sets in.

[12:15] Complaining sets in. Murmuring sets in. And the worst thing of all of that is our witness to the world is dead.

So then, you may ask, well then, Scott, what does spiritual unity look like? I'm glad you asked.

Verse 2 answers that question. Verse 2 says, complete, after these realities, so then what does it look like?

Complete my joy by being of the same mind. By being of the same mind. That's key. Simply put, unity occurs for those in Christ who have the same values and the same loves, the same mind.

And so I think, well how do I say it today? What would be the same value and the same love that we all ought to share that would be unifying to us?

And I would say it this way. It is simply to know Christ and to make Him known. Our mission statement could be whittled down to that.

[13:27] The Great Commission in essence is this, that we ought to know Christ. Paul says, I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection. Paul wanted to know Christ and that we ought to be unified over our desire that we could not think of anything more in our life to spend our lives than just knowing Christ and then to make Him known, to testify to the reality of Christ wherever He has us.

And what would be possible, what would be evident if that was true in all of us is there would be a joy because Paul's delight and joy would be in that.

Make my joy complete, church at Philippi, by being of the same mind. Paul's joy would be found complete knowing that a church that God birthed and He planted was of the same mind, unified, in their desire to know Christ and to make Him known.

So in every ministry here at 4th, every building we have, every ministry we have, every men's huddle, every women's study, every prayer group, every youth gathering, every song we sing, our aim ought to be to cultivate a love for Christ, to know Christ more and to make Him known and to declare the gospel of Jesus to those who do not know.

That is what we ought to be unified around. For those of us in Christ, what does that tangibly look like? It's that we would see all of our lives, the totality of our lives, every resource we have is for the purpose of knowing the Lord and making Him known.

[15:20] Every home we own, every machine that has an engine, every clothing we have, every dollar we have would be for the purpose of knowing Christ and making Him known.

We would see that our whole lives, wherever we live in our neighborhoods, I am in my neighborhood for the purpose of knowing Christ and making Him known. We would see that the Lord has granted us this job, whatever it is, even for those who have the privilege of staying home and rearing children, that my job is to know Christ and to make Him known and to teach my children His ways.

and those who have been blessed to have children, to instill in your children a love for the Lord and instill in your children a desire to make Him known to the very nations who have never heard of Him is such a privilege.

That is why you have children. That is why you have a job. That is why you live where you do. That is why you own what you have. The very purpose of your life is to know the Lord and to make Him known and when we are unified in that purpose and have that same mind, there is unity in the church.

And that is what Paul, and you say, well, Scott, how can you further make that point? Look at the rest of verse 2. Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, and being of full accord with one mind.

[16:58] Because a life worthy of the gospel is a life of spiritual unity. A life worthy of the gospel, back to verse 27 that he's kind of referring back to, is a life worthy of the gospel.

But then you say, well, Scott, how is genuine spiritual unity achieved? Well, verse 3 and 4 are helpful for us. Well, do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

To do nothing out of selfish ambition. Selfishness, nothing can destroy even the most doctrinally sound and spiritually mature church's unity like selfishness.

Selfishness weakens and threatens unity like nothing else. It is subtle and it is in all of us. Then Paul mentions conceit.

He begins with these negative attributes. Conceit. One who seeks personal glory and acclaim has an overinflated self-image.

[18:09] Someone who is wise in their own estimation. They are the smartest person in the room when they enter. This person knows better than everyone else. This is an exalted form of hubris.

And we need to be on guard in our lives for all these things. And then do nothing out of one's self-interest. Chapter 4, the first part of chapter 4.

When we see sin, in the form we need to be looking we want to be careful when we see self-interest often in the form of self-protection.

We want to protect our reputation, our perceived image. This is why we lie and we sin by lying is because we want to protect ourselves and we're looking out for our own interests when we lie. Instead of having eyes on ourselves, general spiritual unity, look what we're supposed to do in verses 3, the latter part of 3.

[19:13] Instead of being self-ambition, instead of having conceit, instead of looking out for our own interests, but in humility it says, count others as more significant than ourselves.

This week when I was doing my study, I found the word count very interesting. It refers to a careful, thought-out conclusion based on truth.

So when someone considers or counts, it is a careful, thought-out conclusion based on truth. It does not mean to pretend that others are more important but to believe that others are actually more important.

So when we count others more significant than ourselves, it's not that we think, okay, I can imagine in my mind how that might be true.

No, no, no. It's more of after a careful consideration of truth, I now have come to realize and am convinced others are more significant than myself.

[20:18] Think about how that would help unity. It reminds me of when Paul says in the book of 1 Corinthians how others are necessary in the body.

Why? Because they're more significant than myself. They're so necessary. Do you pretend that others are necessary or have you considered after a thought-out conclusion based on truth that indeed others are more significant than myself?

when we are certain of this, it helps us understand what Paul is writing in verse 4, not to do things in our own interest but also to the interest of others.

How easy would it be to minister, to visit, to pray for others when we understand that they are more significant than ourselves?

how much easier is that? Do you want spiritual unity? The means to spiritual unity requires us to consider not pretend that others are more important than ourselves to the point that we do not look out for our own interests but also the interests of others.

[21:38] Look around the room and would you thank the Lord with me for each person and say thank you Lord. for they are so significant, so important, even greater than myself.

Thank you. Now at this point I would normally throw in a sermon illustration to see how we are to live out our lives looking out for the interests of others, how we would not be given into doing things out of selfish ambition but doing things out of the interest of others.

usually I would put in a sermon illustration here but then Paul does it for us and any sermon illustration I could have even fathomed Paul does far better in giving us what he records and so then he gives us after we look at the realities that motivate unity then we look at being the same

mind of knowing God and making him known how that's important for unity and we see the characteristics of how unity is achieved of not being certain things but looking out for the interests of others then Paul gets into a model he says okay let me give you a model for what that may look like and so then he tells us of the incarnation of Christ and before we read the incarnation of Christ it is when what does it what does someone mean when they say the incarnation of Christ it is when the second person of the Godhead the son of God takes on humanity takes on human flesh becoming the God man Jesus Christ the incarnation of Christ is the most grand wonderful things that God has ever done you think oh I would have loved to have been there at creation to say let there be light and then voila

I don't know what that looked like but that would be amazing the incarnation of Christ is grander than creation the joining of two natures his fully divine nature taking on the fully human nature in the person of Christ when the eternal and the infinite takes upon the created and the finite many scholars believe that this to be a hymn that we're about to read and sung by early Christians some just say no this is Paul's just illustration of this but now would you just listen to the scripture with me so Paul verse 5 is telling us remember you're to have this mind that leads to unity so have this mind among yourselves that which is in Christ Jesus so if you want to know what it means to look out for the interest of others if you want to know how to love others then here's that beautiful these beautiful verses that many are familiar with who though he was in the form of God did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped

I want to spend a little time on the word form the word form we often think of this external shape so if I say something is in the form of a ball you would all think of a round spherical thing that bounces likely because it's in the form of a ball but this word form isn't necessarily talking about an external form so this the ancient Greek language means that there is some it's not this external form or shape but rather an internal substance the very nature of a thing so Christ shares the same substance and the very nature of God he was in the form of God so he was of the same nature and substance that is God with all his divine prerogatives with all of his divine privileges and benefits of being eternally loving and just God who though he was in the form of God did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped he did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped [25 : 58] Paul unashamedly says that Jesus did not count equality with God and did you catch that equality with God Paul has no problem saying that Jesus is equal with God he did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped but don't go to a thing to be grasped too quickly do you understand what he just said that Jesus did not consider equality with God he is equal with God but he says if Jesus is equal to God then Jesus is God God this is the doctrine that separates Christianity from all others especially two that I can think of that come to mind Mormons the Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses and I don't mention often things but I want to be clear other religions very often but I want to be clear both of those the Mormons and Jehovah's

Witnesses they believe the second person of the Godhead the Son of God is a progeny or an offspring of the Father so the Father must have had relations with someone and they had a progeny a child a progeny who is now the Son of God that's who the Mormons and the Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus to be so they'll come to your door they'll knock on your door they'll speak to you and they'll say the Son of God we believe in the Son of God but there when they say that they are saying Jesus is a progeny of God both of them do but this is saying he does not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped he is unashamed to say I am God but I did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped or a thing to be held on to so Jesus is about to do something where he releases some divine prerogatives in order to do something what did he do he did not consider equality something we grasp and the verse 7 says what did he do but he emptied himself that is he poured himself out all of who

Christ is as the eternal God all that he is he was poured out he loses nothing of his divine nature he loses nothing of his divine qualities nothing is removed because he pours himself out all of who he is he pours out how the verse 7 tells us by taking a form of a servant he empties himself by adding he adds to his divine nature being born in the likeness of men this should be a Christmas message because he was took on human flesh being born in the likeness of men but don't miss the detail of where he emptied himself by taking the form of a servant remember when I said the form is not this external shape but it's an internal reality of who he is so here it says he took on the form of a servant the form there's that word his inner substance and the very nature of who he was is to serve he was a servant

Jesus is fully God yes he was fully man yes and also the very nature of a servant who possessed the very nature of a servant and you say well Scott how can you help understand help me understand that Jesus emptied himself did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but he emptied himself by taking how could you illustrate that there is a vehicle that I enjoy in movies bad guys drive them so if you see this vehicle you say bad guy probably bad guy but it's a Mercedes Benz G wagon it's a G550 it's a high end SUV they run about \$200,000 they're very nice I hear and bad guys drive them and so imagine me going to a Mercedes Benz dealership and I walk in and there it is on the showroom floor and I say I want to drive that one and you're going to have to use your imagination with me because they probably run some bank account stuff and they would say you don't qualify to drive one of those but this is why we're imagining these things so I take this car and I drive it out of the showroom floor they open the big doors and it's an immaculate there is not a speck of dust on it there's some pearl in the paint it glistens in the sun the interior smells like just wonderment and you just get high on that smell everyone with me so that's what it smells like and we're going out

I'm driving this out because I'm a country kid I like gravel roads and so I think well it's an SUV this would be an injustice to the SUV because if it's not off-road then how do I know and so I take it out on a gravel road but I forgot that it rained the day before and there's some puddles and so I'm splashing around and the whole vehicle is just getting caked with mud and the only thing that looks like it might be something under the mud is the clear windshield wiper and that's the only thing that is nice and clean on the whole vehicle and I pull back into the dealership I pull back into the dealership and I just assume that they want this back on the showroom floor and so I pull it into the showroom floor right where it belongs and it is just dripping with mud on their showroom floor now as you can imagine the salesman will come out and say to me what have you done to that car and I will respond with I haven't taken anything away from your

[32 : 31] SUV I have merely added to it the point is clear its luster its beauty has not been removed but what has happened is there is something that has been added to the SUV that prevents these qualities from being able to be shined through the beauty of the car has not been destroyed it has not been diminished but the beauty has been covered over with the mud by taking on the mud something has been added that results in it appearing less while the fact it is actually more and so Jesus emptied himself by taking on the form of man and then verse 8 being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even the death on the cross there are two emphases in this verse what kind of obedience is required of Jesus and then what was the extent of his obedience to the father first let's look at the kind he was he obeyed the father to the point of death

Jesus accepted the full suffering the full rejection he accepts ridicule he accepts agony surely the son in eternity past had never embraced this kind of obedience in relation to the father the son who had obeyed the father in the past for sure the son was responsible for creation so the second member of the Godhead was responsible for creation and so the father he obeyed the father in doing that so the son has obeyed the father but not like this kind of obedience and then the extent of the obedience it's not only just the point of death but it's the death on a cross that's the extent all the way to death including death in the most excruciating manner a death full of shame the shame of the cross he took on human flesh knowing fully that it would cost him his life and his well-being to become sin that others may be forgiven what a servant savior we have in our

Lord Jesus Christ the the passage continues now and the focus has been on the son now the camera is going to shift and it's going to go to the father verse nine therefore God the father has highly exalted him and bestowed upon him the name that is above every name so that the name of Jesus every knee shall bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the father the father highly exalted him this means to super exalt someone upon the resurrection of Christ and his ascension Jesus is super exalted contrast from dying on the cross now he is highly exalted and the father bestows upon him a name that is above every name some have asked well what is that name that is above every name some would some have argued

Jesus and Christ and all of that but many many scholars say no no no no it's the title Lord he's given him a name that is above every name he is the king of kings and he is the lord of lords and he is the lord Jesus Christ and that is the name that is above every name and notice the language of triumph that every knee will bow it's a posture of submission and every tongue confess!

Christ is Lord that name that is above every name in heaven and those under heaven and everyone will confess this in heaven and under the earth and under the earth that Jesus Christ is Lord one of the hardest memorial services to officiate is those who I have to officiate where the person who is deceased no one knows whether they knew Christ or not and those who some even quite certainly did not know the Lord those are the hardest memorial services in part for me to officiate I have found but I appreciate having considered this for a while and what do you say and here's what I will say to an audience that may come to that memorial service is

[38 : 04] I will say regardless of where this person is right now whether they are in heaven or in hell this person would want you to know believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sin that's what this person would be saying to you right now why because every knee will bow every tongue will confess Jesus Christ is Lord whether they are in heaven or they are in hell and that's what they would want you to know right now that can be said even in the most difficult memorial service that a person could officiate everyone would say that and that can be said and so today if you are here and you say I'm not certain of where I will spend eternity and I don't know I don't know God I would say to you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ for your salvation and the forgiveness of sin believe in the life his sinless life his death for sin and resurrection overcoming sin and death on your behalf believe in

Christ and Christ alone today and you can be saved let's not though forget in context where this passage is found it is an example given to the church to say you want church unity you want spiritual unity you want to live a life worthy of the gospel that is found in a life of spiritual unity and you want to know what it looks like in the church to do nothing out of selfish ambition but to consider others as more significant than yourself you want an example consider Christ that's what he just did and that's what this beautiful passage of who Christ is and what he has done in context is in the book of the Philippians for me it provides a great caution to me every time

I'm tempted to grumble every time I'm tempted to gossip every time I'm tempted to have any form of disunity I think whoa consider what Christ has done and stop secondly the thought left my mind well we'll close when we're closed you can share with your neighbor your thought let's close father thank you for this day you are good lord I you are good is actually a severe understatement you have been given a name that is above every name you considered others as more significant than yourself you looked out for the interest of others and you you condescended to earth you took on human flesh you emptied yourself by taking the form of a servant you were born in the likeness of men you humbled yourself being obedient to the point of death even death on the cross you are highly exalted and you've been given a beautiful name that is above every name the Lord Jesus Christ you are worthy of our worship you are worthy of our praise and thank you for this day for to consider you today we love you amen to