

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

May 22, 2024

Series - The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul

The Prison Epistles

The Letter to the Philippians – The Joy of Faith

Text - Philippians 2 – “*This Mind*”

The theme for this letter is *The Joy of Faith*.

Two verses from Philippians that particularly support our theme are found in Philippians 1:25 and 26. Paul states in the preceding verses that he would rather go to Heaven, but the Lord had called him to continue to serve on earth, and then he states:

*"And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and **joy of faith**; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again."* (Philippians 1:25-26)

Notice that phrase – “joy of faith” – We have taken that phrase for our title to this series of messages from Philippians.

Similar verses from Philippians:

"Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe." (Philippians 3:1)

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

You get the idea from this letter that Christians should be a happy, “always rejoicing” people.

Review of Introduction to Philippians

Philippians is one of four New Testament letters that are known as “The Prison Epistles” because they were written while Paul was under a sort of house arrest, awaiting his trial at Rome. He was falsely arrested in Jerusalem basically because he was a preacher of the gospel of Christ.

The recipients of this letter were the saints at Philippi, which is a city in Macedonia where Paul visited and preached on both his second and third missionary journeys. Philippi was the city where Lydia was converted, and the place where Paul and Silas sang the praises

of God after being beaten and thrown in jail, which resulted in the salvation of the jailor and many others. (Acts 16)

We introduced the letter three messages ago by looking into the first 11 verses. There we saw that Paul extended his greeting to the church and expressed his gratitude to them for their faithfulness to the Lord and for their support of him personally. He also shared his expectations for them.

Two messages ago, we preached a message from verses 12 – 21, where we saw that Paul stated that the reason that God allowed him to be put in jail was so that the gospel could be furthered. We shared that God has a reason for allowing us to go through difficult situations and trials. Paul's trials caused the gospel to be preached further than it had previously, and his incarceration also caused people to pray. All of this glorified the Lord.

In the last message, we examined the remaining verses of chapter one where Paul continued the discussion regarding why God had allowed him to go through the things that he has endured, but then he concludes that though he was in a bad situation at the time he wrote this letter, he knew and expressed confidence that God was not finished with him yet. He still had more work for Paul to do, and one of the ways that God was going to use him was to bring joy to these Philippians.

At the very end of chapter one Paul begins to counsel the Philippians about striving together in harmony and standing true through persecution. Like it or not, persecution is part of the Christian life. The fascinating thing about persecution is that it is intended by our enemies to bring sorrow, but it is ultimately used by God to produce joy.

Introduction to Chapter Two:

In this message, Paul will continue counseling the Philippians along the same line as he concluded chapter one. He proceeds with the theme of harmony within the church and emphasizes the need for humility.

In chapter two, Paul used the word "mind" three times in vs. 2, 3, and 5. The word "mind" is an interesting word. It can be used as a verb or as a noun:

*"Be of the same **mind** one toward another. **Mind** not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits." (Romans 12:16)*

It has to do with the way we think. God is very concerned with the way we think, because the way we think will determine the way we behave. All action begins in the heart or mind.

Later in this letter, Paul says:

*"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, **think on these things**. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."* (Philippians 4:8-9)

As we examine verses 1 – 11, we will pay particular attention to the three “minds” that God wants us to have as Christians. It is really only one mindset, but this one mind that God wants us to have has three attributes according to the text.

I. **Harmony – A Like Mind (vs. 1 – 2) – A willingness to deny self.**

*"If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having **the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.**"* (Philippians 2:1-2)

Paul already introduced this subject in chapter one:

"Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;" (Philippians 1:27)

Notice the word “accord” in v. 2 – has the idea of harmony. In music, there may be many instruments, but they play together to make one sound. An affective team will play together.

Illustration – so many of these professional football players are egomaniacs, but they must lay down their egos and play with other egomaniacs to be successful as a team.

The Bible teaches a lot about the concept of being of one mind, and in one accord.

Turn to Acts 2:42

"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common;

And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:42-47)

"Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:" (1 Peter 3:8)

Preaching Point - If we are going to succeed as a church, we are going to have to learn to play together as a team. We don't all get our way, but we labor together to fulfill Christ's way.

II. Humility – A Lowly Mind (vs. 3 – 4) - A willingness to serve others.

***"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."** (Philippians 2:3-4)*

Turn to Mark 10:35 – 45

"And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared. And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."
(Mark 10:35-45)

"And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve." (Luke 22:24-26)

Jesus Himself demonstrated this principle perfectly when He washed the disciples' feet.

III. Humanity – A Love Mind (Christ's Mind – vs. 5 - 8) - A willingness to sacrifice.

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." (Philippians 2:5-8)

When I read this portion of Scripture, I realize that Paul was offering the Lord Jesus here as the ultimate example of humility, but I also see that Christ went above and beyond just serving others, He was will to sacrifice all for others, and His motivation was love.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3:16)

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood," (Revelation 1:5)

Before we conclude this message, let me very clear to point out that these three mindsets that Paul admonishes us to have here are an act of the will. "Let this mind be in you," means that you must be willing to allow God to do this through you. It will not happen automatically.

Conclusion (vs. 9 – 11)

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,

and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:9-11)

If we will humble ourselves, work together, and sacrificially serve others, God will reward us:

"...he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11)

However, the real reward for all of this is not the exaltation of self, but the exaltation of Christ – the glorification of Christ.

That is “Mission Accomplished” for a Christian – we make God look good.

When we exalt ourselves, demand our own way, and are selfish, we make God look bad in the eyes of the people of this world. It is natural to be self-centered, but it takes a supernatural act of the Holy Spirit of God to be sacrificial and a servant to others; but that’s exactly what our Supreme Example did. He humbled himself, and served people, and ultimately sacrificed His human life so that they could have eternal life.

The message in a nutshell is for us to die to self and live for Christ and others.

Illustration

Two missionaries in China were standing by a clogged up sewer, arguing about why they shouldn't have to clean it out. The first missionary said, "I've been here longer, I shouldn't have to do this." The other one replied, "But I have more education. I didn't spend all that money on schooling to be cleaning out sewers." While they were arguing back and forth, famous missionary Hudson Taylor walked past them, opened the sewer, went down into it, cleared it out, and took care of the problem. While the missionaries were arguing, Hudson Taylor simply did the job that needed to be done.