

## Philippians, Chapter Two, Lesson One

THE JOY OF UNITY Philippians 2:1-4

### STIMULATE

\*\* It was encouraging for us all, last week, to see the apostle Paul as he was "**Challenging the Brethren**" at the end of chapter one in his letter to the Philippians. Do you recall the first thing he used to challenge their lifestyle.

Paul called them to live godly in an evil world, which is filled with opposition. They were going to have to determine within their own hearts that they would strive each day to "walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"(V.27).

\*\* What did Paul add to the challenge of trying to live godly for Christ's sake?

We must live godly - knowing all the time that we will suffer, because we have come to believe in the One who gave His life for us.

\*\* Have you been mindful of this challenge over the past week? How has it impacted your daily walk with our precious Lord?

It has directly impacted my moment-by-moment decision making process. By God's grace, I am more aware of the need for increased godliness in my life, that I might reflect the Person of Jesus Christ to those around me. cf. 2Corinthians 3:18

### MOTIVATE

\*\* So far in his letter to the Philippians, Paul has mentioned "Joy" in one form or another four times, (vv. 4, 18, 18, 25) and will continue to do this throughout the epistle. It is the central theme of all that Paul has to share with them. However, what are the settings of life which contribute the most to the "Joy" of a Christian? Over the next five weeks Paul will answer that question for us in our study together of chapter two. We will learn from him about:

*THE JOY OF UNITY* - Philippians 2:1-4

*THE JOY OF HUMILITY* - Philippians 2:5-11

*THE JOY OF OBEDIENCE* - Philippians 2:12-18

*THE JOY OF FAITHFULNESS* - Philippians 2:19-24

*THE JOY OF REUNION* - Philippians 2:25-30

Let's read together our passage for today as Paul describes for us "**The Joy of Unity**" which can only be found through faith in Jesus Christ.

Read passage (V.1-2) (V.3-4)

Opening Prayer

### *The Joy of Unity*

### INVESTIGATE

V. 1 \*\* The apostle uses an interesting grammatical structure here in verse one to lay out for us the four qualifiers of the request he will be making in verse two.

Read verse one again - Is Paul questioning the existence of these four godly qualities in the life a believer?

No - The word "if" is used here in the first class condition and could easily be translated "since". He is saying that because the four things he mentions here in verse one do exist, that his request of verse two should naturally follow.

Let's look at these one at a time -

1) \*\* What does Paul mean by the "encouragement in Christ" which exists within the lives of those who share a like precious faith?

"Encouragement" translates paraklesis, which means to "come along side". Because of our unity in the faith which is in Christ, we are equipped to come to each others side for love, support, strength and compassion. cf. Romans 15:4-6 and Acts 4:34-37

2) \*\* How about the phrase "consolation of love", what does that expression connote?

paramuthion - carries the idea of tenderness, just as the love of Christ is in fact tender toward us, we should have a tender heart toward one another. cf. Ephesians 4:32, 1Thessalonians 2:7 and 1Peter 3:8

3) \*\* What does the third qualifier mean?

"fellowship of the Spirit" - We learned this term back in chapter one, verse five. koinonia - lit. means fellowship, but carries the idea of participation or sharing. Because we have a "fellowship" with the Holy Spirit, we also have fellowship with each other. cf. 1Corinthians 3:1-3, Titus 1:4, Romans 1:11-12

4) \*\* And finally, how about "affection and compassion", how are they manifest in a Christian's life?

"**affection**" translates splanchnon - lit. "inward parts", carrying the idea of our bowels or emotions at the "gut" level.

"**compassion**" comes from oiktirmos - lit. "pity"

These together speak of the ability to identify or empathize with one who is suffering or has a great need. This describes the ability to feel the pain and help carry the load. As sure as Jesus does this for us, we are able to do it for one another. cf. Matthew 9:36, Mark 6:34

V. 2 \*\* Paul is saying, "Since all of this is true about the Christian's life, here is how I want you to conduct your life. Again, he gives four imperatives. What are they?"

1) Being of the same mind. cf. Romans 12:16, James 2:1-4

2) Maintaining the same love. cf. 1Peter 1:22

3) United in spirit. cf. John 17:20-21

4) Intent on one purpose. cf. 1Corinthians 10:31

\*\* What impact will all of this unity have on the joy of the apostle Paul?

It will make it complete. Our joy also is maximized when we are each doing our part in the body toward these four imperatives!

\*\* Why would unity in the body be so important to Paul?

Because it was to Jesus Christ! cf. John 13:34-35

**V. 3** \*\* Ok - if it is so important, how do we do it? In the next two verses Paul lays out the three step design by God to give us the victory in this area of our corporate lives. What is the first step for us if we wish to experience "**The Joy of Unity**"?

**1)** Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit! We must watch our motives very carefully.

\*\* How encompassing is that command?

"Do nothing"! Paul is addressing everything that we think, say or do. All is included, nothing is to be excluded from this prohibition.

\*\* Can you think of some people in chapter one who were guilty of this kind of behavior?

Verse 15 of chapter one, those who were "preaching Christ from envy and strife" (and from verse 17) "out of selfish ambition".

\*\* In our verse three for today, which adjective does Paul use to better help us in our understanding of conceit?

He says that it is "empty". There simply is no true substance to any view that would exalt us above our brothers and sisters in Christ. cf. Colossians 2:18 and Galatians 5:26

\*\* Alright then, let's look closely at this verse to find the second step in God's design for unity within the body of Christ. What is it?

**2)** Regarding others as more important than yourself.

You may remember from our study in Ephesians 5:21, that Christians were to be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. "Be subject" translated hupotasso - lit. "to rank under". This was the exact same idea. We rank ourselves under the importance of others in the body of Christ, out of our reverence for the Lord.

\*\* What genuine attitude is required for us to be successful in this noble effort?

"...with humility of mind..." the very opposite of conceit. While conceit is an empty boast, true humility before a Holy God will fill us with the God given capacity to meet the needs of others.  
cf. Romans 12:3

**V. 4** \*\* While we are 1) Watching our motives, and 2) Exalting others - What is the third step in God's plan?

**3)** We should not merely look out for our own personal interests, but also for those of others.

\*\* What does Paul have in mind when he says "look out"?

He is talking about the **preoccupation** or **anticipation** of needs. Not just ours, but for the needs of others. We ought to plan ahead to meet their needs.

\*\* Is Paul saying that it is wrong or sinful to look out for your own interest or needs?

No - We must plan for and anticipate the needs of our life and the life of our family.  
cf. 1 Timothy 5:8

\*\* Well then, what would be wrong in the context of what Paul is saying to us?

To **ONLY** look out for **OUR** interest! He wants us to experience the joy of building unity within the body of Christ by meeting the needs of others that are within the body.  
Remember - Acts 4:34

\*\* There is a tremendous example of how this builds "**The Joy of Unity**" within the body, which can be found in the book Acts, chapter nine and verses 32-43. Would you please join me there as we learn about a godly woman named Tabitha?

This event takes place in Joppa, which was eleven miles west of Lydda, which in turn was approximately 23 miles west of Jerusalem. This coastal city was at the southern tip of "The Plain of Sharon".

Tabitha (Dorcas in the Greek), constantly anticipated the needs of others and aggressively pursued meeting those needs! She had such an impact, that even her death was a cause for unity within the body of Christ. cf. Acts 9:39

We would do well to follow her example.

## **EXTRICATE**

\*\* Today we have enjoyed seeing the first of five settings in which joy is produced within the body of Christ. What were the four "givens" of the Christian life that we saw at the beginning of our study?

In Jesus Christ we have experienced His encouragement, His consolation of love, His fellowship and His affection and compassion. (All to be shared with our fellow believers!)

\*\* "Since" all of that is true, what should it produce in us which has been designed by God to complete our since of joy in this life?

Our unity "in the fear of Christ". (Remember Ephesians 5:21)

## **DELINEATE**

\*\* What was God's three step plan for creating this type of joy filled unity within the body of Christ?

1. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. Remember - Watch our motives!
2. Regard others as more important than yourself. Form the practice of exalting others!
3. "Look out" for the needs of others. Anticipate and meet those needs!

## **EVALUATE**

\*\* As you review that short list, in which of those three areas does your heart need the most work?

As we study God's word each week, we strive to apply what we have learned. Can you imagine how much greater we would experience "**The Joy of Unity**" if we all were to do what we learned in this passage?

## **ACTIVATE**

\*\* Father, we thank you for examples like Tabitha and Paul, who thought of themselves as they ought to and were always placing others above themselves by anticipating their needs and then meeting them. Help us we pray, to learn and grow in our own walk with You, as your Spirit transforms us from one level of glory into the next - making us more like Your precious Son, Jesus Christ.

Closing prayer