

A STUDY ON PHILIPPIANS
Week 2
Philippians 2

Joy in Humility and Service

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Philippians 2:1-4, If “This” is True...then “What”?

Paul starts a plea with the Philippian believers. He’s asking them to think carefully about their lives before God. Is it true that (v. 1):

- Their *unity with Christ* means something?
- It is *Christ’s love* that bonds them all together and carries them through difficult times?
- The *presence of the Holy Spirit* makes a difference in their lives?
- They know that it is important to *feel* something for each other, to *care* for one another?

If all of this is true, then Paul would want the Philippian believers to rethink some of the things in their lives (vv. 2-4):

- Should they not stop *arguing* and *fighting* with each other?
- Should they not focus on the things they *agree* upon?
- Should they not be *loyal* to one another?
- Should they not *feel* together, *strive* together and *work* together?
- Should they not stop thinking *only about themselves*?
- Should they not stop *aiming to get attention* all day long?
- Should they not *rather think of each other more* than always focusing only on themselves?

This would bring Paul great joy!

- ❖ Make a list of the spiritual truths / realities in your life.
- ❖ Make another list now of how these truths should play out in your life.

Philippians 2:5-11, JESUS—the ULTIMATE EXAMPLE!

We all like to follow an example, and as God's children we have a GREAT EXAMPLE - the Best, CHRIST JESUS!

As Jesus thought about things, felt about things, this is how we should think and feel about things (v. 5). It is as simple as that!

Here is what we need to remember about Jesus' Example (vv. 6-8):

- *Jesus stands with God*, on equal footing. However Jesus was never arrogant or so full of pride that He held on to this position for all it was worth!
- When the time came *Jesus left His status* and place of honor to become human.
- Not only did He decide to *become human*, but He took on the role of a *slave*, someone whom others would not even think much about.
- He chose to set His foot on a *path of humility*.
- Intentionally He chose a path that would dead-end (literally) in a *humiliating cross*.
- The path that God expected from Jesus, *Jesus walked...obediently...to the end!*

Living such an unmatched Example, led to (vv. 9-10):

- God bringing Jesus from the depths of humiliation to the *highest height of honor* and glory that God could ever give.
- God guaranteeing that nothing and nobody would *ever be as important as Jesus*.
- God guaranteeing that nothing and nobody *could ever be more important than Jesus*.
- God setting it up that literally everyone, no matter who and from where, even those who have already died before Christ came to earth, will *forever have to bow before Christ*.

The final, undeniable outcome of this extraordinary Example that Jesus lived is this:

Everyone from everywhere will say with the utmost confidence and certainty, "Jesus Christ IS LORD!", so that all will recognize how great and important God the Father is (v. 11)!

- ❖ This is one of the most incredible passages in the entire New Testament. Read through it slowly, at least three times, and then write down what stirs in your soul.
 - ❖ What about Jesus' Example struck you again anew?
 - ❖ If you think about how you follow this extraordinary Example of Jesus, what are some of the things in your life that you think need some adjustment?
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Philippians 2:12-17, A Life that Brings Joy and Light to the World

It's important to remember that *we're never really alone*. Even when spiritual leaders or anyone else for that matter is not around, GOD STILL IS. He sees us. Therefore, how we live when others are around—to whom we feel spiritually accountable—and *how we live when they are not should not be any different* (v. 12a). We should simply always live as people who belong to God, as this is true: *God is always involved in our lives* (v. 12b)! He is the One working in us so that both what we will and what we do lead to what pleases Him (v. 13).

This should change how we think and live. As people of God we should not complain or argue (v. 14), so that we won't give people a reason to accuse us of deceitfulness or improper motives (v. 15). Even though we as God's children are living in a world that is often corrupt and people who make choices as if they have no conscience, we need to live in such a manner that nobody will have a reason to complain about our lives (v. 15a-b).

Perhaps we can say it like this: Let our lives be as if we are *shining like bright lights in a dark world* (v. 15c)! Like stars in the universe we should point people in utter darkness to Christ in whom they can find Life and Light (v. 15c-16a)!

For Paul, if the Philippian believers would live like this, it would give him reason to be so proud of them at the second coming of Christ (v. 16b)! It will prove that his efforts and time didn't go waste (v. 16c). In fact, even if he would die as he's writing this it would not matter as he would have something to present to God (v. 17a)! *He is sure that even his death would encourage the believers to serve God better, thus bringing him great joy* (v. 17b)! Paul is rejoicing, no matter what is or is to come, and he is inviting the believers to be joyful too so they can all share in joyful lives before the Lord (v. 18)!

Philippians 2:19-30, Qualities in Ministry Workers Worth Honoring

Paul loves and honors people in ministry! He respects them, lifts them up, and serves them.

This is what Paul has to say about Timothy (vv. 19-22):

- He needs to go *where the Lord Jesus wants him* to go.
- He *cares deeply* for the Philippian believers.
- Others are often more concerned about their own agendas than *what is important for Jesus*, but not Timothy.
- The Philippian believers know him, and as he lived among them he clearly *proved himself*.
- Like a father and his son, Timothy *worked extremely hard*, shoulder to shoulder, alongside Paul to tell others about Jesus Christ.

For these reasons Paul is ready to send Timothy back to the Philippian believers as soon as the opportunity arises and he is prayerful that he himself will even be able to join him soon (vv. 23-24)!

As for Epaphroditus, Paul has this to say (vv. 25-30):

- He *worked diligently and really hard* alongside Paul.
- He *longs for his community of believers*, and should now also be sent back, as with Timothy.
- Even though he *got terribly ill*, *God did not forget about him* and healed him, sparing Paul a lot of sorrow too if he would have died.
- *He did not hold back and had no fear* in doing all he could for the Lord. Even possible death did not stop him from serving Paul in a time when the Philippian believers couldn't have done it themselves.

Paul therefore encourages the Philippian believers to give Epaphroditus a warm welcome, reminding them that ministry workers like him surely deserve it (v. 29)!

Paul is certain that this will release them all from anxiety and bring all of them great joy (v. 28)!

- ❖ When you read through these lists of ways in which Paul describes the ministry workers—which of them stands out to you? Create a new list from both of these of what struck you.
- ❖ Looking now at your own list, and remembering that we are ALL workers one way or another in the harvest field, what are some of the qualities that you would like to work on more?
- ❖ Take a peaceful moment to spend in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to mold who you are as a “ministry worker for the Lord”.

